GREENVILLE, S. C.
NEWS
D. 82,500 S. 99,500

NOV 4 1976

# Sangamo says operation 'lawful'

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PICKENS — A $1 billion pollution suit against the Sangamo Electric Co. is being contested on the grounds that the operation of the plant "has been lawful in all respects."

The company claims that it cannot be held responsible for any damage caused by industrial pollution of Lake Hartwell because federal and state environmental agencies fully approved of the plant's waste treatment process.

The company's claims came in response to a suit filed by business and property owners along Lake Hartwell who are seeking restitution for their alleged loss of business and property values.

In addition to placing the responsibility on health officials, the company also "denies that the chemical substance polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) is an ultrahazardous product detrimental to the environment of wildlife and the human pollution."

According to federal and state records, Sangamo has been dumping PCBs into the lake for several years, but it was not until Aug. 13 that officials warned that dnagerously high levels of the chemical had been found in fish.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Health and Environmental Control issued a warning against eating fish taken from the lake. That warning remains in effect for the Seneca River arm, but has been lifted in other areas.

Sangamo's reply indicates that these agencies would have taken further action if they believed there was any threat to lakeside residents and businessmen.

Wastewater discharged from the plant has been permitted by "state and federal agencies entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining environmental quality," the reply says.

The plaintiffs claimed that they and all property owners along the lake should be awarded $1 billion by the court for loss of business and property values as a result of Sangamo's actions.

Sangamo objects, saying that such a claim would only be valid if the plaintiffs could prove a real loss of more than $10,000 apiece.

The company also claims that the suit does not belong in federal court, and does not qualify as a class action.

The Monsanto Company, a co-defendant in the suit, has denied any responsibility for the pollution.

The firm supplies PCBs to Sangamo for use in electronic capacitors.

MONS 050832