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*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Department of Public Health*  
600 Washington Street

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Commissioner

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FOR RELEASE - Tuesday, March 8, 1977 - AM

Public Health Commissioner Dr. Jonathan Fielding today requested that bottom feeding fish, shellfish and eels not be taken for eating from the Acushnet River area for health reasons. This area extends north of a line between Ricketson's Point to Wilbur Point.

Fielding made this request after reviewing the results of a recent state survey that revealed the presence of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) in that area which is a recreational fishing area — not commercial.

The survey revealed that fish in the Acushnet River — an area that has been closed to shellfish taking for many years because of bacterial pollution — have been affected by PCB contamination.

PCBs have been used in industrial production and were deposited in the river over the past 10 years. They are no longer being deposited. The fish in this area have been found to have PCB levels that exceed the Federal standard for food.

Fielding noted that the specific health effects of PCBs are not totally known to date, but that it could cause serious illness if ingested frequently over an extended period of time. He continued, "This problem really affects the recreational fisherman who fishes in this river area and then goes home and freezes the catch to

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eat over a period of time. This sport fisherman and his family could ingest a fair amount of PCBs over a period of time." "With this in mind," Fielding continued, "I am now issuing a health warning to recreational fishermen not to eat shellfish, bottom feeding fish and eels from this area."

Fielding is also extending a health warning to recreational fishermen not to eat bottom feeding fish from the area just beyond the Acushnet River area - north of a line running from Misham Point to Cong "3" on Hursett Rock to Rocky Point on West Island. Samples taken from this area showed bottom feeding fish to have elevated PCB levels.

Fielding noted, "These affected areas are used for recreational fishing. There is no commercial fishing in either of these areas for which I have issued health warnings. This fact has been further verified by no increased PCB levels found in fish samples at commercial landings and in the marketplace."

The Department of Public Health will continue to monitor the fish at commercial landings and in the markets as a further precaution.

The Department of Environmental Quality Engineering and the Division of Marine Fisheries have done the sampling and laboratory testing on the fish, shellfish and crustaceans in these waters for PCB determinations. According to DEQE Commissioner David Standley, they will continue the monitoring efforts.

State health and environmental officials have met with legislators and community representatives of the affected areas in advance of issuing these health warnings.

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