

## **WAL-MART ACCUSED OF POLLUTING RIVERS**

By DANIEL P. JONES; Courant Environment Writer

The state is accusing 11 Wal-Mart stores in Connecticut of polluting nearby rivers and streams with contaminated storm water.

In a lawsuit announced Tuesday against Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the state attorney general's office and the Department of Environmental Protection allege that the giant retailer is violating clean-water laws. The lawsuit was filed last month in Superior Court in Hartford.

The stores keep fertilizers and pesticides outside. When it rains, the state says, the products pollute storm water that runs off paved areas outside the stores into waterways.

The stores targeted in the lawsuit are in Branford, Cromwell, East Windsor, Groton, Manchester, Naugatuck, New Britain, North Windham, Putnam, Shelton and Wallingford.

The DEP made repeated attempts to bring the store chain into compliance with the rules, Environmental Protection Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque Jr. said.

"Unfortunately, Wal-Mart has failed to take their environmental shortcomings seriously and they continue to create conditions that adversely impact the state's natural resources," he said.

Keith Morris, a Wal-Mart spokesman at the company's main office in Arkansas, said the company was surprised by the lawsuit.

He said the company hired an environmental consultant to get advice on how to address the violations after the state brought them to Wal-Mart's attention last summer.

"To seek a civil penalty for something that happened last summer would suggest that we ignored the state's concern, and that's just absolutely not true," he said.

But Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said the pollutants that flow across Wal-Mart's parking lots into waterways create a "clear and present environmental danger."

The state says several DEP inspections found that Wal-Mart was illegally discharging storm water without a permit, failed to develop required plans for handling storm water, did not train employees and failed to maintain storm water detention basins.

Both the attorney general's office and Wal-Mart said they were not aware of similar complaints in other states.