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21 area people seek damages

$1 billion pollution suit filed

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A $1 billion pollution suit has been brought against General Electric Co. and Monsanto Co. by 18 people from Cherokee County and three from Etowah who depend on the Coosa River for their livelihood and recreation.

The suit, filed Wednesday in federal court in Birmingham by Centre attorney John Coggin and Georgia attorney Bob Fennell, charges that pollution from a GE plant near Rome, Ga., into the Coosa River has *ruined their businesses.*

THE DAMAGES SOUGHT are said to be the largest on record in an Alabama Court.

Early this fall, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency warned people living and working along the Coosa that the GE plant was discharging Polychlorinated Biphenyls or PCB into the river.

The toxic chemical is used to make electrical transformers and regulators. The EPA says it has been found to cause cancer in mice.

The suit alleges that Monsanto was the manufacturer and supplier of the chemical to GE, and that the company failed to advise GE on its proper use to prevent contamination.

Georgia officials banned commercial fishing on the Coosa, but Alabama officials did not.

The 18 people from Cherokee County bringing the suit are:

—Tab Chandler, restaurant, bait and tackle shop and fish camp.

—Bill Coffey, fish camp and rental space on Yellow Creek.

—Kenneth Mackey, Bay Springs Marina.

—Fred Ulrich, Cedar Bluff, bait and tackle store and service station.

—Pruitt's Fish Camp Inc.

—H. W. (Rosie) Smith, fish camp in Young's community.

—Dick Young, campgrounds and boat slips.

—Commercial fishermen, H. D. Hampton, William R. Ransum, and Asa Allred.

—Phil Powell, Thrift Court Motel, Centre.

—R. L. Gulce, Twin Oaks Restaurant.

—Randy Odam, Peek's Store and service station.

—Billy Tom Harton, fishing licenses, groceries, boat and tackle, boats and service station.

—Agnes Maddox and Lynne Bishop, Boat Dock Restaurant, Cedar Bluff.

—Frank S. Barber, Centre Rt. 1, homeowner and president of Alabama Bass Chapter Federation.

Those bringing the suit from Etowah County were:

—Grady McBride, Mac's Clubhouse, 708 E. Broad St.

—William T. Rowland, Gadsden Rt. 10, Tommy's Marina and Bait Shop.

—All-Outdoors Inc. doing business as The Outhouse, 1015 So. 4th St. Gadsden.

The class action suit was brought on behalf of the 21 people and others similarly situated.

A Georgia group has filed a $500 million suit against GE and a $500,000 suit has been filed in connection with the PCB chemical.

After that suit was filed, GE concreted the area where the PCBs were being dumped.

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