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PCB levels in river show decline

HUDSON, Wis. (AP) — Recent tests show a definite drop in the level of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in the Mississippi River, the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission was told Thursday.

Willis Mattison of the Rochester office of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA), said tests May 16 showed very low levels of the industrial chemical between the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and the foot of Lake Pepin. However, Mattison cautioned that the lower levels of PCB contamination would not reduce the danger from eating fish taken from Lake Pepin. He noted that the chemical is stored in fish for their lifetime and said earlier high levels of PCB in the lake would present a long-term problem.

Record high readings in mid-March prompted the federal government to ban interstate shipment of commercial fish taken from the lake. The Minnesota Health Department later recommended that persons eat no more than one meal per week of game fish taken from the lake.

Mattison said the fluctuating levels of PCB indicated that the pollution was coming from one major source rather than a number of small polluters.

The 10-member commission passed a resolution urging officials of Minnesota and Wisconsin to continue efforts to find the source of the PCB.

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