

HIGH DIOXIN LEVELS FOUND NEAR PENSACOLA PAPERMILL Reports Confirm Citizens' Concerns Over Paper mill Pipelines

Tallahassee – 7-5-05 -- High levels of cancer-causing dioxin have been discovered in waters near International Paper where citizens routinely fish.

Independent tests of the waters of Tee and Wicker Lakes in Perdido Bay turned up dioxin levels as high as 104 parts per trillion – that's 25 times more dioxin than the federal government allows when it makes polluters clean up neighborhood soil. (The official dioxin soil cleanup limit is 3.9 parts per trillion)

The alarming new numbers are part of technical and scientific reports filed in Circuit Court in Pensacola on Thursday, June 30. The reports are part of a lawsuit against International Paper Company. The reports provide proof that the facility is discharging high levels of dioxin - and it is accumulating in nearby fishing grounds.

“We have to protect public health immediately,” said Linda Young, Southeast Regional Director for the Clean Water Network. “These levels are alarmingly high and we now have proof that the dioxin contamination is growing daily.”

The analysis was done by Dr. Wayne Isphording, University of South Alabama, on the sediments in Eleven-Mile Creek and Perdido Bay, including Tee and Wicker Lakes. Dr. Isphording used chemical and particle size markers to fingerprint IP's discharge in the solids that are accumulating in Perdido Bay. The chemicals dioxin, arsenic and other hazardous substances are found to be abundant in IP's discharge.

In another report filed with the court on Thursday, Canadian pulp and paper technology expert Neil McCubbin documents IP's poor performance compared to other mills in the United States and the world and documents ways in which the mill could improve its discharge to eliminate many of the problems now being suffered at Perdido Bay.

An exhibit attached to the court document provides insight into the corporate strategy used by the mill to hide its poor performance. In 1998, at the request of the Clean Water Network, the U.S. EPA began an investigation of the Pensacola mill, which had been operating without a valid permit for many years. Mr. McCubbin was on assignment as a consultant to EPA at that time. An internal memo from a paper company executive stated that they must keep McCubbin out of the mill because of his extensive understanding of the pulp and paper industry.

McCubbin shows in his report that IP can greatly reduce its discharge of solids and other pollution with a capitol investment, which the company has aggressively avoided for many decades, at the expense of the environment and nearby property owners.

“IP and its predecessors have saved millions of dollars by avoiding the Clean Water Act – with a lot of help from the Florida DEP and the US EPA,” said Young. “The citizens

of Florida and Alabama need to demand better protection and can not be expected to continue accepting this high level of exposure to one of the deadliest toxic chemicals known to man.”