New report of Delta pollution

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SACRAMENTO (UPI) State and federal wildlife scientists say the Sacramento River contains dangerous compounds known as PCBs which can cause cancer, disrupt reproductive cycles and destroy fisheries.

The levels of PCBs, or polychoirinated biphenyls, in the river represent "environmental contamination," Charles Walker, senior environmental scientist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, told the Sacramento Bee Tuesday.

The Bee said environmental scientists reported that laboratory tests have showed that PCBs cause liver cancer in rats and chickens. It said a University of Wisconsin scientist found reproductive problems among female monkeys given a diet that included 2.5 parts per million of PCBs. The

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U.S. Interior Department says rainbow trout eggs containing 2.7 ppm of the compound had a 79 per cent mortality rate.

Walker said fish samples taken in the river showed 0.5 ppm of PCBs in their flesh in 1970 and 1971. But in 1972 it jumped to between 5.0 and 10 ppm. It was 0.5 ppm in 1973. Tests in the summer of 1974 on small sturgeon showed levels of 20 ppm in reproductive organs and 1 to 2 ppm in their flesh, he said.

In the United States, PCBs are mostly used in electrical transformers and capacitors, although they also have been utilized in textile coatings, ink, paints, carbonless carbon paper, hydraulic fluids and seaplants.

Since 1971 Mosanto Industrial Chemical Co., the only U.S. producer, has limited its sales to the manufacturers and users of transformers and capacity. Such equipment with PCBs is in widespread use throughout the nation.

An Interior Department official last month said PCB pollution has been found in a number of rivers throughout the country.

The discovery of PCBs in the Sacramento River occurred in 1970 when Knight's Landing was included in 100 stations in a National Fish and Wildlife monitoring system.

Tim Curtis, a marine biologist with the state Fish and Game Department, told the Bee that PCBs have been found in striped bass and sturgeon in the Sacramento River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

"They certainly are a concern to us," he said.

State fish and game officials said they have not conducted an investigation into the source of PCBs showing up in Sacramento River and Delta fish, and it remains undetermined.

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