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Class action suit filed against Monsanto, GE

BIRMINGHAM, ALA. (UPI) — A $1 billion dollar class action suit was filed in federal court Wednesday against General Electric and Monsanto Co., charging that the release of PCBS into the Coosa River from a transformer manufacturing plant in Rome, Ga., has damaged Alabamians' business and pleasure activities.

The suit alleges that General Electric dumped the PCBS into the Coosa River from its plant with the knowledge that the chemical was harmful to various water life.

Georgia authorities have banned commercial fishing on the Coosa River from Rome to the Alabama border. A similar suit seeking $500 million in damages has been filed in Georgia.

The Alabama Water Improvement Commission issued a warning last November against the consumption of fish taken from the Coosa River and its tributaries, which includes Weiss Lake in Cherokee County.

Pyranol is the main chemical in PCBA, which are used as heat transfer agents in transformers. Pyranol is produced solely by Monsanto and sold to General Electric.

For that reason, Monsanto was named as a co-defendant in the suit, which has been assigned to U.S. District Court Judge James H. Hancock.

Tests by the Environmental Protection Agency have revealed PCBS to be a cancer-causing agent in laboratory mice.

Concentrations of PCBS determined by the Federal Food and Drug Administration to be unsafe have been found in fish taken from the Coosa River as far south as Weiss Lake near Cedar Bluff.

Officials of General Electric said runoff of the chemical into the river has been halted and the use of PCBS will end by late spring.

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