Schillinger and Sauget officials are optimistic that the entire suit can be resolved satisfactorily. They noted that many of the allegations deal with issues that were not even in existence during the design and construction of the plant, which became operational in early 1986.

"All that notwithstanding, the consent order does represent a major stride towards resolving the dispute, thanks to the cooperation of all parties involved," Schillinger said. "It is our hope that the carbon additions will further improve the quality of effluent from American Bottoms."

As originally planned and constructed, American Bottoms used an advanced technology carbon process which would have permitted recycling of the carbon. However, a fire/explosion of unknown origin destroyed the major component of the process. The cost of repairs and very serious doubts about employe safety and the effectiveness of that particular technology caused Sauget to suspend the use of carbon.

Schilliner said the carbon infusion is only one of several steps either completed or in process to improve the quality of the effluent from American Bottoms.

"Even now, our plant is performing at a level well above the parameters for which it was designed and is providing better treatment than most municipal wastewater plants," Schillinger said.

He noted the addition of the carbon may lessen the yellow color of effluents which has gained so much media motoriety. Schillinger said there is no evidence to suggest that the color is harmful, but that it simply looks bad.

"We are also working with local industries to identify sources of pollutants at the plant sites," Schillinger said. "Once that is accomplished we will be able to control and reduce any harmful material in the wastewater before it reaches our waste treatment facilities.

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