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Minnesota pollution board wants federal ban on PCBs

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's board of directors voted unanimously Tuesday to request a federal ban on the sale and use of the toxic chemicals called PCBs.

The resolution will be forwarded to the Minnesota congressional delegation and selected congressional leaders.

Quantities of PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — exceeding federal standards for human consumption have been found in fish from Lake Pepin and Lake Superior.

The chemicals are believed to cause birth defects and reproductive failure in fish, birds and mammals. They also are suspected of causing cancer.

PCA staff members told the board they believe a national ban is the only practical approach to the PCB problem, because their use is so widespread a state ban would be ineffective.

A Michigan agency, equivalent to the PCA, has adopted a similar resolution. And a similar recommendation was made in May to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by the Lake Michigan Toxic Substances Committee.

PCBs are used in such industrial products as plastics, printers' ink, hydraulic fluid and electrical insulators. They also are found in hand soaps.

In a related action, the PCA board called for a conference to consider control of petroleum products and other toxic substances in Lake Superior. Wisconsin, Michigan and Canada's Ontario province would be invited to participate.

The board also voted unanimously to ask the Minnesota congressional delegation to oppose funds for the Garrison Diversion Project in North Dakota. The group argued that the project could adversely affect the quality of water in the Red River.

Govs. Wendell Anderson of Minnesota and Arthur Link of North Dakota have urged the congressional delegations of their states to try to soften opposition to the project.

The Garrison project involves a massive canal and pumping complex that ultimately will take water from the Missouri River and channel it into east-central North Dakota for irrigation.

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