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Lake Pepin fishing gets green light

RED WING (AP) — U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials have told fishermen they may resume limited commercial carp fishing on Lake Pepin.

Fishing on Lake Pepin has virtually stopped since discovery of a toxic industrial chemical in the fish two months ago.

A spokesman for the FDA told fishermen if they limited their catches of fish to five pounds or less they will likely be able to stay within limits for the chemical known as PCB.

Mile Sorensen, a Bay City fisherman and wholesaler, said the five-pound limit means fishermen will be able to keep about 70 per cent of the fish they normally catch.

The size restriction also means that only a handful of the lake's estimated 35 to 40 fishermen will benefit from the FDA go-ahead.

Darryl Brown, chief of the laboratory for the Minneapolis FDA office, said it appears most fish under five pounds meet the FDA standard of less than five parts per million of the toxic chemical known as PCB.

The FDA cannot ban fishing on a lake, but it can stop inter-state sale of foods that do not meet its standards.

Brown suggested that fish dealers should test their shipments for the PCB level before sending them to markets on the East Coast and in the South.

Brown said the five-pound limit is not absolute. He said some fish above that level meet FDA standards and some below it do not.

"We had to give them something to go by and five pounds looked like a meaningful point," Brown said.

Brown and other state and federal officials plan to meet sometime next month to review the results of their fish sampling program. They will review PCB concentrations in fish, water and sediment from along the Mississippi in an attempt to pinpoint where the chemical may be coming from.

Sorenson planned to resume fishing Monday, adding:

"We'll be glad to go fishing. It's (the five-pound limit) going to make it a little tougher."

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