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State commission recommends ban on use of PCB

LANSING—(AP)—The Natural Resources Commission yesterday voted, 5-0, to ask the Legislature to ban the use and production of a chemical which is contaminating fish in Lake Michigan.

The chemical, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), is used in a variety of household products. The commission called for its ban on a national level as well as in Michigan.

"We hope this state will lead the nation in banning PCB," the commission said in a statement. Commission Chairman Carl Johnson said he sees no alternative other than an outright ban.

Fish in Lake Michigan have PCB levels above the limits allowed by the U.S. Food and

Drug Administration (FDA).

The FDA has seized some shipments of chubb caught in Lake Michigan because PCB levels were found to be up to 20 parts per million. The FDA legal level is five parts per million. Human health could be endangered at a level of 500 parts per million, the FDA said.

PCB appears in a wide range of products ranging from paper to hand soap. The sole U.S. manufacturer is Monsanto Chemical Co. of St. Louis, which agreed in the early 1970's to stop selling PCB for some industrial uses. But the chemical has since been sold for other industrial, commercial and household uses.