



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conservation Group Takes Action to Stop Illegal Discharge of Toxic and Cancer-Causing Chemicals

Milwaukee, WI – Today Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers, through its attorneys Midwest Environmental Advocates, sent a notice of intent to sue under the Clean Water Act to Fontarome Chemical, Inc., a Milwaukee area chemical manufacturer. The notice asserts that Fontarome, which discharges its wastewater into the sewer system operated by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District ("MMSD"), has dumped excessive amounts of toxic and cancer-causing chemicals into the sewer. This is a problem for area waters because MMSD's sewer system is not designed to remove these toxic chemicals, but instead relies on companies like Fontarome to not release them into the sewer in the first place.

"Fontarome has violated its Clean Water Act permit almost 500 times since at least June of 2002," according to Melissa K. Scanlan, Founder and Senior Counsel, Midwest Environmental Advocates. "This illegal water pollution needs to be stopped," added Scanlan.

Public records on file with MMSD show that Fontarome has exceeded its permit limitations for a variety of harmful substances, including mercury, ammonia, toluene, and chloroform. MMSD is responsible for issuing Clean Water Act permits for those facilities that discharge into its treatment works, and Fontarome has landed on MMSD's list of entities in "Significant Non-Compliance" with the Clean Water Act multiple times, including 2006 and 2007.

Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers is concerned that Fontarome's excessive chemical discharges will negatively affect rivers and streams, degrading aquatic habitat and posing a threat to human health. "Fontarome is handling dangerous chemicals without any technology in place to reduce toxic loads into our shared waters" said Cheryl Nenn,

(continued)

Riverkeeper for Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers. "We're bringing legal action today to protect our waterways, drinking water, and public health from further toxic abuses," she added.

Under the Clean Water Act, individuals and organizations are authorized to bring "citizen suits" against polluters alleged to be in violation of applicable discharge limitations or permit terms. Citizens are required to give sixty days' notice of their intent to sue.

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FAST FACTS

- Fontarome Chemical, Inc. presently operates under Permit No. 96.02, a Clean Water Act discharge permit issued by MMSD under the authority of state and federal law. The permit places limits on the amounts and concentrations of a variety of chemicals associated with Fontarome's manufacturing process that the company is allowed to discharge to MMSD's sewer system.
- Some of the harmful chemicals illegally discharged by Fontarome include:
 - *Mercury* – a known neurotoxin and suspected developmental toxin that can cause severe damage to internal organs and the human reproductive process;
 - *Toluene* – a volatile organic compound that is known to cause disruptions in human development, and can cause a variety of nervous system disorders;
 - *Ammonia* – a nitrogen compound that can cause severe skin, eye, and lung irritation in its gaseous form, and is toxic to fresh water aquatic species in even moderate concentrations;
 - *Chloroform* – a known carcinogen and suspected of causing harm to human cardiovascular, neurological, reproductive, and respiratory systems;
 - *Bis(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate* ("BEHP") – a member of the Phthalate group of toxic chemicals, often used in plastics production, and a known carcinogen and suspected of causing endocrine and other system disruptions.
- Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers (FMR) is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting water quality and wildlife habitat and advocating for sound land use in the Milwaukee River Basin. FMR is a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an international coalition working to protect and restore the world's waterways, and is the licensed Riverkeeper® for Milwaukee. See www.mkeriverkeeper.org for more information.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. (MEA) is a non-profit environmental law center working to protect the public's right to clean air, clean water, clean government, and responsible land use. See www.midwestadvocates.org for more information.