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[What Is Your Electric Utility Planning for its Coal Ash?](#)

December 22nd, 2016 > [Coal Ash](#), [High Risk Energy](#) > [Adam Reaves](#) >



Utilities in the Southeast are already starting to “close” toxic coal ash pits. We calculated how much ash will be excavated and how much will be left in mostly unlined pits posing a perpetual contamination risk to ground and surface water. In the Southeast:

- **309.7 million tons** of coal ash will be “closed” by 2030.
- **252.2 million tons** of that ash will be capped in place.
- **57.5 million tons** of ash will be excavated to lined landfills.
- **12 billion gallons** of wastewater will need to be eliminated, often through discharges into our waterways.

An additional **3.9 billion gallons** of combined ash and wastewater will need to be excavated or capped in place (some utilities did not separate ash from wastewater in their reporting).

Below, we’ve broken down the totals for North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, and Alabama and provided a summary of how agreements to excavate over 20 million tons of coal ash were achieved in South Carolina.

You can find this information and much more on [Southeastcoalash.org](#), which we manage and update regularly. The site allows users to explore coal ash containment sites and potentially contaminated watersheds using our map and data features. [Click here](#) to learn more about using Southeastcoalash.org to discover if toxic coal ash is stored

near you.

South Carolina

South Carolina's three power utilities, South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G), Duke Energy, and Santee Cooper, [agreed](#) to remove all coal ash from unlined pits near waterways throughout the state, **approximately 20 million tons in total**. The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) [led the charge](#) representing SACE, Riverkeepers, and other advocacy organizations in a series of lawsuits from 2012–2015.

South Carolina's utilities are proving that excavation can be done relatively quickly and that it creates huge positive results for the environment. Santee Cooper, which SELC sued on behalf of SACE, Waccamaw Riverkeeper, and the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League in 2012, [has already removed](#) over one third of its ash. Since SCE&G started removing coal ash from the Wateree power plant site, arsenic at two wells beneath the ash pit [decreased](#) by over 90 percent. SELC and the Catawba Riverkeeper won cleanup at Wateree through a 2012 lawsuit.

North Carolina

In North Carolina, Duke is planning to excavate **35.7 million tons** of coal ash and cap **71.4 million** in place. Some of the ash may also be [recycled](#). Advocates across the state organized thousands of North Carolinians to engage in regulatory processes and support legislation to achieve proper cleanup. Several organizations participated in lawsuits, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, that helped ensure coal ash was excavated from many of Duke's coal ash impoundments in NC. SACE was part of the successful Dan River case.

Plant	Number of storage units with publicly available schedules for closure	Closure Method(s)	Estimated Closure Year(s)	Ash Tons Currently in Closing Ponds	Wastewater Gallons Currently in Closing Ponds	Lined/Unlined
Asheville	1	Excavation	2022	2,804,250	9,776,000	Unlined
Asheville	1	Excavation	2017	291,303	-	Unlined
Belews Creek	1	Cap in place	2028	11,890,000	959,960,000	Unlined
Buck	3	Excavation	2029	6,410,000	89,000,000	Unlined
Cape Fear	5	Excavation	2028	5,760,000	Unknown	Unlined
Cliffside (Rogers)	4	Excavation	2020	353,000	-	Unlined
Cliffside (Rogers)	2	Cap in place	2026	6,091,000	305,760,000	Unlined
Dan River	2	Excavation	2019	1,600,000	21,509,999	Unlined
G.G. Allen	2	Cap in place	2028	17,600,000	64,000,000	Unlined
H.F. Lee	5	Excavation	2028	5,830,000	47,200,000	Unlined
L.V. Sutton	2	Excavation	2019	6,650,000	65,390,000	Unlined
Marshall	1	Cap in place	2029	16,700,000	140,650,000	Unlined
Mayo	3	Cap in place	2026	5,500,000	481,670,000	Unlined

Riverbend	2	Excavation	2019	3,620,000	-	Unlined
Roxboro	6	Cap in place	2028	13,622,000	122,824,000	Unlined
Weatherspoon	1	Excavation	2024	2,450,000	-	Unlined
TOTALS	41			107,171,553	2,307,739,999	

Florida

In Florida, over **98 million gallons** of ash and wastewater will be removed from four pits at Tampa Electric Big Bend Station near Tampa. **3.6 million tons** of ash will be capped in place at two other power plant sites owned by other utilities.

