DEC 31 1976

Suit Filed In Connection With Pollution Of Coosa

BIRMINGHAM — A $1 billion class action suit charging a Rome, Ga., manufacturer and a chemical supplier with polluting the Coosa River was filed by a group of 21 Cherokee County residents in federal court Wednesday.

The plaintiffs alleged that pollution from chemicals discharged from a General Electric Co. transformer plant in Rome have ruined the Coosa, which they contend had been their source of livelihood and recreation.

Also named in the suit is Monsanto Corp., manufacturer of the chemical used by General Electric the suit claims caused the pollution.

The chemical in question is PCBs (polychorinated biphenyls), and the Environmental Protection Agency last September warned Coosa River residents in Cherokee County of a high-concentration in fish taken from the river and from Weiss Lake.

EPA further warned that PCBs was found to cause cancer in laboratory mice.

Since that warning three months ago, area residents reportedly claim their businesses have suffered severely.

A similar suit seeking $500 million in damages was filed in Atlanta federal court earlier. The class suits were reportedly filed in two courts for legal reasons, since the river runs through both Georgia and Alabama.

The Alabama suit seeks twice as much damage as the Georgia suit because more people were said to be affected.

After EPA's warning, The Georgia Department of Natural Resources closed the Coosa to commercial fishing in Georgia. Alabama authorities issued warnings but did not stop commercial fishing.

In a class suit, any damages awarded would reportedly be divided among all those adversely affected and not just those filing the claim. Eventually, some 3,500 Cherokee County residents could be included for a share, depending on the outcome of the suit.

Portions of the Coosa below Weiss Lake, including the part forming Lake Logan Martin in Talladega County and downstream are believed to be free of any PCBs contamination.

MONS 053128