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PCB contaminated fish found near Janesville

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Some 8,000 pounds of contaminated fish caught in a carp trap near Janesville has the fishery crew from Waterville working very hard to try and find the source of the trouble.

Paul Mertins, a commercial fisherman from Waterville, caught 20,000 pounds of carp in his traps 8 miles southwest of Janesville, on the outlet of Lake Elysian and sold them to a dealer at Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River south of Red Wing about a month ago.

The Federal Food and Drug Administration checked the carp and found 8,000 pounds to contain 15 parts per million of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB).

Darrald Erie, assistant manager at the Waterville Fish Hatchery, said he thought the contaminated fish came from the Minnesota River when the water was high last spring.

"Our crews are checking the LeSueur River right now. We have not found anything new," Erie told the JOURNAL this morning. He said the Department of Natural Resources will keep on checking the LeSueur and Minnesota Rivers, however.

Darryl Brown, lab chief of the FDA's Minneapolis office, said the interstate task force investigating the source of contamination in the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers is not much closer to success than earlier this year when fish containing large amounts of the chemical were pulled from Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has asked the FDA to ban the use of PCB, which is used almost exclusively in power transformers.

The chemical has been found to cause birth defects in donkeys and other animals, Brown said. A recent study in Japan showed that children born of persons exposed to PCB suffered birth defects.

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