Thanks to a landmark settlement agreement in 2015, Gulf Power is cleaning up its coal ash at the retired Scholz Generating Plant near Sneads, Florida. SACE, Apalachicola Riverkeeper, and Waterkeeper Alliance, represented by Earthjustice, [sued](#) the utility under the federal Clean Water Act for allowing coal ash to leak from unlined pits into the Apalachicola River. Because of this settlement, Gulf Power is removing its coal ash from unlined pits at Scholz to an onsite landfill with an underground wall designed to prevent groundwater contamination. Gulf will monitor groundwater for signs of leakage.

Plant	Utility	Number of storage units with publicly available schedules for closure	Closure Method(s)	Estimated Closure Year(s)	Ash Tons Currently in Closing Ponds	Last Known Combined Total of Ash and Wastewater Gallons	Wastewater Gallons Currently in Closing Ponds	Lined/Unlined
Scholz	Gulf Power	3	Excavation to dry storage area	2018	-	-	-	Underground slurry wall
Big Bend	Tampa Electric Company	4	Excavation	2018	-	98,361,351	-	3 Lined 1 Unlined
Lansing Smith	Gulf Power	1	Cap in place	2023	3,464,000	-	42,212,571	Unlined
Stanton Energy Center	Orlando Utilities	1	Cap in place	2024	145,200	-	-	Lined
TOTALS		9			3,609,200	98,361,351	42,212,571	

Tennessee

If the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has its way, **13.4 million tons** of coal ash will be capped in place in unlined storage facilities, some of which are inundated with groundwater.

In August 2015, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) released a [Commissioner's Order](#) requiring TVA to investigate its coal ash storage facilities and identify and clean up any coal ash contamination problems it discovers. *If* TDEC holds TVA's feet to the fire, this order could result in improved plans that clean up coal ash by excavating it to lined landfills away from Tennessee's waterways.

Plant	Number of storage units with publicly available schedules for closure	Closure Method(s)	Estimated Closure Year(s)	Ash Tons Currently in Closing Ponds	Wastewater Gallons Currently in Closing Ponds	Lined/Unlined
Allen	1	Cap in place	2017	2,230,000	28,970,548	Unlined
Bull Run	2	Cap in place	2017 & 2018	3,500,000	Unknown	Unlined
John Sevier	1	Cap in place	2017	770,000	Unknown	Unlined
Kingston	2	Cap in place	2017 & 2018	700,000	Unknown	Unlined
Cumberland	1	Cap in place	2024	6,210,166	-	Unlined
TOTALS	7			13,410,166	28,970,548	

Georgia

Georgia Power is planning to cap over **52.4 million tons** of coal ash in place compared to only **1.8 million tons** that it plans to excavate. At least **2.8 billion gallons** of combined coal ash and wastewater is also slated for closure in place. The exact volume comparisons of water to ash were not reported by the utility. Georgia Power's 29 coal ash pits statewide [reportedly](#) contain at least 86 million tons of coal ash, the figures above are drawn from publicly available documents we tracked down. Some of this discrepancy is undoubtedly due to how we converted cubic yards to tons (see Disclaimer and Notes on Methodology and Sources).

In Georgia, we and our allies advocated for a strong coal ash rule during the Environmental Protection Division's recent rule-making process. Even with a state rule in place, Georgia Power is still planning to leave the majority of its ash in unlined pits on the banks of the state's waterways.

