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Hudson bass taint feared

By GERALD S. BUDGAR

The state Department of Environmental Conservation is monitoring the Hudson River for possible contamination of striped bass by an industrial waste that could be harmful to humans.

A departmental spokesman said Friday the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Food and Drug Administration informed EnCon that quantities of polychlorinated bi-phenyls (PCBs) had recently been detected in Hudson River striped bass.

The spokesman added that no official health warning was now being distributed to persons who might eat Hudson River striped bass, but added that the potential PCB health hazard to humans "is not clear and is under study in cooperation with the state Department of Health."

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One source said the contaminant was noted in the river "north of Albany" in recent weeks, and EnCon reports having recorded PCB concentration in fish as early as 1972.

The chemical accumulates in the flesh of fish and may cause serious contamination of the fish, but is not usually fatal.

The results of the EnCon water monitoring program "are expected to be available within two weeks," a departmental statement said.

The PCB problem was raised by Commissioner Ogden Reid at the state health research council meeting last week, the statement added.

In a recent memorandum to field officers, EnCon Deputy Commissioner Theodore L. Hullar said the department should have acted "much earlier" to "remedy this situation, to prevent its recurrence in the future, and to abate the pollution."

The department is attempting to determine the origin of the pollutant, which is a synthetic organic material that "has a variety of industrial uses," the departmental spokesman said.

While the EPA information passed to EnCon does not indicate any accumulation of PCB in fish life other than striped bass, the agency is netting a variety of fish species to determine just how extensive the contamination might be.

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