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Utility Facing Pollution Suit

ROME, Ga. (AP) — General Electric, which already faces a $500 million damage suit filed by angry property owners, now must contend with another suit alleging that the company has hurt recreational income and land values by polluting the Coosa River.

A $500,000 federal damage suit was filed Wednesday against GE by two north Georgia property owners.

Georgia and Alabama property owners last month filed a $500 million damage suit against GE and Monsanto Co., which manufactures polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The latest suit contends GE "either willfully, wantonly, negligently or recklessly allowed PCBs to enter Lake Weiss and other waters."

GE has a plant near Rome that uses PCBs in manufacturing electric transformers.

Health authorities say PCBs can cause skin eruptions, excessive eye discharges and possibly cancer in humans.

The suit filed Wednesday was brought by Lester Lindsey Jr. of Rome, operator of the Coosa Hunting and Fishing Lodge on the Coosa River, and Dr. Richard Jewell of Cedartown, owner of property on Alabama's Lake Weiss, into which the Coosa flows.

The state has closed the Coosa River to commercial fishing, contending the fish were contaminated by PCBs apparently discharged by the GE plant. Fishing is not restricted on Lake Weiss.

Similar restrictions have been put on fishing in Lake Hartwell on the Georgia-South Carolina border, and property owners there have filed a $1 billion damage suit against the Sangamo Electric Co. plant in Pickens, S.C., and Monsanto Co.