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Stocked trout failing to spawn

CHICAGO (AP) — The Illinois Department of Conservation reports a survey shows trout stocked in Lake Michigan are failing to spawn.

Harry Wight, a conservation department biologist, said the halt in spawning could stem from stocking techniques or industrial chemicals dumped into the lake.

Once native to Lake Michigan, the trout died off in the mid-1960s because of over-fishing and the introduction of the predatory sea lamprey with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

About two million trout have been placed in the lake by the state since 1967. A year-long ban on taking of the fish was instituted July 1 to encourage the trout to reproduce.

Wight said the survey taken last fall showed only 50 fish taken from eight locations along the Illinois lakefront did not have the clipped fins, the marking of the stocked fish. And nearly all of these were taken from Great Lakes Harbor near North Chicago.

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

All of the trout stocked in Illinois between 1967 and 1970 were dumped in the 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.

Large amount of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) have been found in the bigger trout and might also have an adverse effect on the reproduction capacity of the fish, he said.

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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