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DEC 3 0 1976

Class Suit Charges Coosa Pollution

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (UPI) — A $1 billion dollar class action suit has been filed in federal court against the General Electric and Monsanto Co. in connection with the alleged pollution of the Coosa River by PCBs.

The suit, possibly the largest such action in Alabama history, was filed Wednesday. It charges that the release of PCBs into the Coosa River from a transformer manufacturing plant in Rome, Ga., has damaged business and pleasure activities in Alabama.

U.S. District Court Judge James H. Hancock will hear the case in which about 3,000 persons in Georgia and Alabama who depend on the Coosa for their livelihood are named as the plaintiff class.

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

Commercial fishing on the Coosa River from Rome to the Alabama border has been banned by Georgia authorities and a similar suit seeking $500 million in damages has been filed in that state.

A warning against the consumption of fish taken from the Coosa River and its tributaries was issued last November by the Alabama Water Improvement Commission.

Pyranol, which is produced soley by Monsanto, is the main chemical in the PCBs that are used as heat transfer agents in transformers. Monsanto sells pyranol to General Electric and, for that reason, was named as a co-defendant in the suit.

Environmental Protection Agency tests have revealed PCBs are cancer-causing agents 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.

General Electric officials 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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GE Target Of Suit

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