

Los Angeles County sues Monsanto over chemical contamination

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Image Credit: Alternet

Los Angeles County recently filed a lawsuit against Bayer, the company that purchased Monsanto last year, for allegedly contaminating the local environment with an outlawed chemical that Monsanto used in many of its products decades ago. According to the lawsuit, Monsanto had been aware that polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were harmful but concealed the data for years while polluting the water.

Between 1935 and 1977, Monsanto manufactured PCBs in many of its products but discontinued production shortly before the U.S. government outlawed PCBs in 1979. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)), PCBs are “toxic and persistent chemicals primarily used as insulating fluids in heavy-duty electrical equipment in power plants, industries, and large buildings across the country... PCBs have caused birth defects and cancer in laboratory animals, and they are a suspected cause of cancer and adverse skin and liver effects in humans.”

Scott Kuhn, a lawyer for the county, recently told [Reuters](#) that a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles federal court on Thursday seeks compensatory and punitive

damages. According to the suit, Monsanto concealed knowledge that PCBs would cause environmental damage while continuing to pollute multiple waterways.

According to Kuhn, the county is seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in damages in order to reconstruct its failing stormwater systems and other contaminated bodies of water.

Last month, Bayer was ordered to pay more than [\\$2 billion](#) in damages to an elderly couple after a California jury determined that Monsanto’s Roundup weed killer had been directly responsible for causing their diagnosis of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. In March, a San Francisco jury ordered Bayer to pay more than \$80 million after unanimously deciding that Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide was a substantial factor in causing Edwin Hardeman’s cancer.

Last year, school groundskeeper Dewayne “Lee” Johnson was initially awarded [\\$289 million](#) after a San Francisco jury found that Monsanto’s glyphosate-based weed killers caused his cancer. A judge later reduced the settlement to \$78.5 million, while Bayer has filed an appeal.

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