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Pollution suit hits 2 firms

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—A $1 billion pollution suit has been brought against the General Electric Co. and the Monsanto Corp. by a group of 21 people who depend on the Coosa River for the livelihood and recreation.

The suit, filed Wednesday in federal court, charges that pollution from a General Electric plant near Rome Ga., into the Coosa River has ruined their businesses.

The plaintiffs said they filed the suit in the interest of more than 3,000 residents of northeast Alabama who depend on Weiss Lake—on the Alabama-Georgia border—for their livelihood, either directly or indirectly.

The damages sought may be the largest on record in an Alabama court.

Last September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency warned people living and working along the Coosa that the GE plant near Rome was discharging PCBs—polychlorinated biphenyls—into the river.

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

The EPA also said test showed heavy concentration of PCBs, often more than the five parts per million limit set by the Food and Drug Administration, in fish taken from the Coosa as far south as Weiss Lake.

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

Monsanto was named in the suit because it manufactures the chemical used by the GE plant.

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