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Wisconsin Warns of PCB in Fish

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MADISON, Wis., April 21—State officials posted 120 miles of prize fishing rivers in eastern Wisconsin today after researchers from the State Department of Natural Resources discovered heavy concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCB's, in the Sheboygan River and two of its tributaries, the Onion and the Mullet Rivers.

State personnel spread out along the river today, posting signs that warned that fish taken from the rivers should not be eaten.

Almost 100 miles of the Sheboygan River has been posted and major sections of the two smaller tributaries. The river empties into Lake Michigan at Sheboygan, 52 miles north of Milwaukee.

Not the First Time

The state researchers, who found the PCB's in the river in a routine check recently, called the concentration the highest ever found in Wisconsin waters. A recheck was ordered, and when the results were tabulated earlier this week, Anthony Earl, Secretary of the resources department, ordered the waters posted.

The source of the pollution is not known, Mr. Earl said. Other officials said that it appeared that Lake Michigan was not a source, since the coho salmon entering the Sheboygan to spawn appeared to be safe.

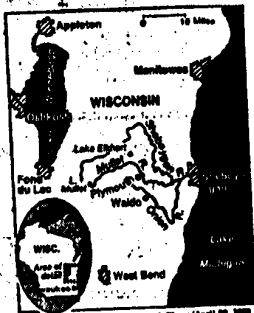
This is not the first time that PCB's have been discovered in Wisconsin rivers said Jeffrey Smoller, public information officer for the resources department. But previous chemical pollution has been "nowhere what we have discovered in the Sheboygan River," he added.

Compounds Used Widely

Mr. Smoller also said that the source was unknown. "It could be an industrial source or it could be from a landfill site or from illegal dumping," he said.

He said that the state dispatched special crews along the rivers today to post signs warning of the pollution. Warnings were posted between the Sheboygan Marsh Dam and the Lake Michigan Coast Guard station, on the Onion River from Waldo Dam to its junction with the Sheboygan and on the Mullet River between Plymouth and its junction with the Sheboygan River.

The chemicals, valuable as a flame retardant, were manufactured in the United



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States from 1929 to 1965 before deleterious effects were discovered. The compounds have been used widely in electric wiring, insulation, plasticizers, hydraulic fluids, lubricants, paints and other products.

Laboratory rats treated with the chemicals have developed tumors, and the Federal Food and Drug Administration considers long-term exposure risky to humans.

State officials said that the levels measured in fish from the Sheboygan County rivers were far greater than the 10 parts per million that alarmed Federal researchers in 1975 when they tested trout and salmon from Lake Michigan. A test of various kinds of fish from the Sheboygan showed an average of 128 parts per million.

Last October state officials warned fishermen to limit themselves to one meal of high-fat fish a week from PCB-contaminated waters near Green Bay north of Sheboygan and along sections of the Mississippi River on Wisconsin's western border. Children and pregnant women especially were advised not to eat contaminated fish.

Anders Andren, a University of Wisconsin professor, has calculated that 98 percent of Lake Michigan's contamination is carried through the air. Scientists said that PCB's could get into streams from atmospheric fallout, leaching from dumps, sludge disposal and treated sewage effluent.