Sangamo, EPA reach PCB settlement

By TOM PRIDDY
News staff writer

ATLANTA — The Sangamo Electric Co. agreed Wednesday to completely stop using and discharging PCBs by Nov. 1, 1977.

At the same time the company was given a temporary relaxation of current PCB discharge limitations.

Sangamo officials also agreed to drop a suit that challenged the right of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to dictate the PCB limits.

The compromise agreement was reached during a lengthy closed-door meeting between officials from Sangamo, EPA and the state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

EPA regional administrator Jack E. Raven said the settlement is a significant step toward ending the PCB pollution problem in Lake Hartwell.

The Pickens Company has to have reduced levels of the toxic chemical to the part per billion in its wastewater discharge by Oct. 2, according to an EPA order.

[illegible] released Wednesday show the [illegible] has not reached that [illegible] but no immediate [illegible]

[illegible]

"We are not in the [illegible] of putting [illegible] out of business. We are in the business of protecting the environment," Raven said.

The administrator added the agreement is the best available means of protecting Lake Hartwell from future PCB pollution.

Sangamo vice president T.C. Hydrick signed the two-page agreement with EPA and DHEC, including what Raven said were "very stringent conditions."

In addition to the core PCB level by Nov. 1, 1977, the company also agreed to a new set of limits that take effect Friday.

At that time the PCB discharge into a [illegible] Hartwell [illegible] average no more than one-fourth of an ounce per day over a 30-day period.

Raven said this roughly equals 1.7 to 1.8 parts per billion.

The company [illegible] discharge [illegible] of the [illegible] per day.

Sangamo has until Nov. 1, 1977 to reach the PCB [illegible]

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Sangamo

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level of one part per billion or one-sixth of an ounce which it was to have achieved two weeks ago.

The company will drop the law suit it filed that charged EPA was "arbitrary and capricious" in setting the original one part per billion limit.

Raven said the plant's PCB discharge is "decreasing significantly."

Latest EPA data show PCB levels in the discharge have been as low as 7.3 parts per billion on Oct. 7 and 8. Hydrick said he expects later figures to be even lower.

"We think Sangamo has made a good faith effort to clean up the discharge," Raven said.

The November 1977 date for eliminating PCBs from use is roughly the same date the PCB manufacturer, The Monsanto Corp., has set as its last sales of the chemical.

EPA officials said a two-month-old warning still stands against eating fish taken from the lake. High levels of PCBs were found in fish taken from there earlier this year.

New fish samples are being analyzed, and an update on the warning may be made later this week or early next week.

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