Pollutant found in area of Coosa

United Press International

ATLANTA — Large new quantities of a deadly pollutant have been found for the first time in game animals harvested in and around Rome, Ga., and the Coosa River area toward the Alabama line, the Department of Natural Resources revealed Thursday.

David Cranshaw, DNR director of information and education, said a report from game and fish officials indicated the high counts of polychlorinated biphenyl, commonly known as PCB, were found in semidomesticated ducks and woodcocks that live year-round in that area.

Of four woodcocks tested, one had a count of 28 parts per million, another 26 parts per million and the other counts were 11 and 7.8 parts per million. The Food and Drug Administration considers any PCB count higher than five dangerous for humans.

PCB is an organic substance used in the manufacture of electric capacitors and transformers and is suspected of causing liver and gall bladder cancer in humans.

Two mallard ducks tested showed counts of 11½ parts per million.

Cranshaw said game and fish officers would issue an advisory to hunters in the North Georgia area that game animals should not be eaten by humans.

"I want to stress the animals which contained the large amounts of PCB live in the area year-round and are not migratory. We will survey the migratory birds very quickly and issue a report," Cranshaw said.

He said officials would be "very surprised" if any new traces are found elsewhere in the state since the DNR was "quite sure this is the same thing as the fish."

Early last fall, large amounts of PCB was discovered in fish in the Coosa River and commercial fishing was banned indefinitely. That ban is still in effect.

Cranshaw said the fish problem was linked to sediment in and around a general electric plant officials believe the latest incident is similar. He said the PCB problem is "what come out (from the plant) in the past, not now."

"Other animals in the area probably won't have a trace of PCB — this is all related to the food 'chain' process," he said.

According to Cranshaw, PCB collects in sediment in the bottom of water and is absorbed by insects and worms. The insects and worms are eaten by fish, transferring the PCB to the fish. If the same fish are eaten by humans, illness follows.

"That will be what we're aiming at. Keeping people from eating the fish or game animals with PCB," Cranshaw said.

MONS 050826