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Waukegan firm hit by \$20 million suit for lake pollution

By Dennis D. Fisher

The Justice Department Friday sued Outboard Marine Corp. for \$20 million in U.S. District Court, charging the outboard-motor manufacturer with discharging 2 million pounds of poisonous PCBs into Waukegan Harbor and Lake Michigan over the last 18 years.

The federal complaint charged that PCB residues make up as much as 25 per cent of the bottom sediments in Waukegan harbor and so-called "North Ditch," both of which empty into the lake.

Asst. U.S. Atty. Thomas G. Dent said the lawsuit seeks penalties of more than \$20 million against the firm.

The Justice Department asked the court to order the company to clean up the bottom accumulation of PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — after determining how it can be dredged up without aggravating the problem.

The suit contends Outboard Marine's discharge of PCB fluid was "at such greatly concentrated levels as to represent a serious threat to drinking water, aquatic life and other uses" of the harbor and Lake Michigan.

The Justice Department maintained that the "accumulated levels of PCB's in bottom sediments . . . present a serious hazard to the environment and the public health and amounts to a public nuisance."

Outboard Marine has acknowledged that PCB's used in the hydraulic fluid for die-casting machines between 1959 and 1972 were discharged into the harbor and ditch, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The company, under pressure from EPA officials, closed all its discharge pipes in the last two years. However, it has asked the state EPA for permission to dump a concen-

tration of up to 10 parts per billion from a newly constructed discharge pipe.

Waukegan Harbor already is the most PCB-polluted part of the Great Lakes, according to federal EPA officials.

PCB's have become global pollutants. They are showing up in mother's milk and in the body fat of Americans. In experiments, they have been found to cause liver cancer and miscarriages in laboratory animals.

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