

Pennsylvania fish to be analyzed

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Scientists plan to catch 100 fish in the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers this fall to analyze them and the water and sediment in which they swim.

The research follows the discovery of male smallmouth bass developing eggs in the Potomac, carp with low sperm counts in Nevada's Lake Mead and white suckers with both male and female characteristics in Colorado's South Platte River, the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review said Monday.

"The fish are pretty much like the canary in the mine," said Dan Volz, a University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health professor and lead investigator.

As canaries alerted miners to the presence of lethal gases, Volz believes fish can give an early indication of problems in Western Pennsylvania's drinking water.

The compounds scientists believe are mutating fish might cause breast cancer and reproductive problems in humans,

"If the fish are getting their hormones fouled up or their sexual development fouled up, then you better believe it's a problem for us," Pat Eagon, a Pitt Cancer Institute professor, told the Tribune-Review.

Volz believes estrogen from birth control pills and other pharmaceuticals is entering Western Pennsylvania's waters through sewer systems.

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