PCB Level Is Highest In Hudson

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ALBANY—Fish taken from the Hudson River at Poughkeepsie have the highest level of PCB's of any point monitored in the nation, according to a Department of Interior official.

David L. Stalling, a research chemist with the Interior's Fish Pesticide Laboratory in Columbia, Mo., said in prepared testimony at a hearing conducted by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, "The results from our PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) analyses established that fish from the Hudson River were the most highly polluted among those sampled from the United States Monitoring Stations."

Currently, there are 150 testing stations throughout the nation but the only one on the Hudson River is at 1974 and 1975 are still being processed, he said.

According to Stalling, goldfish monitored at Poughkeepsie have about twice the levels as fish taken from the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers, where the nation's second and third highest levels of PCB concentrations in goldfish, respectively, have been measured.

He said PCB levels found in many other non-industrial parts of the country are about 100 fold lower, ranging from .01 to 5.0 ppm. According to the federal Food and Drug Administration fish containing more than 5.0 ppm are considered unsafe to eat and are banned from interstate commerce.

David J. Hansen, an aquatic biologist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's research laboratory at Gulf Breeze, Fla., said at the hearing Monday that the type of PCB the General Electric Co. is dumping into the Hudson

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River can be "acutely toxic" to some forms of aquatic life.

Hansen contradicted G.E.'s claim that the type of PCB the company discharges, known as Aroclor 1016, is a safe form of PCB. He said that this form can be deadly to organisms that live in the Hudson when found in concentrations of 100 parts per billion and said many oysters, brown shrimp and grass shrimp are killed by levels of 10 parts per billion in flowing water.

By comparison, the concentrations of PCB's in Hudson River water at Poughkeepsie has been measured at 1,100 ppb and the treated water flowing from the tap as high as 100 ppb. The levels of PCB's in Poughkeepsie's drinking water is then about 10 times higher than the level needed to kill some oysters and shrimp.

The hearing on PCB's is being conducted to determine whether GE should halt its discharges of this toxic chemical into the Hudson at Fort Edwards and Hudson Falls. The state is demanding that the company halt all discharges by next Sept. 30, a date the company maintains is not economically feasible to meet.

PCB's, a chemical simmilar in composition to DDT, has been found to cause cancer and reproductive failures in certain laboratory animals.

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