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Wednesday, January 7, 2009

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Shell Settles Dumping Suit for \$3 Million

Published: February 9, 1995

The Shell Oil Company has agreed to pay \$3 million to settle a lawsuit charging that it has been dumping illegal amounts of selenium into San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

In a settlement filed in Federal District Court here on Tuesday, Shell also agreed to reduce the selenium released in wastewater at its Martinez refinery.

Judge Thelton E. Henderson of Federal District Court had ruled in December 1993 in favor of the California Public Interest Research Group, which argued that the amount of selenium in Shell's discharges violated Federal law. Arguments on the overall lawsuit had continued after that ruling.

Selenium is a nutrient in small amounts but is toxic in larger doses. It occurs naturally in soil and oil in the San Joaquin Valley.

While admitting that Shell had exceeded permit limits, company officials said the selenium discharges in the strait were not enough to harm the environment.

In the settlement, Shell agreed to meet progressively stricter selenium limits until it averages no more than 2.3 pounds a day in 1998. The refinery averaged 4.1 pounds a day in 1994, Shell officials said.

The settlement must be approved by a Federal judge.

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