U.S. hunting for PCB dump sites in Illinois

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — Up to 8 million pounds of PCBs were dumped in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin during the last 30 years and no one knows exactly where the poisonous chemicals are, government officials say.

Efforts to find the chemicals have uncovered PCBs at a playground in this northern Illinois city of 65,000, in the well water of one family and in enough quantity to create "very high" contamination of a creek that flows into Lake Michigan, the source of drinking water for 10 million people.

THE RANDOM dumping occurred before the government banned manufacturers of PCBs, polychlorinated biphenyls, in 1977 as a suspected cause of cancer, birth defects and other health problems. The chemical has been used in the United States since 1929, mainly as a lubricant and coolant in industrial machinery and electrical equipment.

Federal officials have known for years that up to 3 million pounds of PCBs were dumped by Outboard Marine Corp., which makes boat motors, into Waukegan Harbor 35 miles north of Chicago. The company used the chemical to lubricate aluminum die-casting machines used to make the motors.

But only within the last year have federal officials joined local efforts to track down millions of pounds of the chemical that were apparently dumped on land.

Officials of the Lake County Health Department fear the chemicals will work their way into ground water, Lake Michigan and the food chain. The dumping in the harbor already has been linked to dangerous levels of PCBs in fish.

THE MISSING PCBs were first described in a letter from Outboard Marine to the EPA, dated March 15, 1976, but officials have concentrated their efforts on the harbor dumping because it was a more immediate threat.

Outboard Marine lawyer Hugh Thomas estimates 5.9 million to 6.7 million pounds of PCBs were dumped on land. EPA lawyer Joy Jacobs puts the figure at 8 million pounds.

While some PCB contamination has been discovered, environmental officials say they do not know the location of all the dumpsites.

Outboard Marine officials say they do not know where the waste haulers took the chemicals because 20 years ago there were no disposal restrictions.

Monsanto gives $25,000 for V.P. concert

Monsanto Co. has contributed $25,000 toward the cost of bringing the Ella Fitzgerald concert to the Veiled Prophet Fair July 3 — a move that will help several area charities raise up to $50,000 each on the sale of tickets to the performance.

J. Hord Armstrong, chairman of the fair's Opening Night Committee, said each of five area charities will be given 500 tickets to sell at $50 each. Robert R. Hermann, president of V.P. Fair Inc., said the charities will be able to keep 80 percent of the ticket sale proceeds and the remaining 20 percent will be used to help defray costs of the performance and opening night cocktail party.

Hermann said the cost of bringing the concert to St. Louis is about $75,000, with $25,000 coming from Monsanto, $25,000 from the sale of tickets by the charitable organizations and the remainder coming from V.P. Fair Inc.

While there will be only 2,500 chair seats for the performance, everyone who attends the fair will be able to enjoy the open-air concert on the riverfront, Hermann said.

The charities that will be selling concert tickets are the American Red Cross, Childhaven — an autism center on Clayton Road — the Museum of Science and Natural History, the National Kidney Foundation unit, St. Louis University Hospitals.

The Ella Fitzgerald concert will be on the main stage beneath the Gateway Arch beginning at 8:30 p.m.

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