Sangamo To Drop PCB Regulation Suit

By MICHELLE GREEN
Staff Writer

ATLANTA — Sangamo Electric Co. agreed Wednesday to drop its lawsuit challenging the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) right to order the plant's wastewater be cleaned of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The action came after EPA officials said Sangamo showed "good faith efforts" to reduce the levels of PCBs discharged from the Pickens plant. The Sangamo lawsuit was filed earlier this month.

The agreement to drop the suit came in an afternoon meeting between representatives of EPA and Sangamo who had gathered to discuss EPA's Aug. 30 administrative order to the company. That order called for Sangamo to reduce PCB levels in its treated wastewater it dumps into a Lake Hartwell tributary to a "nondetectable," or 1 part per billion (ppb) level.

Water samples taken at the Sangamo plant in Pickens Oct. 6 showed that Sangamo's wastewater discharge into Twelve Mile Creek still contained up to 12.0 ppb of the toxic chemical, but EPA tests showed a decline in the PCB content to 7.9 ppb by the end of that week.

EPA regional administrator Jack Ravan called this a "significant decrease."

Ravan said, although the company *failed to meet the* precise PCB level and Oct. 2 deadline specified in the agency's administrative order, EPA will not file suit against the company or take any punitive actions in the near future.

"Every time we go to adjudication, we lose time in our cleanup efforts," Ravan explained. Instead of taking court action, he said, EPA will continue to monitor the PCB content in Sangamo's wastewater. It has also taken steps to speed the cleanup process by clarifying the terms of the company's discharge permit.

According to the agreement made Wednesday, the plant must limit PCBs in the wastewater it discharges into Lake Hartwell to a monthly average of one-fourth of an ounce, or about 1.7 ppb, until March 31, 1977.

After that time, Sangamo will be allowed to discharge a monthly average of only one-sixth of an ounce or about 1 ppb.

And as of Nov. 1, 1977, the company will not be allowed to use PCBs in its manufacturing process and will not be able to discharge PCBs in excess of the amount contained in the raw water coming into the plant from the Pickens county supply.

"This is a very stringent requirement but we think that Sangamo can meet it," Ravan said. "I think this cleanup plan will work faster than what we could get any other way," he said.

Sangamo legal representative Lewis Smoak had said earlier Wednesday that company officials would object to too-stringent limits on the PCBs *in the* discharge *from its* Pickens plant.

"If we set this thing too tight now," he said, "we'll have a compliance problem later." Sangamo agreed, however, to the EPA-proposed limit of a monthly average of 1.7 ppb, which will be effective until March 31.

Sangamo representatives reported that construction has started on a new wastewater treatment lagoon, scheduled to be completed by Dec. 31. The new lagoon is expected to help reduce PCB levels in the company's wastewater.

The cleanup schedule established Wednesday is aimed at the total phaseout of PCBs in Sangamo's *manufacturing* process as well as in its wastewater discharge.

The Monsanto Co., the sole U.S. manufacturer of the toxic compound, recently announced that it will not manufacture PCBs after Oct. 31, 1977. PCBs are used in the manufacture of electrical equipment.

PCBs have recently been identified as being extremely harmful to human health, causing illnesses such as cancer, skin rashes, and

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malfunctions of the digestive and reproductive systems. Because of the serious environmental hazard posed by the compound, the Toxic Substances Control Act signed into law this week calls for a ban on the use of PCBs by late 1978.

Monsanto and Sangamo have been named co-defendants in a $1 billion class action lawsuit on behalf of owners of businesses and property near *Lake Hartwell, who claim they* have suffered "irreparable" financial losses as a result of PCB contamination of the lake and its fish. EPA has confirmed that Sangamo's contaminated wastewater was the source of that pollution.

Sangamo must meet a deadline of a net PCB addition of zero and a total phaseout of PCBs by Nov. 1, 1977, the deadline Monsanto has set to discontinue manufacturing PCBs.

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