Democrat and Chronicle
ROCHESTER, N. Y.
D. 144,897 SUN. 221,081

DEC 2 1975

U.S. to test water for PCB

By SALLY BUCKLEY

The Rochester office of the U.S. Environmental Protection agency plans to test industrial waste dumped into local waters for a harmful chemical that threatens fish, birds and humans.

The chemical, called PCB, causes serious skin diseases, miscarriages and birth defects when large quantities are ingested. Fish in Lake Ontario, the Hudson River, Cayuga Lake and other waters throughout the nation, have been found to contain more than the maximum allowable five parts per million.

Kenneth H. Walker, director of the Rochester office of the environmental agency, said he didn't know of any industrial users of the chemical in the Rochester area. But the agency, which checks effluents to make sure industries are discharging only what their permits allow, plans to test for PCBs early next year as a precaution, Walker said.

The chemical also accumulates in animals. A study by Cornell University scientists published in 1972 reported that PCB concentrations of up to 30 parts per million were found in Cayuga Lake trout. Dr. Donald J. Lisk, one of the scientists, said the research showed that the older the fish, the higher the concentration of PCB.

The U.S. Department of the Interior reportedly has found PCB concentrations in almost every bird sampled since 1970.

PCBs are chlorinated hydrocarbon compounds used by industries because of their resistance to heat. The chemical was previously used in many products — carbonless copying paper, paints, brake linings — but because of environmental concern, the only U.S. manufacturer voluntarily restricted sales of the chemical in 1971 to manufacturers of certain electronic equipment.

A spokesman for the State Department of Environmental Conservation, which warned the public last September against eating striped bass from the Hudson River and salmon from Lake Ontario because of high PCB levels, speculated that the chemical enters many bodies of water through leaching from landfills.

The chemical also is dumped in. The state is seeking an order to require General Electric Co. to reduce the 30 pounds of PCB it discharges a day into the Hudson River to zero by September 1976.

In the Rochester area, the conservation department last summer found concentrations of PCB in fish in the Genesee River, the Erie Canal near Clyde and Lake Ontario. But only the Lake Ontario fish exceeded the 5 parts per million safety standard set by the U.S. government, the spokesman said. He refused to say exactly how much PCB Lake Ontario fish contained.

Delta Labs Inc., a nonprofit environmental lab in Rochester, also is studying PCB in fish, E. Grant Pike, the lab's research director, said. Tests on four Lake Ontario fish, with eight more to be studied, showed a wide range of PCB levels — from a sunfish, with less than 1 part per million to a sucker, with 8 parts per million, he said.

MONS 033216