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What is Being Done To Save Lake Pepin?

Lake Pepin is dying, and little is being done to save it. This was the central concern of the July executive committee meeting of the Mississippi River Regional Planning commission (MRRPC).

Recently the lake was closed *to commercial fishing by the* U.S. Food and Drug Admn. because of high levels of the industrial additive polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCB's, found in fish samples. This additive, according to Norman Kirschbaum of the Wis. Dept. of Agriculture, who met with the committee, *is known to cause* skin problems, birth defects and even death. The level is in the tainted fish from Lake Pepin was in excess of federal and state health limits. Kirschbaum admitted that not enough is presently known about PCB's either to be sure that the limit of *5 parts per million is sufficient* to ensure public health, or to hold that it is unrealistically restrictive.

PCB's are used in a wide range of manufactured products, all the way from automotive lubricants to agricultural fertilizer containers. When released to the environment, they act somewhat like DDT; in fact, until recently, laboratory tests did not distinguish the two. They both remain in the food cycle for years without degrading to safe levels. However, Kirschbaum noted, PCB's are much more widespread than *DDT;* appearing in municipal and industrial sewage, in the air, in water supplies, and in food products.

Since the dangers of PCB's first became evident, the sole U.S. supplier has restricted its sales, but it has not halted production. This supplier has not chosen to release the names of PCB purchasers, so the search for the source of the Lake Pepin contamination is made that much more difficult. Mrs. Ed Hill of Pepin maintains that the only logical source is the Twin Cities area. Representing the Citizens for the Preservation of Lake Pepin, *Mrs. Hill told the* commissioners of the adverse local effects of both the closing of the fishery and the increasingly noxious conditions brought about by the lake's pollution.

In response to requests by Mrs. Hill's organization and by *Commissioners from the* River counties, Commission Chr. John Thomas will appoint an action group of commissioners and citizens to look into the situation. The group will seek a coordinated response from Wisconsin's Congressional delegation, Gov. Lucey, and all the *state and federal agencies* involved.

In other action at the July meeting, the commissioners endorsed five proposed federal spending projects in the region, including:

-a 16-acre village park in Ellsworth. The initial phase will be a six-acre picnic and softball area, costing $16,000, of which the village will pay half. Jim Peterson, Pierce Co. Resource Agent, said that the park's master plan will also be reviewed by a professional park designer.

PUBLIC SEWER AND WATER SYSTEM IN THE *Village of Warrens. Monroe Co.* Resource Agent Leonard Anderson explained that the village, although just recently incorporated, has been seeking such a system since 1944. Some commissioners, while supporting the concept of water pollution abatement throughout *the region, expressed* concern about the financial burden such an expensive project will place on the 250 residents of Warrens.

-a fifty-unit $900,000 apartment building for Viroqua's elderly. Commissioner Chester Erlandson, Vernon Co. Board Chr., noted that a recent survey *showed a very real need for such* housing. Construction will be financed through a loan from the FHA.

Clearing of the Kickapoo River in Crawford Co. Subject to a feasibility study by the Corps of Engineers, this project will remove snags and debris to *reduce flood damage and in*crease recreational potential. The proposal received written support from Bob Dillman, Co. Board Chr. and MRRPC Commissioner; Bernard Watson, Village Pres. of Gays Mills, and Noel Daugherty, Village Pres. of Steuben. The Exec. Committee *endorsed the project and at the* same time asked that the Corps s re-open its files on the long dormant clearing of the lower Chippewa River through Durand.

-construction of restrooms along the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail. Commissioner Adolph Hellman, Monroe Co. Board Chr., said that these improvements were much needed additions to the popular trail and were in accord with the trail's original master plan.

The Executive Committee tabled a proposal to begin a roadside seeding project in *Monroe county. Commissioners* seek assurance that both the county board and the Golden Sands Resource Conservation and Development District have reviewed the project.

At the request of Commissioner Tony Pollzer, Durand, the August meeting of the Exec. Committee will hear a representative of the Corps of Engineers explain his agency's study and work procedures, particularly with reference to the lower Chippewa. Details are forthcoming.

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