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Greenpeace

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Plant discharges subject of federal investigation

Cahokia - Duys
By Mary Ann Power
Editor

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SAUGET — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is continuing an investigation of pollutants that are allegedly being discharged by local plants into the Mississippi River.

Twenty-five to 30 scientists and environmental engineers began taking hundreds of samples Tuesday of discharges from eight chemical plants and two sewage treatment plants in the Sauget area. Sampling will end Sunday.

The investigation is being conducted to determine whether the industries are complying with federal clean water laws, said agency spokesman Dan O'Riordan.

"Since March, we have been concen-

trating on the level of toxic waste discharged into the Mississippi," he said.

Samples are being taken from the discharges of Monsanto Co., Midwest Rubber and Chemical Co., Clayton Chemical Co., Cerro Copper Products Co., Trade Waste Incineration, Big River Zinc, and Ethyl Petroleum Additives Inc., all of Sauget; and Pfizer Pigments Inc., East St. Louis.

Discharges from the Sauget Physical Chemical Plant and the American Bottoms Wastewater Treatment plant also will be tested.

O'Riordan said the samples will be tested for nitrites, nitrates, total suspended solids, ammonia, arsenic, heavy metals, mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls, grease and oil.

He said the investigation was not

prompted by the recent study released by Greenpeace, an international environmental group. In early October Greenpeace released a study citing a excessive death rate in the St. Louis area between 1968 and 1983.

O'Riordan said companies being tested have been "very cooperative" with the EPA.

Area plant managers said they were notified by the agency that testing would take place, and that they plant cooperate with the EPA.

"They have been doing routine sampling here probably for a year and half," said Henry L. Schweich, president of Cerro Copper Products Co.

"This is not out of the ordinary, as we plan to cooperate with them," he said.

A statement released from Monsanto Co.'s W.G. Krummrich Plant, Sauget, said, "This is a routine program. ... We have cooperated with the U.S. EPA during the preparation for this program and we will continue to cooperate fully as the samples are collected."

"We are in compliance with all applicable waste water discharge standards to American Bottoms," the statement said. "In addition, we are studying the feasibility of a water pretreatment program at the plant to further reduce waste water discharge to the American Bottoms treatment facility."

"This is not unusual," said American Bottoms Plant Manager George Schilling. "I feel very confident that they are just going to confirm what we have been reporting all along ... that we are

producing high quality waste water."

"Our effluent has color, but for that we have a state variance," he said.

In May, the U.S. EPA sued American Bottoms for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act. The suit is pending in federal court.

Anne Weinert, environmental engineer for the agency, has said that EPA officials took samples of discharge pollutants from the plant in March and found the waste to be "the most toxic measured in our region."

The region to which she referred, U.S. EPA's Region 5, includes Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

O'Riordan said he did not know when the test results would be completed.