

# Protect Your Water From Dangerous Coal Ash!

Coal ash is a byproduct of coal combustion and contains high levels of harmful heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, selenium, and many more. Stored in ash pits, also known as ash ponds, coal ash is leaching into our streams, rivers, lakes and groundwater, and is a serious public health hazard and environmental threat to nearby communities.

## COAL ASH PRESENTS SERIOUS HUMAN HEALTH RISKS

- **1 IN 50:** Your chance of getting cancer if drinking water contaminated by coal ash.<sup>1</sup>
- Living near coal ash impoundments increases risk to serious medical problems, such as:
  - Birth defects**
  - Neurological damage**
  - Reproductive issues**
  - Tumors and cancer**<sup>2</sup>
- **78-105:** Years after coal ash ponds begin operation that health threats still persist.<sup>3</sup>



**Above:** 2008 TVA 1 billion gallon coal ash spill into the Emory River in Tennessee.  
*Credit: Appalachian Voices*  
**Left:** Selenium-exposed duck embryo on left; normal on right; from Utah's Middle Green River Basin.  
*Credit: Bruce Waddell, USFWS.*

## COAL ASH PRESENTS SERIOUS RISKS TO FISH, WILDLIFE, AND OUR WAY OF LIFE

- A report submitted by a U.S. Forest Service Research fish biologist concludes that coal ash surface impoundments pose **unacceptably high ecological risks** regardless of their location or design.<sup>4</sup>
- The report identified **\$2.3 billion in monetary damage** to the sports recreation industry at just 22 waterways as a result of coal ash contamination.
- Levels of arsenic in the Emory River were 149 times the allowable standard for drinking water after the 2008 TVA coal ash spill in Tennessee.<sup>2</sup>

## COAL ASH: IN YOUR BACKYARD

### In Illinois<sup>5</sup>:

- Over 4.4 million tons of coal ash are produced in Illinois *each year* and are stored in wet coal ash pits at 24 power plant sites.
- Only 37% of Illinois coal ash ponds are lined.
- Coal ash contaminants have been found in groundwater at **every single coal-fired power plant site** in Illinois!
- Residents throughout the state depend on clean rivers and groundwater—yet our water resources are at risk as facilities continue to dump and leach millions of gallons daily of toxic coal ash waste.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. EPA, Human and Ecological Risk Assessment of Coal Combustion Wastes, RIN 2050-AE81 April 2010, page 4-7.

<sup>2</sup> Physicians for Social Responsibility and Earthjustice, *Coal Ash-The toxic threat to our health and environment* <http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/coal-ash.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. EPA, Human and Ecological Risk Assessment of Coal Combustion Wastes, (Aug. 6, 2007) (draft) 4-7, 4-8.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Office of Management and Budget, A. Dennis Lemly, Ph.D., Research Fish Biologist USFS, S. Research Station Piedmont Aquatic Research Laboratory, Jan. 8, 201

<sup>5</sup> Earthjustice. Illinois and the Threat to Public Health from Coal Ash Disposal. <http://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/library/references/il-coal-ash-factsheet.pdf>

# We Need To Protect Our Communities!

IEPA has proposed rules for surface impoundments that contain coal combustion waste at power generating facilities. The proposed rules establish requirements for site characterization, groundwater monitoring, preventive response and corrective action for groundwater contamination, and closure of coal ash pits. While the need for such regulation is critical, unfortunately the rules fall short of protecting Illinois communities from the serious harm that coal ash pits pose to our waters—surface waters, groundwater and drinking water supplies.

**Now is the time to strengthen these rules and prevent coal ash from contaminating our waters and jeopardizing public health.**

## Groundwater Contamination

Impoundments causing groundwater impairment must be closed by a set date to fully protect the environment and human health. Complete removal of waste should be considered as the presumptive closure strategy.

## Surface water Contamination

The draft rules do not require that threats to surface waters be assessed and as such leave downstream waterways vulnerable to toxic pollutants. The rules must protect surface waters from contamination.

## Public Participation and Notice

Public citizens should have the right to be informed and participate in decisions regarding what is to be done with coal combustion waste in their communities. The rules must give the public ample time (60 days) to comment meaningfully on any facility's plan and allow the IEPA to hold a public meeting on the plan where there is significant interest.

## Financial Burden

The weight of our state's coal ash problem is a tremendous burden that communities should not be held responsible for. Given the potential costs of addressing aged impoundments and groundwater contamination, this rule needs a financial assurance requirement for power companies to make sure that Illinois taxpayers are not left to cover the bill.

**The Illinois Pollution Control Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed rules in Chicago:**

**May 14th, 10 a.m.**

(to continue May 15th as needed)

James R. Thompson Center,  
100 W. Randolph St., Chicago, IL

**Written comments can also be sent to:**

Illinois Pollution Control Board  
Office of the Clerk  
100 W. Randolph St. Ste 11-500  
Chicago, IL 60601

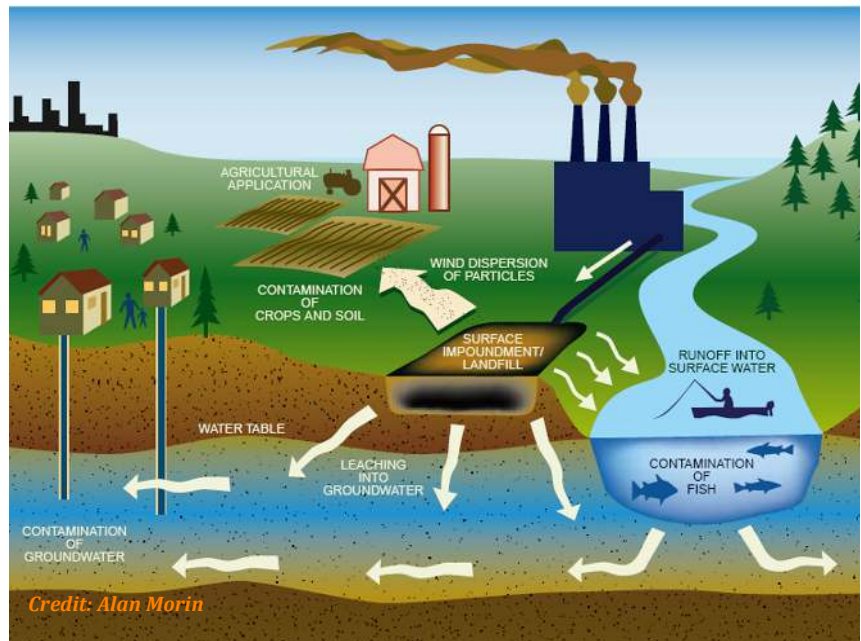
Subject: RE: R14-10, Coal Combustion Ash Ponds  
**OR**

Use this link to send in a comment letter:

<http://bit.ly/CoalAshComments>

**Sign up to attend and help!**

<http://bit.ly/coalashsignup>



**IPCB: PLEASE PROTECT THE HEALTH OF ILLINOIS' ENVIRONMENT AND FAMILIES AND STRENGTHEN THE PROPOSED RULES ON COAL ASH PITS IN ILLINOIS!**