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Lake Trout

CHICAGO AP - Trout stocked in Lake Michigan are failing to spawn, a survey by the Illinois Department of Conservation indicates.

Harry Wight, a fishery biologist for the department, said today the failure could be the result of stocking techniques or industrial chemicals dumped into the lake.

Lake trout were once native to Lake Michign but died off in the mid-1950s because of overfishing and the introduction of the predatory sea lamprey with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Illinois has stocked the lake with about 2 million trout since 1967. A year-long ban on taking of the fish was instituted July 1 to encourage the trout to reproduce.

In an autumn survey, Wight said, only 50 fish taken from eight locations along the Illinois lake front did not have the clipped fins, the marking of the stocked fish. And nearly all of those were taken from Great Lakes Harbor near North Chicago.

One problem could be that the trout go back to the area where they were dropped into the lake to spawn, instead of heading for offshore reefs, Wight said.

All of the trout stocked in Illinois between 1967 and 1970 were dumped in tht harbor, and most of those taken in the survey were from the 1969 stock, the biologist said, adding that the water quality in the harbor and muddy bottom are poor breeding areas.

Wight said also that large amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls PCB have been found in the bigger trout and might also have an adverse effect of the reproduction capacity of the fish.

PCB is a chemical compound used in industry which lately has been suspected of causing cancer.

The biologist said none of the trout taken in the survey had lamprey wounds, indicating that this predator is no longer a problem.

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