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Fishermen attack government inaction

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The Hudson River Fishermen's Association is finding governmental agencies increasingly reluctant to take up environmental causes at a time when the Hudson River fisheries face one of their greatest dangers.

Approximately 30 members of the active anti-pollution group met Sunday afternoon at St. Mary's and St. John's School in Peekskill to discuss its legal battles and the recently publicized threat of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) pollution in the river.

LIVING UP to their reputation for willingness to take on all comers, the members voted to have the HRFA attorneys investigate whether the Army Corps of Engineers may be held in contempt of court. HRFA officials contend that the corps has not conducted a court-ordered environmental impact study of two Hudson River power plants although the deadline for the study was last year.

Failure to conduct them study was an example of what three attorneys told the membership was increasing reluctance of governmental agencies to pursue environmental issues. Discussing relations with the agencies, were Susan Chasis and Ross Sandler of New York City and Nicholas Robinson of 258 Kelburne Ave., North Tarrytown.

"We're really seeing erosion of all the work we've done over the years," Robinson said.

He said the common excuse is that anti-pollution controls are uneconomical. But, he said, "no one's telling the truth" because the environment will eventually have to be cleaned up and "it will be taxed against us."

With PCB concentration in Hudson fish running as much as 100 times higher than allowed by the Food and Drug Administration, Boyle said, the situation is "not cheery at all."

Pond said PCB is prevalent throughout the world. "It's in everybody's blood and there is a level accepted as being normal," he said.

THE MOST severe effect of PCB is that it causes sterility, with cases recorded among Long Island ducks, and wildlife.

"We're at the top of the food chain so whatever's in there we get," Pond said. "Unfortunately the timewe find out is when we stop reproducing, and pretty soon we will stop reproducing; and pretty soon we will stop reproducing," he predicted.

Tax dollars are financing research into the effects of PCB, found by the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in high concentrations in Hudson River striped bass and other fish. The DEC is holding hearings to determine if General Electric should be forced to stop dumping PCB into the river upstate where the odorless liquid is used in the manufacture of electrical equipment.

There was a grim report on Pcb pollution from an HRFA founder, Robert Boyle of Finney Farm, Croton, and Robert Pond of South Attleboro, Mass., who heads Stripers Unlimited.

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