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Road Oil Possible Pollution Source

ROCHESTER, Minn. (AP) — A Pollution Control Agency (PCA) official said the application of oil, once used in electrical transformers, on dirt roads could be the source of the Polychlorinated Biphenol (PCB) pollution detected in the Zumbro, Cannon and Whitewater Rivers in southeastern Minnesota.

Joel Schilling, a PCA water quality specialist, said Thursday that the reuse of such oil on roads, or as a fuel, could account for the intermittent levels of PCB detected by monitoring equipment. He also said it would be difficult to determine if transformer oil containing PCB would be included in road applications. However, he added, if the matter contained PCB, it could account for part of the pollution since the route from road application to the river could come from normal runoff.

If PCB-type fluids are included in the collections, according to the (PCA) official, this could account for present levels of PCB on such nonindustrial streams as the Whitewater.

PCB is sometimes used in certain types of electrical transformers. And, used transformer oil is frequently collected along with used crankcase oil for blacktopping use on roads and a fuel.

Schilling also said PCB is difficult to destroy and that because of its expense it can be returned to the manufacturer for reprocessing.

Monitoring records of the Zumbro River show no detectable levels of PCB from July 1973 through March 1974, but the May 21, 1974 record shows 3.84 parts per billion (ppb) with a drop of 1.94 ppb in July 1974.

The Cannon River had a reading of 1 ppb to July 1973 and on May 21, 1974 it rose to 1.74 ppb dropping to undetectable levels by July 1974.

The Whitewater near Utica had a July 1974 reading of 1.2 ppb dropping to undetectable levels at Beaver.

Highest record on the Mississippi River below Lake Pepin was in the LaCrosse, Wis. area where one reading was 12.3 ppb. Readings at the Alma Dam were below detectable levels.

PCA and U.S. Food and Drug Drug Administration officials at Minneapolis agreed the scattered patterns indicate isolated occurrences.

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