

CATSKILL, N. Y.
MAIL
(ALBANY MARKET AREA)
D. 4.000

FEB 26 1976 *Byline*

Spring-run Herring Expected to be Safe

by ANNABAR JENSEN
ALBANY - River area residents who enjoy netting herring during the spring run for pickling or other eating should be relieved to know that it should be safe to do so despite the presence of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls in the river, because herring spend most of their life in the sea and enter the Hudson only to spawn.

Dr. David Axelrod, director of the Infections Disease Center of the State Health Dept., whose office has been put in charge of PCB-related material, said this week that herring, like shad, have their major growth in the ocean and for that reason do not absorb as much of the PCB's.

The State has banned all fishing north of Troy and all commercial fishing, except for shad, south of it. The reason is the PCB's which continue to be poured into the river each day by General Electric plants.

Axelrod explained that both the Health Dept. and the Environmental Conservation have been working closely in the PCB case. PCB's can cause skin diseases and have been blamed

for functional symptoms in Japan. Toxic manifestations are definitely shown, he said.

He also said no one knows or is willing to guess how long the river will be off-limits to fishermen. "PCB's are a persistent chemical," he said.

He suggested that people who plan on eating herring from the river get in touch with EnCon people who are doing the monitoring of fish. There is an EnCon monitoring station in Catskill where fish are taken from the river and studied.

He said communities taking drinking water from the river face no problem because the amount of PCB in the water is only one part per billion; in fish, however, it is several hundred parts per million. Fish also on the bottom where the material is concentrated and the PCB's pass on up through the food chain, Dr. Axelrod said.

DUMPING CONTINUES

Bob McManus of En Con said a hearing officer for En Con issued a preliminary report finding GE in violation of En Con law, and asking the firm to

plan on correcting the situation. Hearings will be resumed on remedies as soon as GE comes up with a plan, he said.

En Con has banned commercial fishing except for shad and sturgeon, because no adequate data can be collected until the run starts.

En Con said the order includes herring but does not apply to individuals, although there is a prohibition against selling fish taken from the river. Commissioner Ogden Reid, he said, "feels you should not eat any fish from the river, including eels." He also said it could conceivably be dangerous to pets, thus eliminating the thrifty practice of angling for Puss's dinner.

McManus said the impact of PCB's on humans is not well-documented yet. It can interfere with the reproductive process and cause miscarriages in mink, he said; it can also be cancer producing to rats and is toxic to aquatic life.

The question of reparations by the company will be brought out at future hearings, he said.