

Monsanto good or evil essay



ANNISTON, Ala. — On the west side of Anniston, the poor side of Anniston, the people ate dirt. They called it “Alabama clay” and cooked it for extra flavor. They also grew berries in their gardens, raised hogs in their back yards, caught bass in the murky streams where their children swam and played and were baptized. They didn’t know their dirt and yards and bass and kids — along with the acrid air they breathed — were all contaminated with chemicals. They didn’t know they lived in one of the most polluted patches of America.

Now they know. They also know that for nearly 40 years, while producing the now-banned industrial coolants known as PCBs at a local factory, Monsanto Co. routinely discharged toxic waste into a west Anniston creek and dumped millions of pounds of PCBs into oozing open-pit landfills. And thousands of pages of Monsanto documents — many emblazoned with warnings such as “CONFIDENTIAL: Read and Destroy” — show that for decades, the corporate giant concealed what it did and what it knew.

In 1966, Monsanto managers discovered that fish submerged in that creek turned belly-up within 10 seconds, spurting blood and shedding skin as if dunked into boiling water. They told no one. In 1969, they found fish in another creek with 7,500 times the legal PCB levels. They decided “there is little object in going to expensive extremes in limiting discharges.” In 1975, a company study found that PCBs caused tumors in rats. They ordered its conclusion changed from “slightly tumorigenic” to “does not appear to be carcinogenic.”

the Environmental Protection Agency ordered General Electric Co. to spend \$460 million to dredge PCBs it had dumped into the Hudson River in the past, perhaps the Bush administration's boldest environmental action to date. The decision was bitterly opposed by the company, but hailed by national conservation groups and many prominent and prosperous residents of the picturesque Hudson River Valley.

Anniston is not much of a model city anymore. The EPA officials who set up an Anniston satellite office to deal with the PCB problem are now alarmed about widespread lead poisoning as well. The Army is building an incinerator here to burn 2, 000 tons of deadly sarin and mustard gas. And the Anniston Star has been questioning Monsanto's past mercury releases.

Officials at Solutia Inc., the name given to Monsanto's chemical operations after they were spun off into a separate company in 1997, acknowledge that Monsanto made mistakes. But they also said that for years, PCBs were hailed for preventing fires and explosions in electrical equipment. Monsanto did stop making PCBs in 1977, two years before a nationwide ban took effect. And the current scientific consensus that PCBs are harmful, especially to the environment, masks serious disputes over just how harmful they are to people.

Still, the company's credibility problems linger in Anniston. A recent company e-mail revealed that even the gifts of computers and labs were part of a new damage-control strategy, along with donations to Siegelman's inaugural fund: " The strategy calls for significantly increasing . . . community outreach, contributions and political involvement while

aggressively seeking . . . to contain media issues regionally.” The company’s critics say little has changed. And they warn that Monsanto, which no longer produces chemicals, is now promising the world that its genetically engineered crops are safe for human consumption.

Part of the problem is that despite all the publicity, much remains unknown about PCBs. Various animal studies have linked them to various cancers. Other studies suggest possible ties to low IQs, birth defects, thyroid problems, immune problems, diabetes. A federal research summary titled “Do PCBs Affect Human Health?” concluded: “No smoking gun . . . but plenty of bullets on the floor.”

Records show that the Anniston plant did act to reduce its mercury releases after the Snow Creek fish kills. But it did not try to reduce PCB releases, even though the Anniston plant was leaking 50, 000 pounds of PCBs into Snow Creek every year, while burying more than 1 million pounds of PCB-laced waste in its antiquated landfills. (By contrast, GE has been ordered to dredge 150, 000 pounds of PCBs from the Hudson.) Jack Matson, a Pennsylvania State University environmental engineering professor who has consulted for Monsanto, concluded in a report for the Anniston plaintiffs that the company failed to observe even basic industry practices here. It had no catch basins, settling ponds or carbon filters to clean its wastewater. It washed spills straight into its sewers.

These horrid acts are just the tip of the iceberg of Monsanto here is a timeline of the criminal record for environmental contamination.

Monsanto has been identified by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency as being the “ potentially responsible party” for no fewer than 93 contaminated sites (Superfund Sites) in the U. S. Monsanto has also admitted: “ There are various other lawsuits, claims and proceedings that state agencies and others have asserted against the company seeking remediation of alleged environmental impairment”.

1986 – A US District Court found Monsanto liable in the death of a Texas employee from leukemia caused by exposure to the carcinogen benzene. The plaintiffs family contended that Monsanto had neglected to monitor benzene emissions at the plant and had failed to instruct workers about the risks of handling benzene-tainted compounds. The court awarded the plaintiffs family \$108 million. 1988 – Monsanto agreed to a \$1. 5 million settlement in a chemical poisoning case filed by over 170 former employees of the companys Nitro, West Virginia facility. Six workers said they had been exposed to chemicals which gave them a rare form of bladder cancer. 1990 – Monsanto paid \$648, 000 to settle charges that it allegedly failed to report significant risk findings from health studies to the EPA as required under the Toxic Substance Control Act.

1991 – The Massachusetts Attorney Generals office fined Monsanto \$1 million–the largest ever assessed in Massachusetts for violation of a state environmental law–for illegally discharging 200, 000 gallons of acid-laden wastewater from a plant and failing to report the release immediately as well as understating the volume of the release. According to the states Department of Environmental Protection, Monsanto, which paid a \$35, 000

fine in 1988 for failing to report an acid spill at the same facility, had a history of violating spill-reporting laws.

