

# Help Protect the Middle Fork From Coal Ash Pollution



## What's the Problem?

In 2011, Dynegy Midwest Generation closed its electric power station along the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, Illinois' only National Scenic River. The Middle Fork is one of the most biologically-diverse streams in the Midwest and is the centerpiece of a major recreational area in east-central Illinois.

A proposal is now before the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) that could allow Dynegy to leave 3.3 million cubic yards of coal ash in three unlined pits in the river's floodplain. The pits are on the west side of the Middle Fork, right next to the river's channel. That's enough ash to fill the Danville Dan's baseball stadium with a pile of toxic material that is over 90 stories tall, or fill Chicago's Willis (Sears) Tower nearly two times!

## What is Coal Ash?

Coal ash is what's left over after coal is burned. It contains some of the world's most toxic metals, such as arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium and selenium. These and other chemicals found in coal ash can cause birth defects, cancer, and brain damage in humans; and can harm and kill wildlife, especially fish.



### **Coal Ash Pollution**

In 2012, the IEPA issued Dynegy a Notice of Violation of Class I Groundwater Standards for boron, manganese, sulfate, total dissolved solids, iron and pH, which are indicative of coal ash pollution. Independent tests have recently shown heavy metals such as arsenic, boron, chromium, lead, and manganese leaking into the river

### **Erosion**

Severe riverbank erosion has been a threat to the coal ash pits for years. In the 1980's, gabions (wire cages filled with rocks) were installed along the North and Old East Ash Pits. Within decades, they were severely compromised by the forces of the river.

A recent study shows that erosion is now progressing 2.5 to 9 times faster than previously predicted. In 2016 Dynegy had to do emergency repairs on 485 feet of riverbank along the New East Pond after 20 feet of bank had been lost in just six years. Dynegy now wants to cap its pits, stabilize up to 1,700 feet of additional riverbank, and move on. Bank stabilization will slow erosion, but long-term, the river will continue to threaten the ash pits.



### **What's at Stake?**

Dynegy's pits are ticking time bombs. Coal ash does not belong in the river system. Dynegy's cap will not isolate the ash from the groundwater or river.

A potential breach in one of the walls of the pits could result in a coal ash spill on the Middle Fork. This would have devastating consequences for recreation and riverfront development. Kickapoo State Park is immediately downstream from the coal ash pits and Danville's riverfront project is just 12 miles away.

### **The Solution**

Dynegy should move its ash out of the floodplain, and place it into a properly-lined and monitored cell on its property, far from the river. Leaving the ash in the river's floodplain creates a future liability for taxpayers who will have to monitor and repair river stabilization, and clean up the ash in the event of a spill.

### **What You Can Do**

You can join this campaign by learning more and taking action [www.ecojusticecollaborative.org](http://www.ecojusticecollaborative.org). Go to our website to sign and send a letter to the Governor and Director of the IEPA.

Let your city, county, and state officials know you want them to act to protect the river from coal ash pollution. You'll find letters to send electronically to local officials and a sample script on our site to help you make your concerns known. Your calls and letters can, and do make a difference!

Watch our website for information on the upcoming spring People's Hearing, where you can provide testimony that will be delivered to the IEPA.