# Supreme Court Allows Lawsuits Against Water Companies for Sewage Dumping in Landmark Ruling



A landmark Supreme Court ruling has allowed water companies in Britain to be sued for sewage dumping in waterways. This decision arose from a prolonged legal struggle between Manchester Ship Canal Company Ltd and United Utilities. The Manchester Ship Canal Company initially sought damages due to raw sewage discharges into the Manchester Ship Canal.

The case, which commenced in 2018, saw a series of judicial decisions that initially favored United Utilities. In 2021, the High Court ruled in favor of the utility company, a decision upheld by the Court of Appeal. However, the Supreme Court has now overturned these rulings. In a key judgement by Lord Reed and Lord Hodge, the court established that waterway owners have the right to sue for sewage-related damages, regardless of negligence or deliberate misconduct by the companies.

The ruling concludes that inadequate sewage infrastructure contributing to discharges during heavy rainfall does not absolve water companies from potential lawsuits. The Environmental Law Foundation and the Good Law Project, who supported the case, welcomed the decision as a significant step towards environmental justice and accountability for water companies.

United Utilities has acknowledged the ruling and is evaluating its implications. The company highlighted its proposed £3 billion program aimed at improving storm overflow systems, a plan under consideration by the regulatory body Ofwat.