

GE Sued For PCB Pollution Of Coosa

ATLANTA (UPI) — A group of Georgia and Alabama residents have filed a \$500 million lawsuit against General Electric Co., charging the firm "recklessly" caused PCB pollution of the Coosa River.

The class action suit filed Monday on behalf of river property owners, businesses and fishermen charges GE "willfully, wantonly, negligently or recklessly allowed and caused PCB to be released into a stream that leads directly into the Coosa River."

The suit also named the Monsanto Co. as a defendant because the firm sold the pollutant to GE.

Georgia officials two weeks ago halted commercial fishing in the Coosa after high levels of PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — were found in fish caught there. The ban later was extended to two northwest Georgia tributaries of the river.

A GE plant near Rome uses PCBs in the manufacture of electric transformers.

W.R. Buchanan, a plant official, said PCBs were used to make many products at the plant a few years ago.

"Until 1972, there were any number of uses of PCB. It was used in lubrication oil that might have been disposed of and ultimately found its way into the water system," he said.

He said since the firm still uses PCBs, it is a "natural target" for lawsuits.

William C. Lanham, the Atlanta attorney representing the river

residents, said since the fishing ban "the place is a ghost town all up and down the river."

He said some poor residents "literally depend on catching fish in the river just to eat."

The suit asks \$500,000 in damages to be distributed among as many as 1,000 people who may have been adversely affected by the pollution.

Lanham said he would attempt to prove Monsanto did not fully inform GE of the effects of PCBs.