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Fileted Fish Are Safest

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Often times, I as most outdoorsmen, have been fed up to the gills with the Corp. of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies.

After second thoughts, perhaps we should be grateful, especially to the EPA for awakening us to the dangers that exist not only to ourselves but to the great outdoors that we so thoroughly enjoy.

A couple of weeks ago at a conference in Chicago, we received a warning regarding chemical pollutions affecting our Lake Michigan fish. It's getting to the point where eating Lake Michigan fish may become harmful to our health.

I appreciate the warning that the condition does exist, but I wish they would be more specific as to which of our industries is the biggest offender. If sports or conservation groups had this information they could help attack the problem at its roots.

We've made a personal survey with regional fishermen all to many are "doubting Thomases." If they can't see it, they don't believe it. If it is not visible to the marked eye it just doesn't exist.

Scientists at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin have made tests and confirm the EPA's findings to a certain degree. They, however, show a bit more optimism than do most governmental agencies.

PCB's or polychlorinated biphenyls, are toxic industrial chemicals which are rapidly being dispersed throughout the world. In the midwest, contamination is mostly found in Lake Michigan fish, especially the larger salmon and lake trout. The fish readily absorb the PCB's from the water through their gills, fins and skin. PCB's tend to accumulate within the fatty tissues of the fish. The larger trout and salmon have much more fatty tissue than do their smaller relatives, hence the more concern regarding the large fish.

Fortunately, the P.C.B. content of large trout and salmon can be reduced by careful cleaning and cooking. Since P.C.B's tend to accumulate in fat, anglers should remove as much fat as possible when cleaning the fish. Proper fileting will remove the belly portion, the skin and the meat just under the fish's lateral line.

The idea is to remove as much fat as possible. Tests have shown that the fat contains as much as ten times more P.C.B. than does the leaner parts of the fish.

It is advisable to bake, barbeque or broil the fish over the frying method since these cooking methods will also help remove the P.C.B's

Generally all the scientists agree that an average of one full meal of fish a week is considered safe.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been studying several small fishing harrists in Michigan. Studies show that a good portion of their food consumption has been fish for many years. No ill effects or health problems have been found as a result of a more than normal diet of Lake Michigan fish.

But I'm going to play it safe. From now on, all my large fish will be fileted.

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