

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: John H. Morrow
FROM: Janice Seaman
DATE: March 21, 1977
RE: Trip of March 18, 1977

The purpose of my trip was to obtain data relating to Polychlorinated Biphenyls in Lake Weiss. To obtain this information I visited the Alabama Water Improvements Commission, The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and The Department of Public Health.

At approximately 9:30 a.m., I met with John Williford, Chief of Monitoring and Surveillance, Alabama Water Improvements Commission. Williford was in charge of collecting samples at Lake Weiss. I asked him questions (attached) which I felt would lead me to documents concerning PCB levels at Lake Weiss. Williford was very guarded in answering questions and said that he preferred that I talk with his immediate supervisor, James Warr, Chief Administrator of the AWIC. Williford produced documents containing the results of samples taken in August, September, and October of 1976. Warr carefully checked over each of these documents and added comments. Williford stated that sampling for PCB began in 1971 with a contract between the Alabama Department of Conservation and an Auburn University

MONS 000380

pesticides study. PCBs were examined in this study and were found to be at high levels in Alabama, particularly in the Chocoloca Creek vicinity. Since that time samples of Lake Weiss have been taken: February, 1976 and in the summer of 1976 the E.P.A. took only one or two samples at the F.D.A.'s request. Warr feels that the study in February was sparked by a T.V. special narrated by Walter Cronkite which discussed the possible effects of PCB and other pollutants on the environment. Both Williford and Warr stressed that AWIC was only a data collecting agency and had no part in making decisions to ban fishing, etc. Warr referred me to The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and The Department of Public Health which, he said, were the agencies where decisions were made.

I proceeded on to the Department of Conservations and Natural Resources. Sam Spencer, State Fishery Chief was out of town, and I spoke with Clarence White. White informed me that the Attorney General's office had instructed him not to give out any information concerning PCBs and Lake Weiss without its permission. White and I went to the Attorney General's office and met Jim Cooper, an attorney there. Cooper said that he would consider my request and in a week or ten days would produce what he would like me to have. I pointed out that many documents I requested were of public

record. White reviewed each document that I saw and a xerox copy for myself as well as for the Attorney General's office was made of all documents shown to me concerning PCBs and Lake Weiss. Many times White brought up Chococola Creek and the high concentrations of PCBs found there.

I next went to The Department of Public Health and spoke with Dr. Ira Myers, State Health Officer and Chairman of the AWIC. Myers said that he felt Georgia's ban on the Coosa was a political move. Georgia had banned the river adjoining South Carolina and Georgia because of pollutants so they felt they had to ban the Coosa. Myers said that he did not put a ban on Lake Weiss because of an experience he had in North Alabama where he involved a ban using scientific criteria and was unable to remove the ban. Myers also feels the advisory levels set by the EPA are not discretionary and are rather arbitrary because some chemical pollutants are much more toxic than others, and the advisory levels should reflect this. On a scale of toxicity PCB is less toxic than D.D.T., which can be ingested by humans in large quantities producing no ill effects. Myers says that it would not bother him at all to eat fish from Lake Weiss. He did point out, though, that he would advise pregnant women not to eat fish known to contain PCBs because later PCBs will show up in the mother's milk. If a child or adults ingests large quantities

of PCB it will stay in their fat forever, as it is not biodegradeable. Myers stated that he also took economic factors into consideration in not banning Lake Weiss. If Lake Weiss was banned to commercial fishing unnecessarily, Myers points out, it would ruin people's lives who depend on the lake for their livelihood. Myers said that presently Lake Weiss residents are trying to promote the area for Bass tournaments, etc. to help ease the PCB scare. W. T. Willis, Director of Environmental Health Administration was very willing to give me all documents in his possession concerning PCBs and Lake Weiss. He also suggested Articles in the Annual Reports of the Council on Environmental Quality concerning PCBs. Willis also felt that Georgia's ban on commercial fishing was a political move.

JS

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MONS 000383

Questions derived from the 11/5/76 News release from Dr. Myers.

1. A request was made for all documents concerning Lake Weiss and Polychlorinated Biphenyls.
2. When was the most most recent sample of fish taken from the Lake Weiss Reservoir?
3. What levels have previous PCB samplings shown?
4. At what level is PCB high enough to issue an advisory?
5. When did the program of sampling Lake Weiss for pollutants, particularly PCB, begin?
6. What does individuals should adjust their consumption of fish from Lake Weiss mean?
7. How is data collected on samples and why was data limited on PCB context at Lake Weiss when the advisory was released by the Department of Public Health?
8. What is necessary to determine overall impact of PCBs on Lake Weiss?
9. Why was commercial fishing not banned in Alabama?
10. What three species of fish were sampled?
11. Where are the sampling sites located on Lake Weiss?
12. What are the water quality standards in Alabama?