

Pollution unit backs PCB ban

By Don Boxmeyer
Staff Writer

Water quality specialists from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) are now in agreement with scientists from four other Midwestern states and the federal government that the use of PCBs, a group of highly toxic industrial chemicals, should be nationally banned.

The PCA staff will urge the agency's citizen board, at its meeting Tuesday, to support a move for a national ban on the sale and use of PCBs except in certain "essential" applications.

LAST WEEK, the Lake Michigan Toxic Substances Committee, made up of technical representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), similarly urged a national ban on the use of the PCB compounds.

Monasanto Chemical Co. is the only domestic producer of PCBs, a family of chemical compounds with a variety of industrial applications, as electrical insulators, heat transfer agents and hydraulic fluids. It is also used in making soap.

But it has recently been found that PCBs — Polychlorinated Biphenols — can produce birth defects in fish, birds and mammals. It is suspected of having similar effects on humans and of being a cancer-causing substance.

PCBs have been found in fish taken from Lake Pepin, Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. The compound does not occur in nature, it is used in the manufac-

turing processes of plants around the Great Lakes and on the Mississippi River.

THE U.S. FOOD and Drug Administration (USDA) recently enforced its "action limit" of 5 parts per million of PCBs on several shipments of commercially-caught carp from Lake Pepin, leading to the voluntary disposal of several thousand tons of carp fillets prepared for outstate sale.

Since the USDA enforcement, 40 commercial carp fishermen on Lake Pepin have been idled by PCB investigation.

Late last month, Dr. Warren Lawson, Minnesota Commissioner of Health, advised the public to limit consumption of fish from the Mississippi and from the Metro-

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