

Perspective

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Comments? Call Column Page Editor Mike Bacha, (920) 431-6248

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This year critical to future of the Fox

The proposed list for the Fox River and lower Green Bay is a landmark Superfund site that focuses public attention on the river's water quality and how best to improve it.

Monday marked the beginning of a 60-day public comment period on the proposed Superfund designation. (For information about how to comment, see Page A-3.)

Today on Page One, environmental writer Susan Campbell discusses some of the latest research on the unique pond by the river's mouth. The designation that lists the river as a Superfund site is the force of cleanup efforts. In Q&As on this page, we explore reports that come this year on PCBs.

On Monday, I'll publish an interview with Timothy Finkle II, the EPA official who will determine whether the Fox receives Superfund designation. This isn't the first time that momentum has built to push for government action to clean the river.

But anyone naive enough to think that the Fox is over should know that we should talk with Art Kahan, 85, a retired De Pere lawyer who's one of the region's environmental pioneers.

The Fox has been in the news for 30 years ago, sponsored by Kahan and other members of the Hook Village League, a natural conservation group. In 1968, Kahan, one of those World War II veterans who fought in the Pacific, was one of the founders of the Fox River Association. They convinced Gov. Oscar Rothenberg, then running for reelection, to declare the Fox a national landmark. That December, he signed legislation that designated the Fox as a Superfund site.

The city's water treatment plant pumps water from the river. The city's water treatment plant pumps water from the river. The city's water treatment plant pumps water from the river.

The debate over PCBs

Q&A
with
Theo Colborn
and
John Giesy

Following are excerpts from interviews with two researchers in the field of endocrine — or hormone — disruption. Studies have shown that chemicals in the environment, such as PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins), can disrupt the reproductive, nervous and immune systems of animals in the wild and in the laboratory.

Such chemicals are said to mimic hormones, such as estrogen and testosterone, and other chemical messengers in the body that direct development. Hormones help do their business by "locking in" the body's hormonal responses — like pineal gland to receive specific hormones — and directing the body's response.

Drawing parallels between the chemical and hormonal systems is the focus of the book, *Our Endocrine Disruptors*, by Theo Colborn and John Giesy. Colborn is a professor at the University of Michigan and Giesy is a professor at Michigan State University. They are the authors of the book, *Our Endocrine Disruptors*, published by Basic Books.



The PCB-laden Fox River is shown in an aerial shot taken near the Tower Drive Bridge.

Interviews by Susan Campbell
Photos by Ken Wesley

Reproductive organs show effects of PCBs

Theo Colborn, an environmental scientist with the World Wildlife Fund in Washington, D.C., and John Giesy, a professor at Michigan State University, have been studying the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish.

Q: When are you picking the first generation of humans that we've exposed to these types of chemicals?
A: We're looking at the first generation of humans that we've exposed to these types of chemicals. We're looking at the first generation of humans that we've exposed to these types of chemicals.

Monitoring lone effects ignores other issues

John Giesy is a professor of ecology at Michigan State University and is on the faculty of the National Center for Food Safety and Toxicology. He has served as a member of several Environmental Protection Agency advisory boards and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences panel on Endocrine Disruption.

Q: You've been studying the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish. How do you think that affects humans?
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John Giesy

Q: Where does PCB research stand right now?

A: It's a very active area. There's been a lot of research done in the last few years. We're looking at the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish. We're looking at the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish.

Q: How do you estimate risks when you say that because PCBs and other chemicals have shown to disrupt hormonal messages in animals, we cannot automatically assume they cause similar effects in humans?

A: The endocrine system has been conserved over generations, geological time, in all animals. During the developmental period, everything depends upon hormonal signals and so you demonstrate that those signals in natural systems are operating in extremely low concentrations — whether it's a human, a domestic animal, wild animal or laboratory animal. Why is everyone suddenly questioning the fact that if you find something wrong in an animal, you would not predict that the same thing happens in humans? This is a very weak argument.

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Q: Based on your involvement with the issue of hormone-disrupting chemicals, in your perfect world, where should the research be headed? What approach should people take on the issue of hormone disruption in the environment?

A: We have learned a lot from our past mistakes. We don't make chemicals with certain profiles and we don't use them in ways we wouldn't use them. We're doing research on people. If there's no exposure, then when you do see it in animals, there are enough similarities in the biochemistry that you should sit up and take notice and say that is something we should watch out and prevent our human populations. Absolutely.

Q: What is a controversial part of Superfund legislation — but the rise in Superfund sites and the rise in Superfund sites?

A: When it comes to Superfund sites, the issue is how to clean them up. We're looking at the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish. We're looking at the effects of PCBs on the reproductive organs of fish.

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