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Salmon Safe To Eat Once A Week...

DEC Seeks Source Of PCB In Lake

The State Health Department said last week that it's safe to eat salmon from Lake Ontario once a week, but the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation stuck to his warning to the public not to eat them at all.

The public disagreement did nothing to dispel the uncertainty of local officials that began two weeks ago when the New York Times reported that conservation Commissioner Ogden Reid advised people not to eat Lake Ontario salmon because of high levels of a chemical called PCB found in the fish.

Although there were several reports from local officials that the report was not true, some of which were printed in this newspaper, the DEC has never denied it and in fact has continued to say that Reid thinks the fish should "Not be consumed." Due to an editorial decision, this newspaper omitted that quotation from a spokesman for Reid in last week's story.

'We don't want to encourage people to fish for salmon if there's even a slender danger involved," said Assemblyman John Zagame last Friday. "But we don't want to be scared unnecessarily. This

Dr. Herdman said Health Department officials had met with officials of the Department of Environmental Conservation last Friday and had agreed that henceforth the D&C would confine itself to measuring and reporting the PCB level in fish, and the Health Department would decide whether or not eating the fish was safe for people's health.

He said the DEC had agreed with the Health Department that it was all right to eat salmon once a week. But a spokesman for Commissioner Reid, informed of Dr. Herdman's remarks, said Reid still advised the public not to eat salmon.

Michael Duttweiler of the Sea Grant office in Oswego said the office was waiting for a firm word from Albany. Sea Grant has been advising local officials on how to prepare for the onslaught of fishermen that are expected in the county as salmon return to the lake over the next few years. The appearance of the fish in the Salmon and Oswego Rivers attracted hundreds of fishermen earlier this spring.

He also said his firm used a "very small quantity"and that none of it was released to the river. "we're very careful," he said.

The New York Times had reported on Aug. 8 that PCB is banned in Great Britain and Canada. The DEC spokesman said he did not know whether this was true, but he did say his agency had not asked Monsanto for the names of Canadian customers.

The DEC is testing more fish for PCB and expects to have more data in a few weeks according to Zagame. Meanwhile, the Assemblyman said, he isn't going to eat more than one meal of fish per week. "I wouldn't anyway," he said, 'because I'm not all that crazy about fish."

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