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Seminar to focus on PCB

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TRAVERSE CITY — A U.S. Bureau of sport fisheries and Wildlife representative of the Great Lakes Fisheries Laboratory will explain the toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and its effects on fish and man.

Tom Kelly, an aquatic biologist with the University of Michigan Sea Grant program, urges fisherman and other interested persons to attend Robert Reinert's seminar on PCB Wednesday at the Park Place Motor Inn at 7:30 p.m.

"I don't want to alarm people about PCB but to help them understand what we are dealing with," Kelly said. "People shouldn't stop eating all kinds of fish, because the toxic chemical is more prevelent in some kinds of fish than others."

He said the PCB concentration can be reduced by cutting away the fat of the fish. PCB is generally found in salmon and lake trout in this area.

He said PCB may have a hazardous effect on man if a person has a steady diet of coho salmon.

Reinert's lecture also will include an explanation of DDT with the history of these organic chemicals, their effects on the environment expecially with man and fish, along with strategies for action.

"Basically we solved the DDT problem now we have PCB (to contend with) he said. "PCB is a little different, maybe a little harder to get rid of."

There has been concern about the present tolerance limit of five parts per million of PCB's in fish, which is a U.S. Food and Drug Administration figure.

Kelly said a conference with the federal Environmental Portection Agency is scheduled in Chicago Nov. 19-21 to re-evaluate the present guidelines and standards of PCB use in industry and for limits for the public consumption of fish.

He said he would attend that meeting.

Kelly sees PCB as a "very serious problem." He noted a warning from the Ontario health ministry stating that pregnant women shouldn't eat coho salmon fish from the Great Lakes, explaining there is reason for concern. "I don't think the Canadian government would make such a statement otherwise."

PCB's are used as coolants and in insulation, electrical wiring, epoxy paints, sealants and caulkings. Kelly described them as plasticizers. He said "There are substitutes available for most uses of PCB," with the exception of PCB's used in transformers.

Kelly said the Wednesday seminar would be a good preview for the meeting scheduled in Chicago.

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