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EPA to test water at 10 area plants

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SAUGET — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is conducting a weeklong investigation that will test water samples from 10 metro-east waste treatment plants.



Anne Weinert

The American Bottoms Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility is the first of 10 waste water discharge plants east of the Mississippi to be investigated, beginning today, through Sunday.

Regional engineers and representatives from the EPA's National Enforcement Investigation Center will be conducting an intensive on-sight sampling investigation, according to Anne Weinert, one of the environmental engineers conducting the investigation.

"We've been planning this for quite sometime," Weinert said. "We decided it was necessary to do a comprehensive weeklong sampling investigation to get an overall picture of the various facilities."

Weinert said the investigative team will be sampling for total suspended solids, biochemical oxygen, nitrates, nitrites, ammonia, metals, arsenic, mercury, oil or grease, PCPs, acid compounds and organic compounds.

"We are deeply concerned about the conventional pollutant and toxic discharges in the area. And, we will do whatever we feel is necessary to protect the water that falls into the Mississippi River," Weinert said.

George R. Schilinger, manager of American Bottoms, said he doesn't expect the investigation will turn up any surprises. In fact, he believes investigators will find only information the company has already given in their monthly reports to the state and federal EPA offices.

"This is quite routine. It's been their practice in the past to have surprise visits," Schilinger said. "The plant has been running very well in the past three to six months and I expect it will continue to run well."

The companies are subject to fines of $25,000 a day if wastes exceed the compliance standards of the Clean Water Act of 1972, said Daniel O'Riordan, spokesman for the U.S.

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EPA office in Chicago.

The results will not return for several months, Weinert said.

The U.S. EPA filed suit May 13 in federal court against American Bottoms for repeatedly discharging pollutants into the Mississippi River in excess of permitted amounts. The case is pending, Weinert said.

In September, American Bottoms was granted a limited one-year pollution compliance variance concerning the color of water discharged. The company was denied a variance from state water quality standards for dissolved organic solids, various metals and water acidity.

An explosion at the treatment center in December 1987 crippled the plant's $14 million carbon treatment system. An estimated $500,000 damage was done to the plant.

The American Bottoms plant treats 15 million to 20 million gallons of water daily. The company provides secondary sewage treatment for communities that include Cahokia and East St. Louis.

Other waste water treatment plants being investigated this week include:

- Midwest Rubber Reclaiming Co., 3101 Mississippi Ave., Sauget.
- Pfizer Pigments Inc., 200 Lynch Ave., East St. Louis.
- Monsanto Company, 500 Monsanto Ave., Sauget.
- Cerro Copper Products, Mississippi Ave., Sauget.
- Clayton Chemical Co., 1 Mobile Ave., Sauget.
- Trade Waste Incineration, 7 Mobile Ave., Sauget.
- Ethyl Petroleum Additives Inc., Monsanto Ave., Sauget.
- Big River Zinc, Monsanto Ave., Sauget.

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