1992 – Monsanto agreed to pay \$39 million of a \$208 million Superfund settlement with 1700 Houston residents who claimed injuries as a result of living near a former toxic waste dump, labeled one of the worst such sites in Texas. Plaintiffs argued that Monsanto deposited 519 million pounds of hazardous compounds into unlined holes in the ground. Children in the area suffer health problems including immune deficiency disorders, cancer, and facial deformities allegedly due to exposure to toxins leaking from the site.

1996 – Monsanto agreed to pay \$50, 000 in legal costs and to alter advertising in New York after complaints from the states attorney general that advertisements for Monsantos Roundup brand herbicide were misleading. In their advertisements, Monsanto had claimed that Roundup was safer than table salt and “ practically non-toxic” to mammals, birds and fish. New York had been challenging the ads since 1991.

The Mississippi River has suffered especially from Monsantos pollution. Monsantos Sauget, Illinois plant discharges an estimated 34 million pounds of toxins into the river. The facility is a major producer of chloronitrobenzenes, bioaccumulative teratogens detected at levels as high as 1000 parts per billion in fish over 100 miles downstream. Before they were banned in the 1970s, the Sauget plant was the worlds only manufacturer of PCBs. Besides being present at high levels in Mississippi fish, PCBs are ubiquitous in the global ecosystem.

Monsanto's Muscatine, Iowa plant, which produces alachlor, butachlor and other highly toxic compounds, releases at least 265,000 pounds of chemicals per year directly into the Mississippi.

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service: “[T]he combined effect of the Monsanto discharge with other discharges may severely stress and degrade the [aquatic] habitat.” Agricultural chemicals in the discharge were of particular concern.

On top of PCBs and numerous other dioxins Monsanto also produces butachlor (trade names Machete, Lambast), an herbicide which poses both acute and chronic health risks and can contaminate water supplies. Although Monsanto manufactures butachlor in Iowa, the herbicide has never been registered in the US or gained a food residue tolerance. In 1984, the EPA rejected Monsanto's registration applications due to “environmental, residue, fish and wildlife, and toxicological concerns.” Monsanto has refused to submit additional data requested by the EPA. Despite its recognized dangers, Monsanto sells butachlor abroad. Dozens of countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa use the product, primarily on the paddy rice which constitutes almost all of US rice imports.

Although in the 1997 merger Monsanto's chemical branch has split off into a sister company called Solutia Monsanto is still making products that affect our lives here is a list of some of Monsanto's current products:

Roundup Herbicide

Roundup Herbicide is one of Monsanto's family of more than 90 glyphosate-based herbicide products. The products are used to control weeds on the farm, the golf course and in home gardens; create sustainable agricultural systems that preserve top soil, help retain moisture and provide a valuable tool for integrated pest management programs. They help prepare deforested land for reforestation, reclaim land for grazing or agriculture that has been taken over by weeds, restore wildlife habitats, control roadside vegetation and rid school yards and parks of noxious weeds like poison ivy, among many other uses

Anthem, Maverick, Monza and Sundance Herbicides

These herbicides help farmers optimize wheat yields by selectively controlling brome grass, couch grass, wild oats, canary grass and other grasses and broadleaf weeds. Other products in this family (Apyros, Monitor and Leader) were launched in 1998 in several key international markets. These products were first marketed in 1999 in the United States as Maverick.

Far-Go Herbicide

Far-Go is an emulsifiable herbicide for control of wild oats in winter wheat, spring and durum wheat, triticale, barley, peas (green, field dried, chickpeas, garbanzo beans), lentils and sugar beets. It is approved for use in Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Seed Products

Monsanto produces seeds for virtually all of the important food crops, including wheat, corn, soybeans, and grain sorghum. The seeds are marketed under the Asgrow, DEKALB, Hartz, and Quantum brands.

Insect Protection Products

Monsanto has produced several product solutions to help growers fight insect pests. These products include Bollgard Cotton, Bollgard with Roundup Ready Cotton, Ingard Cotton, NewLeaf Potato and YieldGard Insect Protected Corn.

Dairy (Posilac Bovine Somatotropin)

POSILAC bovine somatotropin is widely accepted and used as a management tool to enhance dairy cow productivity.

Not only does Monsanto's products wedge themselves into your life but that sister company Solutia also called "old Monsanto" has many products that without your life would be much different. Solutia uses its skills in applied chemistry to create products used by consumers every day. They own product lines that touch many areas, including:

Films for Glass Products – Their plastic interlayer strengthens laminated glass, helping to protect homes from hurricanes and automobile occupants from sun, sound and injury. CPFilms produces high-performance film products for automobiles and industrial products.

Resins and Specialties — Their resins and additives are the critical functional components in high performance coatings for autos, appliances, food and

beverage cans, compact disks, highway stripes and thousands of other applications. There Skydrol hydraulic fluid is used by the world's leading airlines.

Carpet, Nylon and Fibers — Wear-dated carpet made with there nylon fibers provides comfort for millions of homeowners, while there other products are used in home furnishings, foods and beverages, vehicle air bags, tire cord and engineered plastic components.

Pharma Services — There scientists provide process research and development and small-scale manufacturing in support of new drug therapy development.

Given the history of trubbles that Monsanto has had in the past cleaning up its mess should we as the consumer and as a guardian of the earth trust that the wrongs of the past will not be repeeted and even if we see the actions of these companys as wrong could we live without there Products?