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New PCB Suits Names Monsanto

The Monsanto Co., in a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission, said it was named in a 1.1-billion-dollar damage suit in Alabama that involves its manufacture of polychlorinated biphenyls — known as PCBs.

The company said a class action suit was filed late in December naming it and General Electric Co. Twenty-one plaintiffs, who allege that pollution from a General Electric plant near Rome, Ala., into the Coosa River, ruined their businesses, livelihoods and river sport.

The plaintiffs contend that Monsanto did not warn against the alleged dangers of PCBs. The state of Alabama, which was granted permission last week to intervene in the case, is seeking $100,-100,000 in damages, Monsanto said. The company said it will vigorously defend itself in the litigation.

Monsanto will discontinue production of PCBs later this year, it has announced. The substance is used as a cooling and insulation fluid in electric equipment. It had come under attack by the Environmental Protection Agency because of its toxic and persistent nature.

Monsanto said two similar suits were filed last September by the same plaintiffs — one in state court in Georgia and the other in federal court in Georgia. Each seeks $500,000,000 in damages, a company spokesman said.