



September 19, 2008

## **MADIGAN: AGREEMENT REACHED IN U OF I TOXIC WASTEWATER RELEASE THAT KILLED FISH AND OTHER AQUATIC LIFE**

Chicago - Attorney General Lisa Madigan today said the University of Illinois, the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District and CEDA, Inc., will pay \$65,000 to resolve allegations of water pollution filed by the Attorney General's office in 2002 after thousands of gallons of toxic wastewater overpowered the treatment facilities of the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District. The mishap resulted in a significant loss of fish and aquatic life along a stretch of the nearby Saline Branch and Salt Fork of the Vermilion River.

In July 2002, the university hired an industrial contractor, CEDA, Inc., to clean the boilers at the Abbott Power Plant and arranged for the wastewater generated to be discharged into the sanitary district's treatment system. However, the wastewater contained such a high concentration of ammonia and was released at such a high rate that it was impossible to adequately treat before being released into the Saline Branch drainage ditch and then the Salt Fork in amounts that exceeded the sanitary district's permits.

"Accidents like this illustrate why it is absolutely mandatory that proper procedures are followed when undertaking such a significant project," Madigan said. "Environmentalists and the state are still working diligently to restore aquatic life to what it was in these waterways. We are pleased that we were able to work cooperatively with the University of Illinois to resolve this matter."

Madigan said the consent order filed last week in Champaign County Circuit Court also orders the University and CEDA - going forward - to dispose of wastewater containing cleaning chemicals at permitted hazardous waste management facilities and to no longer discharge those wastes into the sewer system. Routine and periodic cleaning using water without chemicals can continue at the power plant. In addition, prior to each planned cleaning, the University and CEDA are now required to prepare a Boiler Cleanout Waste Management Plan, which identifies all of the hazardous substances, specifies how the wastes will be disposed and restricts the offsite transport of the wastes for treatment or disposal until written laboratory results confirm that the wastes are acceptable to the disposal facility. The court also ordered the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District to require users of its facilities proposing one-time or limited duration discharges of wastewater to identify all hazardous substances in wastewater and their expected concentration levels prior to the District's decision to authorize the discharge.

The court order, entered September 12, 2008, in Champaign County Circuit Court, follows the October 2007 settlement between the three defendants and the U.S. Department of Interior and Attorney General Madigan representing the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. That agreement recovered \$491,000 to compensate for the natural resource damages and costs associated with the incident. Of that amount, \$450,000 will be dedicated to funding natural resource restoration projects in the Saline Branch and Salt Fork watersheds.

Senior Assistant Attorney General James Morgan is handling the case for Madigan's Environmental Bureau.

-30-

[Return to September 2008 Press Releases](#)