as do half of those caught off the South Shore.

"To make a long story short, 95 percent of the striped bass that originates in the Hudson is probably in good shape," he said.

The day Peter Kromer's fish dropped in price, some of his fish were taken by the state for testing. Mr. Kromer feels he should have been told what the tests showed.

"Nobody could tell me if my fish were all right," he said plaintively.

John Spagnoli, the chief fish and wildlife ecologist for the State Department of Environmental Conservation, coordinated a test on 2,000 fish. The test results went to Commissioner Reid and were the basis for his decision to close the Hudson. There were, however, sharp differences between the results for fish taken in the Hudson and those from other waters.

"To date, the data show the marine waters of New York State are relatively free of PCB's," said Mr. Spagnoli. However, this generalization is made on limited data.

"We're not giving a clean bill of health, not yet. What we are saying is, it appears that the marine waters do not have the problems we found in the Hudson River. The data we have seen have given us favorable attitudes."

The State Department of Environmental Conservation is testing more fish through December and making an effort to include striped bass tested during their migration.

Long Island fish are tested at the Stony Brook laboratories of the Department of Environmental Conservation by Jack Foehrenbach and an assistant. The elaborate procedure is time-consuming and only 12 fish each week can be tested. The fish is homogenized in a blender, dried to a white powder, then boiled for four hours until PCB's concentrate at the bottom. The PCB's are extracted and the extract is measured by a gas chromatograph, a device that records the PCB levels on ordinary graph paper.

'Nobody could tell me if my fish were all right.'

Almost all the first batch of Long Island fish tested registered PCB levels below five parts per million. But, Commissioner Reid said, "we haven't tested enough—you may have the 70 percent that didn't spawn in the Hudson."

The Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund have urged the F.D.A. to lower the acceptable PCB level to zero. The F.D.A. has said that it is at least considering changing the five parts per million standard to a lower number.

According to Mr. Spagnoli, lowering the level could result in the closing of more waterways and the declaring of more species to be off limits. But he said that even if the Federal standard and the allowable PCB level were halved, Long Island fish tested so far could still pass.

Mr. Foehrenbach said, however, that if the figure went below 2 parts per million, bluefish would be on the borderline.

Bluefish?

"They do not spawn in the Hudson. I don't know where they get it," said Mr. Foehrenbach.

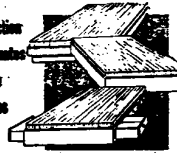
For Peter Kromer and his fellow fishermen, the news from Albany, Washington and Stony Brook is worrisome. Mr. Kromer has been in business for 20 years and has $29,000 invested in equipment. Changing equipment to fish for another species would require a major investment. Quitting is out of the question.

"What kind of a trade have I got?" he said. "It's too late to start again."

So about April 15, while the Environmental Conservation Department is making tests and studying migration patterns trying to determine where the polluted fish of the Hudson River end up, Mr. Kromer will take his boat out in search of the first striped bass of the season.

"I always anticipate a good year," Mr. Kromer said. "PCB's or no PCB's you've got to have faith." ■

MONS 036951

Wayside bedding has it all
platform beds
• selection
• luminaires
• style
• prices

Wayside bedding
311 HEMPSTEAD TURNPIKE
WEST HEMPSTEAD, L.I.
(516) 481-1800
OPEN LATE MONDAY
THURSDAY AND FRIDAY

The CONCERT ORCHESTRA of LONG ISLAND
LASZLO HALASZ, Music Director & Conductor
Oratorio Concert
orchestra, 120 voice chorus, soloists
VIVALDI: "Gloria" (in Latin)
BERNSTEIN: "Chichester Psalms" (in Hebrew)
KODALY: "Psalmus Hungaricus" (Hungarian)
in cooperation with
THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. AGNES
Rockville Centre
SUNDAY, APRIL 4—8 P.M.
All Seats Reserved—$5
516-367-4995 516-766-0205

Fish Season With a Catch

Continued from Page 1

The week before the Hudson was closed the price of striped bass at the Fulton Fish Market, where Long Island fishermen sent 16,842,000 pounds of fish last year, was $1 to $1.15; the week after, 85 cents to $1.15.

"You just can't predict what the public's reaction will be," said Richard Miller, executive secretary of the Long Island Fishermen's Association, which he says represents more than 10,000 commercial fishermen. "When it first happened we were convinced it would destroy the market, but it hasn't happened."

