Resources Board Asks PCB Ban

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Madison, Wis. – A ban on the use of polychorinated biphonyls (PCBs) was proposed Thursday in a hearing order by the State Natural Resources Board.

PCBs are chemicals, used in several industrial processes, that accumulate in fish and water where traces of the chemicals flow. Early this year the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned sale of carp from Lake Pepin because they are contaminated with PCBs.

Since the FDA action, the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has found high PCB levels in fish in the Wisconsin River near Portage, in parts of the Fox River and in Green Bay and Lake Michigan. As a result, fishermen have been warned not to eat more than one meal a week of fish from those areas.

Some of the PCBs have been traced to the effluents from paper mills recycling waste paper, but they have also been found by DNR chemists in municipal treatment plant effluents and in water where no specific source could be cited.

In one case, PCBs were found in snow melt.

Two separate rules will be considered at the hearings. One would ban the discharge of any effluent containing PCBs. The other would limit the concentration of PCBs allowed in a discharge. No dates for the hearings have been set.

The board also:

• Delayed to next month a decision on a request from the Walworth County Metropolitan Sanitary District for an exemption for part of its planned construction from the priority system for federal aid.

Part of this system, a treatment plant at Elkhorn, has the No. 1 priority. The connecting sewers have a No. 191 ranking. No one is certain how far the available money will stretch, but it will not reach No. 191, DNR aides said.

• Took no action on a plea from the Americology Division of American Can Co., that DNR speed action of the firm's environmental impact report on a proposed recycling plant for the City of Milwaukee.

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