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Complete Ban Needed

Anyone who fished off Sheboygan harbor or off any harbor on the Great Lakes last summer must feel great concern over a report given last week by Nathaniel P. Reed, assistant secretary of the interior.

Reed said during an anti-pollution conference in Chicago that an industrial chemical known as PCB should be banned nationally. PCB is short for polychlorinated biphenyl, a hydrocarbon that was widely used in industrial applications until the early 1970s. Since then its sale has been limited to the manufacturers of electrical transformers and capacitors.

But Reed's report indicates that a complete ban is necessary. He said high levels of PCBs have been found in the fish in the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers in the midwest and other rivers in the east and west. PCBs have even been found in the Yukon River in Alaska. It seeps into the water from discarded equipment.

The Food and Drug Administration already bans the commercial sale of any fish with a PCB content of 5 parts per million. One paper presented at the Chicago conference showed that all Lake Michigan coho salmon and lake trout tested for PCB content by the Fish and Wildlife Service last year exceeded the FDA accepted levels. Dangerous levels have also been found in the roe of Great Lakes fish.

Federal and local governments have spent more than $175 million in the past 17 years to replenish the fisheries decimated by the sea lamprey. The restocking program this year is estimated at $18 million. Despite these great expenditures, Reed contends that the lifespan of the Great Lakes fishery will be limited to a single generation. We quote from his address at the Chicago conference:

"Nothing short of immediate drastic action will enable us to raise anything better than lakes full of eunuchized fish."

It is not only a matter of endangering the health of consumers. There is the added question of spending great sums of money on a restocking program that cannot succeed.

As Reed said, nothing short of immediate drastic action will remedy the situation.

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