Plant	Number of storage units with publicly available schedules for closure	Closure Method	Estimated Closure Year	Ash Tons Currently in Closing Ponds	Last Known Combined Total of Ash and Wastewater Gallons	Wastewater Gallons Currently in Closing Ponds	Lined/Unlined
Bowen	1	Cap in place	2022	21,170,691	-	57,483,019	Unlined
		Excavate					

Branch	5	four pits, add to fifth pit, then close in place	Unknown	-	1,641,542,388	-	Unknown
Hammond	1	Excavation	2024	367,100	-	48,191,003	Unlined
Hammond	1	Excavation	2024	360,000	-	72,710,649	Unlined
Hammond	1	Excavation	Unknown	-	349,792,352	-	Unlined
Hammond	1	Cap in place	2018	-	223,822,553	-	Unlined
Hammond	1	Cap in place	2027	450,000	-	-	Lined
Kraft	1	Excavation	Unknown	-	6,591,623	-	Lined
McDonough	1	Cap in place	2017	-	177,737,143	-	Unlined
McDonough	1	Consolidate with other closing pits	2017	-	Unknown	-	Unlined
McDonough	1	Consolidate with other pits and cap in place	2018	-	209,245,090	-	Unlined
McDonough	1	Consolidate with other pits and cap in place	2018	-	603,498,389	-	Unlined
McIntosh	1	Excavation	2022	26,871	-	17,454,595	Unlined
McManus	1	Excavation	2018	-	Unknown	-	Unlined
Mitchell	3	Excavation	Unknown	-	370,727,140	-	Unknown
Scherer	1	Cap in place	2030	15,233,822	-	2,951,415,136	Unlined
Wansley	1	Cap in place	2026	14,116,013	-	2,118,166,242	Unlined
Wasnley	1	Cap in place	2024	161,600	-	-	Unknown
Yates	1	Excavation	2018	-	Unknown	-	
Yates	1	Cap in place	2021	56,815	-	-	Unlined
Yates	1	Cap in place	2021	473,627	-	-	Unlined
Yates	1	Excavation	2017	-	59,986,282	-	Unlined
Yates	1	Excavation	2020	1,051,626	-	137,520,883	Unlined
Yates	1	Cap in place	2021	750,200	-	-	Unlined
TOTALS	30			54,218,365	3,642,942,960	5,402,941,527	

Alabama

Alabama Power plans to spend over \$1 billion on coal ash handling and other environmental compliance at coal plants over the next five years. The utility plans to spend an additional \$1.034 billion over a longer period to cap nearly **84 million tons** of coal ash in place. With the addition of 28.2 million tons of ash from TVA's two plants in

northern Alabama, that's **111 million tons of ash** capped in unlined pits near Alabama's rivers and waterways and **4 billion gallons** of wastewater that will need to be eliminated.

Alabama's Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) should take action immediately to require proper storage and disposal of coal ash to protect Alabamians' health and the health of the environment.

Plant	Utility	Number of storage units with publicly available schedules for closure	Closure Method	Estimated Closure Year	Ash Tons Currently in Closing Ponds	Last Known Combined Total of Ash and Wastewater Gallons	Wastewater Gallons Currently in Closing Ponds	Lined/Unlined
Barry	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2027	15,760,000	-	302,961,039	Unlined
Gadsden	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2018	unknown	215,647,263	unknown	Unlined
Gaston	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2025	23,650,000	-	201,974,026	Unlined
Gorgas	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2028	17,375,000	-	3,502,902,857	Unlined
Greene C.	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2024	8,700,000	-	52,513,247	Unlined
Miller	ApCo	1	Cap in place	2029	17,695,000	-	262,566,234	Unlined
Colbert	TVA	1	Cap in place	2018	3,200,000	-	61,223,377	Unlined
Widows Creek	TVA	3	Cap in place	2018	25,000,000	-	-	Unlined
TOTALS		10			111,380,000	215,647,263	4,384,140,780	

Background: Coal Ash Rules and Disposal Concerns

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently created federal coal ash and effluent limitation guideline [rules](#), which set minimum federal requirements for storage and handling of coal ash and liquid discharges from coal ash waste, respectively.

In general, utilities are responding to these rules by shifting from wet to dry handling and storage of their ash. Many are choosing to reduce the amount of water in ash pits and place a cap on top ("cap in place"). This method has not been shown to reduce the risks of groundwater contamination and leaves ash dangerously close to rivers where it can be vulnerable to flooding. The best way to reduce the contamination risks of coal ash is to excavate the ash and move it to lined, dry landfills away from our waterways.

It's also critical that permanent coal ash disposal options do not have an unfair impact on low-income residents and