By Pollution Board

Monsanto Hit On Discharge

By MIKE ALBERTSON
Journal Staff Writer

Monsanto Co. here has been ordered to take immediate action to halt the flow of a toxic chemical from their plant discharge or face a fine of $5,000 per day.

In a notice and order the Florida Department of Air and Water Pollution Control reported that polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) are still escaping from the Monsanto discharge and must be halted.

In a company statement, plant manager Walter T. Cline said: "We were quite surprised to receive this notice as we have not used any polychlorinated biphenyl-containing chemicals since the Summer of 1969."

Phil Doherty, regional engineer for the pollution control agency, said the firm isn't releasing the chemical into the water now, but low levels are still escaping from the sediments of the discharge canal and spreading over the estuary.

According to Doherty, the substance, much like DDT, has been found as far away as Bayou Texar and some fish samples from Escambia Bay and Bayou Texar have exceeded the Federal Pure Food and Drug Administration "action level" of 5 parts per million.

Doherty said later samples showed most of the fish have lower levels of PCB. Monsanto officials denied the PCB is still being discharged.

Dr. Thomas W. Duke, director of the Environmental Protection Agency's pesticide laboratory at Gulf Breeze (the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries), first reported the substance in 1969.

His researchers found it while carrying out tests for pesticides, which react similarly on the instruments used, he said.

Notified of the discharge, Monsanto found the source in an air-conditioning, heat-exchange system. A substance manufactured by Monsanto, AROCLOR 1254, was leaking into the system and was immediately stopped, according to Doherty.

But, on several occasions, Dr. Duke, Dr. Thomas Hopkins of the University of West Florida and the Federal Water Quality Administration reported publicly that the compound had settled thickly in the sediments of Monsanto's discharge canal and was slowly leaking out.

According to the Pollution Control Department order, residues of PCB up to 64 parts per million have been detected in the canals, channels and outfall structures of Monsanto and as late as Oct. 27, 1970, PCBs were detected in the Monsanto discharge in concentrations of 2.6 parts per billion.

Tests carried out by Dr. Duke's agency indicate PCB is toxic to fish and shrimp and even low levels can retard shell growth in oysters.

Asked how long the compound would remain stable and continue to spread, he said: "There is no known breakdown time." Even DDT, he pointed out, will degrade slowly under bacterial action. "We just don't know as much about PCB as DDT," he said.

"The potential danger is that the sediments in Escambia Bay will act as a reservoir for the poision spreading it through the food chain," he said.

Doherty said the concern that the substance would continue to soak out of the sediments in Monsanto's discharge canal for months to come, and spread throughout the estuary, is the major reason for seeking action against the firm.

The notice and order charges that Monsanto is in violation of Department Rules 17-3.02 and 17-3.09 of the Florida Administrative Code, by discharging "into the waters of the state. toxic substances . . . harmful to animal, plant, or aquatic life.

Monsanto was ordered to submit a plan within 30 days for halting the discharge and pending approval of the plan, "take emergency measures to reduce and prevent the unnecessary discharges of waters containing (PCB) . . ."

Specifically; the final action. ". . . shall include, but not be limited to the removal from Respondent's outfall structure, ditches, etc., all sediments and residues containing polychlorinated biphenyls."

Doherty said the removal of sediment's would be monitored and that special measures may have to be taken to keep more of the compound in the sediments from being discharged.

Monsanto's Cline issued the following statement:

"We received a notice today (Wednesday) from the Florida Department of Air and Water Pollution Control concerning alleged discharge of polychlorinated biphenyl from the Pensacola plant. We were quite surprised to receive this notice as we have not used any polychlorinated biphenyl - containing chemicals since the Summer of 1969.

"In April 1969, researchers at the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Pesticide Field Station first detected the presence of small quantities of polychlorinated biphenyl in organisms taken from Escambia Bay. In August 1969, these researchers notified our plant that they had found polychlorinated biphenyl in our effluent and that our plant was one source of polychlorinated biphenyl into the Bay.

"We were using at that time an industrial fluid which contained polychlorinated biphenyl. Subsequent investigation led to the discovery that some of the fluid was leaking into our effluent. This condition was promptly corrected and the fluid was replaced with one containing no polychlorinated biphenyl.

"We have not used any material containing polychlorinated biphenyl for more than a year-and-a-half.

"We will continue to extend full cooperation to the Florida Department of Air and Water Pollution Control and will resolve the matter as soon as possible."

Cpy RED from Emanuel Stanford Hill White Mr. Cliff Shannon

PENSACOLA ... RNAL, 1/28/71