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U.S. discovers high toxic levels in nation's waters

By [illegible]
Post Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Monitoring of the nation's water sources [illegible] for third highest [illegible] (PCBs) — has [illegible] the Food and

Toxic industrial chemical found in nation's water sources

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Drug (FDA) inspectors found some common foods contaminated with the highly toxic substance.

However, both the Department of Interior and FDA officials said no determination of a "safe level" of PCB for humans has been "generally accepted to date."

Reporting on the results of an interagency monitoring program for PCB and other chemicals, Hans J. Crump-Wiesner, chief chemist for the U.S. Geological Survey, said Tuesday:

"During the past two years, we have analyzed over 1,600 water and sediment samples from streams and lakes throughout the United States . . .

"We expected to find traces of PCB at sampling points near industrial centers, but we were surprised to find detectable levels in samples from 17 of 33 states covered by the sampling," he said.

"We found PCB in clear water, some newly developed sand [illegible] lakes part of one U.S. Geological Survey 'benchmark' stations [illegible] in relatively remote areas essentially unaffected by man," Crump-Wiesner continued.

The monitoring program took 160 samples in Texas waters and turned up concentrations of PCB in eight. The concentrations varied from 0.1 of a microgram per liter to three micrograms per liter.

Two hundred thirty-one samplings in Florida yielded 12 concentrations ranging from 0.1-2.1 micrograms per liter. New York had the highest: 31 concentrations out of 103 samples with a range of 0.1-4 micrograms per liter. New York and Florida rank one and two in concentrations.

In addition to the concentrations in the water, the survey also found lake and stream sediments "to have relatively high concentrations of PCB residues . . .

"One out of every five bottom sediment samples collected in 33 states contained significant concentrations of PCB," said Crump-Wiesner.

Of 104 sediment samples taken in Texas, 22 had detectable levels of PCB varying from 7.5 to 200 micrograms per kilogram of sediment, said the report. Florida's range of 5 to 4,200 micrograms per kilogram was the nation's highest.

FDA generally limits consumption of PCB in foods to 5,000 micrograms per kilogram (the equivalent of 5 pounds per one million pounds).

As a result of this and other studies, the Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a maximum limit of one one-hundredth of a microgram per liter of water (one pound in 50 billion quarts) of rivers and lakes.

First produced about 45 years ago, PCB compounds have become increasingly useful in such industrial applications as paints, inks, dies, dust control, electronic components and so forth.

"Although previous investigations have generally been concerned with pcb contamination from accidental spills in industrial areas, this study was an attempt to document the general distribution of the compounds in our waterways," Crump-Wiesner said.

"PCBs can enter the aquatic environment by atmospheric fallout, from low temperature incineration of solid wastes, from spills or from sewage and industrial outfalls," he said.

These are the places in Texas where PCB was found.

In water:

Canadian River near Amarillo.
Brazos River at Richmond (two occurrences).
Cypress Creek at Cypress.
Guadalupe River below Victoria (two occurrences).
Trinity River below Dallas.
Chocolate Bayou at Port Lavaca.

In sediment:

Guadalupe River below Victoria (two occurrences).
Trinity River below Dallas (five occurrences).
Medina River near San Antonio.
Neches River at Evadale.
Trinity River near Romayor (six occurrences).
Canadian River near Amarillo.
San Antonio River near Elmendorf.
Mission River at Refugio.
Nueces River near Three Rivers.
Middle Bayou at [illegible] in Harris County.
Hunting Bayou at [illegible]
Buffalo Bayou at [illegible]