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Steel firm fined $1.9m for fouling lake

CHICAGO — Inland Steel Co. was fined $1.9 million yesterday for polluting Lake Michigan.

Judge Nathan Cohen of Cook County, Ill., Circuit Court also ruled that Inland Steel should continue paying a $1000-a-day fine until it hands over a plan for halting the flow of 924 million gallons of wastes flushed into the lake each day from the East Chicago, Ind., steel mill.

Lake Michigan is the drinking water supply for residents in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

The wastes "create a problem so overwhelming that its effect upon the millions of lives dependent on Lake Michigan for a fresh water supply will be catastrophic," the court said.

The ruling concluded the case dating to 1967, in which Illinois Atty. Gen. William Scott and the Chicago area Metropolitan Sanitary District charged Inland with contaminating drinking water.

Scott wants Inland to recycle its wastes instead of discharging them into the lake, at an estimated cost of $50 million to $80 million.

Scott said after the ruling:

"This is one of the most important legal decisions in the nation's history regarding protection of the environment and one that sets a crucial legal precedent."

Inland lawyers had argued that Scott could not prove that industrial wastes reaching Illinois waters of Lake Michigan originated from Inland. The Inland plant is at the mouth of the Indiana Garbor ship canal, some 8½ miles from the Indiana-line.

Inland said it would appeal.

"We convinced the state did not prove its contention that Inland's waste waters have adversely affected the drinking water of the city of Chicago, or any other use of Lake Michigan," said Fredrick Jaicks, Inland chairman.

In a related matter, a Federal health official has called upon the Environmental Protection Agency to order an immediate halt to industrial pollution which New York State officials say may have caused "irreparable damage" to the Hudson River.

"We feel that available evidence dictates that immediate action should be taken to terminate the discharge of polychloripated byphenlys," said Dr. Theodore Cooper, assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health Education and Welfare.

The state last week took its first step to stop the General Electric Company from discharging the pollutant into the Hudson.

Federal officials say PCB is fatal to fish eggs, but its effect on humans is still being studied.

GE officials said the company eliminated four years ago the type of PCB state officials say they found in the Hudson River fish.

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