DURAND, WIS.
COURIER-WEDGE
W. 3,742

JUL 17 1975

Commission Studies Lake Pepin Situation

PAGE ONE

Lake Pepin is contaminated and little is being done to save it.

That was an opinion expressed during a July executive committee meeting of Mississippi River Regional Planning commission at LaCrosse.

The lake was closed to commercial fishing because the federal food and drug administration found high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCB, in fish meat. According to Norman Kirschbaum of the Wisconsin department of agriculture, the chemical is known to cause skin problems, birth defects and even death.

Level in tainted fish from Lake Pepin exceeded federal and state health limits. Kirschbaum told the regional commission so little is known about PCB that a limit of five parts per million might not be sufficient to ensure public health.

The chemicals are used in a wide range of manufactured products, all the way from automotive lubricants to agricultural fertilizer containers. When released, they remain in the food cycle for years without degrading to safe levels. PCB is known to appear in municipal and industrial sewage, in the air, in water supplies and in food products.

When the danger of PCB became evident, the only supplier in the United States restricted sales, but did not halt production. The supplier has not released names of purchasers, so a source for Lake Pepin contamination cannot be pinpointed.

Mrs. Ed Hill of Pepin maintains the only logical source is in the Twin Cities area. Representing Citizens for Preservation of Lake Pepin, Mrs. Hill told about adverse effects of closing commercial fishing and increasingly noxious conditions created by lake pollution.

Chairman John Thomas of the regional commission decided to appoint an action group of commissioners and citizens to investigate the situation. It will seek a coordinated response at federal and state levels.

In other action at the July meeting, commissioners endorsed a 16 acre village park for Ellsworth that will cost $16,000. They also okayed construction of rest rooms along the Elroy-Sparta bicycle trail.

At the request of Commissioner Tony Polzer of Durand, the August meeting of the executive committee will hear a representative from the army corps of engineers explain work procedures on the lower Chippewa river.

MONS 031037