PCB is polychlorinated biphenyl, a chemical somewhat similar in composition to DDT. It has been manufactured in this country since 1929 by the Monsanto Company, which sold as much as 80 million pounds a year. PCB conducts heat rapidly and is not flammable, a characteristic that has made it important for transformers and capacitors. PCB is increasingly being suspected, however, of being a carcinogen, a cancer-causing agent.

In 1974, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency began testing in the Hudson and found a rock bass containing a PCB level 200 parts per million of edible flesh. The Food and Drug Administration's allowable level for PCB was five parts per million.

That rock bass set the Federal bureaucracy in motion, which moved the state to test fish in its waterways. The state's Department of Environmental Conservation held hearings and concluded that General Electric discharged as much as 30 pounds a day into the Hudson from its Hudson Falls and Fort Edward plants, about 40 miles north of Albany.

Last month Ogden R. Reid, the state's Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, closed the Hudson to commercial fishing of all species except shad, sturgeon and goldfish. Sports fishermen were restricted from fishing in the area immediately downstream from the two plants.

The public was warned not to consume more than one fish from the Hudson a week. State scientists said that infants and pregnant women should not consume any fish from the Hudson.

While the murky waters of the Hudson River would seem far removed from Long Island's marine waters, the inescapable fact is that the Hudson is the spawning ground for several species of fish, most importantly the striped bass. Every year about this time and again in the fall, the striped bass migrate.

There are Long Island fishmarket proprietors who sweat, eloquently and truthfully, that they would never touch a fish caught in the Hudson River. There are Long Island fishermen who discuss "war fish" as if the striped bass left the Hudson with a one-way ticket for Virginia.

But Commissioner Reid estimates that about 20 percent of the striped bass in the area known as the Atlantic Fishery, which includes Long Island, come from the Hudson River and are "possibly tainted."

According to Mr. Reid, most of the other 70 percent come from the Chesapeake Bay.

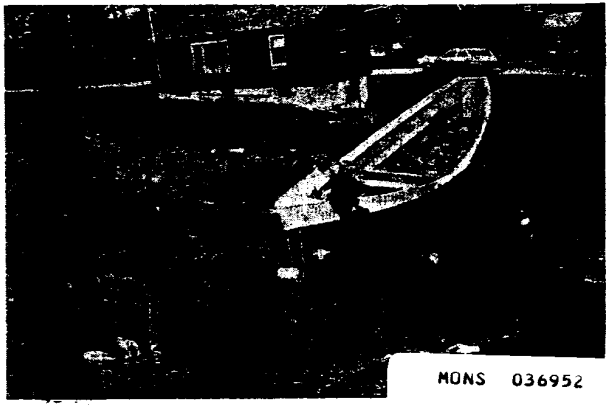
"The question" Mr. Reid says, "is how do you tell one from the other?"

William Dovel, an estuarine ecologist at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Research in Yonkers, said that the fisherman "are basically right" because of a little-known fact of striped bass life. There is a special group of striped bass that he calls "oddball-stay-at-home striped bass." They never leave the Hudson. He believes it was fish from this group that have been tested so far.

Because these fish spent their entire life in the Hudson, they would have a large percentage of PCB's accordingly, he says. Dovel...The rest of the striped bass spend a year or a year and a half in the Hudson, then leave, returning as adults briefly to spawn. The striped bass may have been contaminated the first year, Mr. Dovel says, but as the fish grown larger, the parts per million become smaller.

Mr. Dovel said that probably 95 percent of the striped bass caught off the Long Shore come from the Hudson.

Cont'd on Following Page



Mending nets: Pete Kromer, left, Don Eames, Lex McClosky, Bill Leland

The New York Times/Barton Silverman

For Fishermen, a Time of Apprehension

By DEE WEDEMEYER

LAST August Peter Kromer of Amagansett had a fisherman's dream day, a full catch on a Thursday followed by a stormy sea that sharply reduced the catches of other boats. The market was his. His previous catch of striped bass sold for 80 cents a pound. He was incredulous when he learned his fish got only 50 cents a pound in the New York wholesale market.

