SEP 22 1976

Suit charges 2 firms for Coosa pollution

ATLANTA (AP) — A $500 million lawsuit has been filed against General Electric Co. and the Monsanto Co., charging the firms with polluting the Coosa River.

The class action suit, filed in U.S. District Court here Monday by businessmen, property owners and fishermen, charges General Electric with poisoning fish by dumping Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) into a tributary of the river.

The suit claims the Monsanto Co. sold the chemicals to General Electric.

The state ordered a halt to commercial fishing in the river two weeks ago because the fish contained levels of PCBs above the limit recommended for human consumption by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

PCBs are used in the manufacture of electronic components and can cause skin eruptions, excessive eye discharges and swelling of eyelids. A General Electric spokesman denied that the firm was responsible for fish contamination.

W. R. Buchanan, manager of employe and community relations, said GE still uses PCBs, it is a "natural target for anyone" who wants to file suit.

On another matter, state biologists said Monday thousands of fish have died in the state-operated Buford fish hatchery on the Chattahoochee River. Only four days earlier dead fish were discovered in Nancy Creek, whose waters flow into the Chattahoochee.

A spokesman for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources said researchers do not believe the fish died from consuming PCBs.

Gibb Johnson said scientists are studying the possibility that the fish in the Buford hatchery died from "chemical imbalance" in the water. He said there are indications that the water contained insufficient oxygen.

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