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PCB, DDT levels drop in Great Lakes fish

While Michigan officials have found dramatic drops in the levels of DDT and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in fish from the Great Lakes, there will be no immediate change in the state's health warnings against consumption of certain fish species from state waters. That's the upshot of last week's meeting of the state Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), Public Health Dept. and Agriculture Dept.

The state is reluctant to ease the consumption warnings until more fish have been tested.

According to John Hesse, chief of DNR's office of toxic materials, PCB and DDT levels were "down so far that we could hardly believe our eyes." In 39 fish samples, all but one had PCBs below the federal 5 part-per-million level. Mercury and dieldrin levels remained steady.

Stiffer laws, new-water-treatment processes, and bans on some compounds presumably contributed to the improved levels. □

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