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Official warns of 'eunuchized fish'

CHICAGO (UPI) — A top federal fish and wildlife official says industrial chemicals known as PCBs should be banned because they are destroying wildlife resources and threatening the nation's health.

Nathaniel P. Reed, assistant secretary of the interior for fish, wildlife and parks, said, "our rivers and streams are sick" and vast food and wildlife resources already have been contaminated by PCBs.

Reed, addressing a national conference on PCBs hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies, said polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, could wipe out fishing in such areas as the Great Lakes within a generation.

"Nothing short of immediate drastic action will enable us to raise anything better than lakes full of eunuchized fish," Reed said. "With the present preponderance of PCBs, the lifespan of the Great Lakes fishery will be limited to a single generation."

PCBs have been widely used as insulating fluids in certain electronic transformers and capacitors and in hydraulic fluids, lubricants, heat transfer fluids, and as plasticizers in adhesives, sealants, printing inks, coatings and waxes.

Reed said besides the Great Lakes, high levels of PCBs have been found in the fish of the Hudson River, the Merrimac and Connecticut Rivers of the Atlantic Coast, the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers of the Midwest, the Columbia in the Northwest, the Sacramento in the West, the Rio Grande and other Gulf Coast streams and even the Yukon in Alaska.

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