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Chemicals Infect Lake Pepin Fish

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Doubt about the future of fishing in Lake Pepin was expressed at a public hearing last week in Wabasha, Minn. Officials said angling could become a national problem requiring attention from congress.

High concentrations of polychlorinated biphenols in Lake Pepin was compared to concentrations of DDT in Lake Michigan, which affected sport fishing in the 1960s.

Federal food and drug administration recently halted shipments of carp from Lake Pepin to New York because they contained up to 70 parts per million of PCB. They are chemicals known to cause cancer and deformed births among laboratory animals. Allowable federal level of PCB is five parts per million.

About 80 persons crowded into the school at Wabasha to hear reports by a Great River Environmental Action Team and Southeastern Minnesota Assistance and Planning organization. Apparently, PCB concentrations are in the lake itself, because levels downstream are satisfactory. PCB is a non-flammable fluid used as insulation in transformers, heat exchangers and hydraulic equipment.

Government officials have had no luck locating the source of pollution, although it is believed to be coming from the Twin Cities. Search has been conducted by a single two man team from Minnesota pollution control agency.

Commercial fishing in Lake Pepin has stopped. R. E. Hogue of Lake Pepin Fisheries says he intends to continue in business with carp from other streams. Idle fishermen, who took 7,000 to 8,000 lbs. of carp a week from the lake, are baffled about their future.

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