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Protecting the environment

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STATE SENATOR

Protecting the environment is a never-ending job in our state and nation.

Currently under study by Senate committees are two measures designed to restrict the use of PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) and pesticides. The bills have already received overwhelming House approval.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

The Senate Conservation Committee is currently reviewing a bill sharply restricting the use of PCBs, a poisonous industrial chemical that has become a major international pollution problem.

PCBs, which are used to insulate high-voltage power capacitators and in buildings' heating systems and factories' hydraulic systems, have been cited by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission as a serious source of water pollution.

PCBs have been found in Lake Michigan salmon at levels as high as 20 parts per million, four times the maximum allowed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration if the fish are to be sold.

The chemical interferes with the reproductive processes of many animals, including birds, whose eggs may have defective shells if they consume even tiny amounts.

In humans, PCBs affect liver function and can cause skin lesions.

The sole U.S. manufacturer of PCBs announced recently that it is phasing out manufacture of PCBs. The bill would eventually halt foreign manufacturers' sales of PCBs in Michigan.

PESTICIDE CONTROL

The Senate Agriculture Committee is currently studying the provisions of a bill to regulate pesticides and those who sell and use them in Michigan.

The legislation was introduced to bring Michigan's pesticide regulations in line with new federal requirements set forth in the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act of 1972.

The federal act directs all states who wish to continue use of certain pesticides to classify all pesticides into "general use" and-or "restricted use" categories and to certify applicators. As of October, 1976, only certified applicators will be permitted to buy and use restricted use pesticides which are approved by the State Department of Agriculture.

The bill also regulates the transporting, containing and labeling of pesticides and prohibits their use in an unsafe manner or for purposes other than previously approved.

Enforcement procedures are also provided for the misuse of pesticides, including appropriate court action and seizure of unlawful pesticides.

A Pesticide Advisory Committee would be created to advise the Director of the Agriculture Department in the administration of the provisions of the bill.

The bill has received the support of numerous public and private agencies and will likely be reported to the Senate floor for debate within the near future.