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Seek source of PCB in pike, walleyes

The industrial source of high levels of PCB poisons in pike and walleyes is being traced by the Dept. of Natural Resources.

Pike taken from the Kalamazoo River, Lake Macatawa (Holland) and Muskegon river contain as much as 14 ppm PCB's, DNR hatcheries chief Jack Hammond reports. Walleyes taken from the Muskegon and Jordan River had about 5 ppm.

The pike and walleyes were captured and stripped of their eggs, for rearing and later planting in Michigan lakes and streams. Nearly all of the pike eggs died. About 30 percent of the walleyes survived, Hammond reports.

Researchers have found that as little as five-tenths of one ppm of PCB's will kill trout eggs, according to Hammond. He points out that the actual PCB's in the pike and walleye eggs would be much higher than that found in the flesh of the adult fish. The actual eggs were not monitored for PCB's.

The highest concentration of PCB's was found in the Kalamazoo River pike--14 parts per million. The Lake Macatawa fish had 5.23 ppm, and the Muskegon River pike had 4.3 ppm.

DNR water resources division personnel are attempting to trace the source of the PCB's to industries along the rivers or on Lake Michigan, Hammond says. If they are identified, they will be ordered to halt discharging PCB's.

To obtain eggs from non-poisoned pike, the DNR took about 18 million eggs from pike in Bay de Noc and other Upper Peninsula waters. Fry from these eggs were placed in artificial pike spawning marshes, operated by the DNR.

About 27.5 million walleye eggs were obtained from New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. The federal government gave the state a million walleye fry. These are reared in ponds until fingerling size and then planted in lakes.

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