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PCBs Problem Not Solved

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The problem of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Wisconsin waterways is far from solved, a University of Wisconsin researcher told the state Coastal Zone Council Tuesday.

James Allen, a UW pathologist doing research on the effects of PCBs on monkeys, told the council that the toxic chemical will be around for a long time.

"We still have this material in our environment, and we're likely to have it around for a considerable time," he said.

PCBs are a complex chemical acting something like DDT. Research has shown they can have a damaging effect on reproduction in birds, mink and monkeys.

At one time, Allen said, federal and state regulatory agencies had thought the problem was under control in Wisconsin, but levels of the chemical in Lake Michigan have not gone down.

Allen said his research has indicated that PCBs have serious and sometimes fatal effects on monkeys, although he knows of no human death or illness traced to the chemical in Wisconsin.

But he added that he would be concerned if anyone ate fish from Lake Michigan as a steady diet.

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