The plaintiffs filed suit to block the sales, contending that the Forest Service was required by NEPA to prepare a site-specific impact statement in addition to the regional impact statement.

The court ruled that preparation of site-specific statements on the four sales would be unreasonable and was not required.

A site-specific impact statement would only repeat unnecessarily the analysis of the regional impact statement, the court said.

Water Pollution

PCB CONTAMINATION OF GREAT LAKES MAY GROW DESPITE BAN, SAY SCIENTISTS

The contamination of the Great Lakes by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) may continue to increase in spite of the Environmental Protection Agency ban on further production or use of the chemicals, researchers said at an American Chemical Society seminar.

The researchers said the atmosphere is the major source PCBs presently entering the lake, and therefore, the contamination cannot be prevented by eliminating municipal and industrial discharges of PCBs into the lakes.

Thomas J. Murphy, of DePaul University, Chicago, said levels of PCBs found in Great Lakes fish have declined only slightly since the early 1970s, despite a great reduction in PCB use. He contrasted this with earlier experience with DDT. He said DDT levels in fish declined rapidly after the pesticide was banned.

Present concentrations of PCBs in many fish exceed the Food and Drug Administration limit of two parts per million, Murphy said. The FDA recently stayed the new two ppm tolerance.

Murphy said known pollution from municipal, industrial, and tributary sources does not seem to account for the present PCB levels in the Great Lakes. He said he and other researchers set out to determine whether fallout from the atmosphere could be an important source of PCB contamination.

They measured rates ranging from 15 to 75 grams per square kilometer per year at various points in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Assuming an average rate of 25 grams per square kilometer, Murphy said, the contribution of PCBs from the atmosphere would be about 3,300 pounds per year in the two lakes. This is greater than the contribution from all other known sources, he said.

Murphy said the PCBs in the atmosphere probably come from such sources as municipal incinerators and evaporation from landfills, from PCBs discarded in the past, and from PCBs used in paints and as preservatives.

Lake Superior

S. J. Eisenreich of the University of Minnesota reported research on PCB contamination of Lake Superior. He said atmospheric deposition from rain, particles, and PCB vapor accounts for over 88 percent of the total PCBs presently entering the lake.

Eisenreich estimated that 20,000 to 23,000 pounds of PCBs enter Lake Superior each year, while only 2,200 to 3,500 pounds are removed by outflow and sedimentation. Consequently, 16,000 to 21,000 pounds apparently accumulate in the lake each year, he said.

Has Not Peaked

Eisenreich said he believes the atmospheric contamination of Lake Superior has not yet reached its peak, although PCB production has been dropping since 1969. He said PCB-containing materials and products such as electrical equipment are being disposed of continuously. He said there is a substantial time lag between the disposal of PCBs and their appearance in the Great Lakes.

Eisenreich said the importance of atmospheric deposition as a source of PCB contamination is demonstrated by the presence of PCBs in small lakes on islands in the lakes isolated from any source of direct PCB contamination.

He said fish caught in the island lakes had PCB levels as much as 100 times higher than those caught in the Great Lakes. He attributed the higher contamination levels in the island fish to the shallowness of the island lakes, which makes them more sensitive to atmospheric contamination.

Eisenreich said the Great Lakes have low sedimentation rates. PCBs which settle out of the lake water remain close to the surface of the bottom where they are available to bottom-feeding marine life, he said. He estimated that it would take about 175 years for PCBs to be buried in sediments so deeply that they can not reenter the lake.

Water Pollution

EPA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON CHEMICAL INDUSTRY MONITORING

Comments on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed self-monitoring program for chemical and plastics manufacturers will be accepted until October 12, according to EPA (44 FR 55400).

The agency said the original notice of the proposed self-monitoring program was ill-timed, and the 30-day comment period originally proposed was inadequate (Current Developments, August 17, p. 1022).

"EPA recognizes that appearance of the notice coincided with the summer vacation season and that key personnel may not have been able to assist in evaluating the impact of the program," the agency said. The agency said comments on the proposal will be accepted until October 12.

Alabama

STATE CHARGES CAR CLEANING FIRM WITH FISH KILL FROM AMMONIA EFFLUENT

The Alabama Attorney General's office and the Alabama Water Improvement Commission (AWIC) have filed suit against a company engaged in car cleaning operations, charging it with responsibility for a large fish kill in south Alabama last June 23-24.

The suit was filed in Escambia County Circuit Court against Frit Car and Equipment Co. in connection with the death of approximately 85,201 fish having a monetary value of $36,671.89 on the Conecuh River in Escambia County.

The fish deaths were attributed to elevated ammonia levels in the water.

AWIC referred the matter to the State Attorney General after investigators learned from Frit representatives that, during company operations, aqueous ammonia had entered a tributary to a creek which flows into the Conecuh River.

The State claims that the kill resulted from a negligent act or omission on the part of the car cleaning firm and is asking the court to order it to pay the amount of the monetary value of the fish and also to pay for the cost of restocking the river "if necessary and feasible." In addition, the State is seeking reimbursement for the expenses incurred by staff members of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and of AWIC in conducting the fish kill investigation.

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