

Water pollution continues at famous Russian lake



Researchers report that Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake in the world, faces continued threats of water pollution. It holds more than 1,500 species that are found nowhere else on earth. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Despite widespread concerns about preserving the world's largest body of fresh water, researchers report that pollution is continuing in Russia's fabled Lake Baikal. The study is scheduled for the April 15 issue of ACS' *Environmental Science & Technology*.

The deepest lake in the world, Lake Baikal holds 20 percent of the world's unfrozen freshwater and is home to more than 1,500 species found nowhere else on earth. But compared to other areas in the world such as North America and Western Europe, little is known about the regional contamination to plant and animal life from compounds called perfluorochemicals (PFCs), the article says.

In the study, Hisato Itawa and colleagues measured levels of PFCs in the livers and sera of Baikal seals — the only entirely freshwater seal species in the world — and then compared them to recorded levels in 1992. They found that several chemicals were elevated to indicate an ongoing source of contamination in the lake.

“Given these results, continuous monitoring of PFCs as well as dioxin-like compounds in Baikal seals is necessary to assess potential biological effects of PFCs,” the report says. The researchers noted a commercially manufactured PFC known as perfluorononanoic acid to be highest in the Baikal seals.

Source: ACS

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