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Move to Ban PCBs Gets Federal Boost

The move to ban the use of PCBs, a group of industrial chemicals, in Wisconsin got an assist last week from the assistant secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Interior.

Nathaniel Reed wrote the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency of the growing concern for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) and growing evidence — including some from Wisconsin — that they might be harmful to health. (See above story.)

"There appears to be broad unanimity for the banning of this family of industrial contaminants," Reed wrote, "and I recommend that this be done at the earliest moment."

After the presence of PCBs were detected in increasingly large quantitites in fish in Wisconsin and Great Lakes waters, the State Natural Resources Board set up public hearings to consider banning them entirely.

In Reed's letter, he called attention to the pending Wisconsin DNR action, and noted that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency had unanimously urged a federal ban on PCB's, as had the Upper Great Lakes Committee of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

"The intensity of public concern is high and is growing rapidly," Reed said. "I see this (banning) as the only means to avert a threat to national fish and wildlife resources and to the public health."

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