"I had never heard about PCB before," said Mr. Kromer, who is a haul seiner, a fisherman who uses dory boats to take the nets to sea and trucks to pull them in. "I said what the hell is a PCB scare?"

A lot of fishermen, wholesalers, restaurateurs and consumers would also like to know about the chemical that is the latest threat to an industry already at the mercy of weather, mercury, oil slicks and sewage, to name a few.

Last month PCB contamination of Hudson River fish, traced to a General Electric plant near Albany that has been dumping tons of the chemical into the waterway for years, resulted in the closing of the river to commercial fishing for the first time in its history. The action sent a ripple through the marketplace and caused apprehension and anger in the Long Island fishing industry, which will begin its spring season in a few weeks.

The fishermen's resentment seems directed both at G.E. and at the government. "How come the commercial fishermen can take the brunt of it when G.E. can keep pumping PCB's into the water?" demanded Scott Bennett, an East Hampton fisherman.

"They're only punishing the fishing industry," said William Schultz, another East Hampton fisherman. "They should be punishing polluters."

"It boils down to this," said Mr. Kromer, "they are allowed to stay in business and we aren't."

The sometimes contradictory and tentative findings of the various government agencies investigating the problem also evoke resentment from the fishermen. "While they are doing all the research," said Mr. Bennett, "we are out of business."

A different sort of reaction was expressed by William Vorpahl, who owns Stuart's Fish Market in Amagansett, a wholesale, retail packing and trucking company founded by his father, Mr. Vorpahl believes people are weary of hearing about threats to their health. "We've been through this with the chickens, with the beef; some people are tired of hearing about it," said Mr. Vorpahl. "It started out five or six years ago with smoking. Now they are selling more cigarettes than ever before."

Some of the fishermen are torn between wanting to express their anger at industry and government and their feeling that any publicity is bad publicity. The fish market responds to news. Reports of the red tide in Maine can affect sales in New York. When there is a tuna scare, consumers not only give up tuna, "they switch to hamburgers," said Dan Dzenkowski, of East Marion.

Continued on Page 22

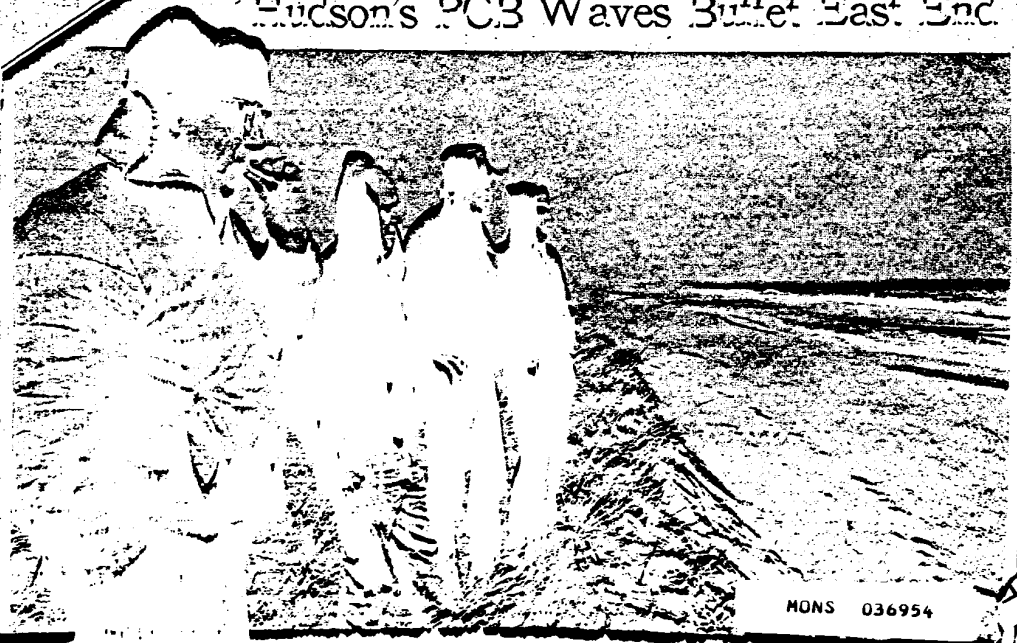
MONS 036953

LONG ISLAND WEEKLY

The New York Times

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 1976 Section 11

Hudson's PCB Waves Buffet East End



MONS 036954