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$1-billion pollution suit is filed

A $1-billion class-action lawsuit, possibly the largest in Alabama history, has been brought against General Electric Co. and Monsanto Corp. to recover damages caused by pollution of the Coosa River with a chemical suspected of causing cancer.

The suit, filed in federal court in Birmingham Wednesday, charges that the discharge of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) from a General Electric transformer plant near Rome, Ga., has destroyed fishing in the Coosa and its tributaries by making fish caught there inedible. Named as the plaintiff class are roughly 3,000 persons in Georgia and Alabama who depend upon the Coosa for their livelihood.

In August of this year the Georgia Department of Natural Resources closed the Coosa to fishing within the boundaries of the state because of PCB contamination, and in November the Alabama Water Improvement Commission (AWIC) issued a warning that fish taken from the Weiss Reservoir on the Coosa had been found to contain PCB concentration "considerably in excess" of the five parts per million set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as tolerable human limits.

Monsanto was named as a defendant in the suit because it manufactures PCB, under the trade name Pyranol, and sells the thick, oily chemical to General Electric for use in the manufacture of electrical transformers.

PCB has been found to cause cancer in laboratory mice. The suit charges that the two companies were aware of the dangers of the chemical and that they allowed it to be discharged into the Coosa without regard for the health hazards it could cause.

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Suit Brought Against GE And Monsanto

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—A $1 billion pollution suit has been brought against the General Electric Co. and the Monsanto Corp. by a group of 21 people who depend on the Coosa River for the livelihood and recreation.

The suit, filed Wednesday in federal court, charges that pollution from a General Electric plant near Rome Ga., into the Coosa River has ruined their busindsses.

The plaintiffs said they filed the suit in the interest of more than 3,000 residents of northeast Alabama who depend on Weiss Lake—on the Alabama-Georgia border—for their livelihood, either directly or indirectly.

The damages sought may be the largest on record in an Alabama court.

Last September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency warned people living and working along the Coosa that the GE plant near Rome was discharging PCBs—polychlorinated biphenyls—into the river.

The chemical is used to make electrical transformers. The EPA says it has been found to cause cancer in laboratory mice.

The EPA also said test showed heavy concentration of PCBs, often more than the five parts per million limit set by the Food and Drug Administration, in fish taken from the Coosa as far south as Weiss Lake.

Georgia officials banned commercial fishing on the Coosa, but Alabama officials did not.

Monsanto was named in the suit because it manufactures the chemical used by the GE plant.

A Georgia group has filed a $500 million suit against GE and another group has filed a $500,000 suit in connection with the PCB solution.

After that suit was filed, GE concreted the area in which the PCBs were being dumped. Officials said that halted the runoff of the chemical into the river, and that all use of PCBs would be ended by next summer.