

High PCB Levels Recorded in State ; Region is Uncontaminated

by Beth Burgeon

Hardford - Dangerous levels of the toxic chemical compound PCB have been found in striped bass all along the Connecticut shore recently, but so far the Mystic area seems to be safe.

PCBs - polychlorinated biphenyls - are heat-resistant industrial chemicals that have been linked with cancer, skin disorders and reproductive failure. They have been found throughout the state in varying concentrations.

The highest readings came from Fairfield's Black Rock Harbor with results of 3.7 parts per million (ppm). The other readings which exceeded the federal limit were from the Connecticut River at Saybrook, where six fish tested together showed levels of 3.1 ppm.

The temporary federal limit is five ppm, but the U.S. government is con-

sidering lowering that standard to only two ppm, which is the current level in Canada.

Most of the fish tested would exceed the lower level, and could result in warnings to the public "or even closing that area to fishing," according to Robert Cosgrove of the Department of Health (DOH).

Striped bass from the Mystic-Groton area migrate mainly from the Chesapeake Bay and are relatively uncontaminated, although there are no recent DOH test results, said Robert Jones, the biologist who collects the test samples.

Fish that have turned up with high readings elsewhere migrate through the Sound from the Hudson River in New York, but have only been known to swim as far east as the Connecticut River, not reaching this area.

New York officials banned striped bass from the Hudson last fall because discharges from a General Electric plant at Glens Falls, N. Y. were producing levels of up to 100 ppm per fish.

The Mystic area has also been relatively free from industries that have used PCBs in the past, according to DEP surveys.

The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reports that the PCB levels have already "peaked and dissipated" since Monsanto, the nation's only producer of the substance, voluntarily restricted its sales in 1971 when the dangers became known, and many other industries discontinued use.

In the past 40 years, however, the company has produced over 400,000 tons of the chemical that was widely used in such products as plastic, epoxy glue, lubricants and inks and in electrical products. Uses are now restricted to closed-system transformers.

The compound is practically indestructible, which means that the majority of all PCBs ever used remain in the environment from past discharges, or when the products are disposed of.

A bill that would ban the sale, use and manufacture of PCBs suffered an unexpected setback in the House of Representatives last week.

The measure that was slated to receive unanimous approval was sent to the Appropriations Committee when the Depart-

ment of Environmental Protection (DEP) demanded \$30,000 in state funding which they said they would need to enforce the bill.

The bill would provide for immediate prohibition of sale and manufacture of the substance, and would place progressive restrictions on the concentrations allowed in products over the next four years. The measure would also require highly controlled systems to contain and dispose of the product.

Fredette claimed.

that the measure would require extensive monitoring of state industries, and said the Department would need additional equipment and staff that would amount to \$30,000 the first year and \$30,000 every additional year that the program was in existence.

The bill is being temporarily halted until the DEP and the legislature can come to an agreement on the "overall intent," according to Rep. Thom Serrani (D-Stamford), who introduced the measure.

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