

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019

This report focuses on the work of EJC in five primary areas:

1. Continuing EJC's campaign calling on Dynegy-Midwest Generation to move its coal ash out of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion, Illinois' only National Scenic River.
2. Ongoing work with the Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Climate Table to achieve an equitable, deep de-carbonization to combat climate change and build resilient communities based on assets and opportunities in central and southern Illinois.
3. Partnering with environmental organizations and community groups to bring about Illinois coal ash legislation and/or regulations in 2019.
4. Providing input to the worker and community transition components of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, one of the country's most comprehensive energy bills.
5. Working with economically disadvantaged communities in central Illinois to bring clean energy, energy savings and jobs through the innovative Illinois Solar for All program.



Outside hearing room for Dynegy's proposed massive riverbank stabilization project. March 26, 2019. Photo by EJC.

Middle Fork Campaign

It is possible that a final resolution to Dynegy's proposed closure of its three coal ash pits will take place over the coming year. These three, unlined pits hold enough toxic coal ash to fill Chicago's Willis (Sears) Tower nearly two times. Two of the three pits are known to be leaking, and the river is moving towards these pits at a rate nearly 3 times that previously predicted by Dynegy Midwest Generation's consultants, leaving some sections vulnerable to a breach.

Given the need to protect the river "in perpetuity" from the threat of a spill, and to stop the pollution, our work in 2019 continued to push for ash relocation. Dynegy-Vistra, continued their efforts to cap the ash, stabilize adjacent riverbanks, and leave the ash permanently in place. Over the past year, we:

1. Worked with an intern from the graduate program of the Urban Planning Department at the University of Illinois. This individual is a licensed engineer, and has now graduated with a masters degree in planning, with an emphasis on sustainability. His insights, experience, interest and commitment of time was invaluable, as e continued our work to ensure the relocation of toxic coal ash.
2. Met with the newly appointed Director of the Illinois EPA and other EPA staff to voice concerns over the lengthy process (7 years and no fines), and to lobby for a public hearing for Dynegy's closure plan.
3. Continued public information meetings in Danville and Champaign, tabled in Vermilion and Champaign counties, and worked closely with media (TV, radio, and print) to push our message for ash relocation fresh at key points in the campaign.
4. Reviewed and submitted extensive comments on Dynegy's joint Section 404 / 401 applicator for a 2,000-foot long bank stabilization project with massive fill in the river. This project was proposed to allow the ash to be capped and left in place, but also to protect the coal ash from the erosional forces of the river. If approved, the project would have: threatened habitat for endangered mussels; polluted the river with contaminated soils; disrupted recreational use of the river; left a visual scar along riverbanks; and left the toxic waste vulnerable to erosion that, over the long-term, could have resulted in a spill.
5. Organized 300 people to attend the March public hearing on Dynegy's proposed bank stabilization project. This included preparing newsletters and blog posts; tabling at events; soliciting letters to the editor; and preparing the public to make comments at the public hearing; and paying for radio ads. It also included organizing a pre-hearing rally to energize those who present and planning to testify.
6. Designed, funded, and distributed 400 yard signs to residents in Champaign and Vermilion County as a way to draw attention to concerns of leaving toxic waste in the floodplain of Illinois' only National Scenic River.
7. Maintained close contact with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service about the impacts of Dynegy's proposed riverbank plan, encouraging each to withhold their approval due to the scale of the project and the impact it would have on the state's National Scenic River; incomplete and often conflicting submittals for the Section 401 / 404 permit required to build this project; and the inadequacy of the purpose and need statement; and the lack of meaningful alternatives, including ash relocation.
8. Launched letter writing campaigns, with talking points, for people to submit written comments on the proposed stabilization plan, and to encourage both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Park Service to withhold their approval. Ultimately, Dynegy withdrew its plan in the summer of 2019, and began to evaluate a bank stabilization project with less impact to the river.
9. Discussed, with the Illinois EPA, the anticipated process for closing the three ash pits. The Illinois EPA has referred Dynegy to the Attorney General for enforcement and potential fines. It is expected that the closure plan will be resolved by either consent decree or litigation. This makes it far more difficult to require transparency among agency representatives as they review plans and work with Dynegy for resolution.
10. Held a joint fundraiser in August with the Protect the Middle Fork Citizens Advocacy Group. Over 150 people attended. Funds raised (about \$2,500, net) helped recover costs for signs and will be used for the campaign (ads, print materials, more signs, etc.).

11. Continued coordination with Earthjustice and Prairie Rivers Network who have filed another lawsuit as one way to require ash removal from the floodplain of Illinois' National Scenic River. This ongoing coordination ensures collaboration among the three groups, and effectively pressure Dynegy and review agencies to move the toxic waste out of the floodplain and away from the river.
12. Prepared short presentations for stakeholder groups in Vermilion and Champaign Counties that would update the public about Dynegy's current plan to circumvent Federal approval for its bank stabilization proposal, and encourage attendees to stay involved with the campaign. Scheduled presentations with the help of the Protect the Middle Fork Citizens Advocacy Group that began in November and will continue through the winter months.
13. Continued the process of obtaining documents about Dynegy's plans and intent via the Freedom of Information Act.

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Photo of elected officials honored at October award celebration organized by Eco-Justice Collaborative. Holding plaques are (left to right): State Representative Carol Ammons, State Representative Mike Marron; and Senator Scott Bennett. Also in the photo (left to right): Vince Rancuret, Protect the Middle Fork Citizens' Group; Cindy Shepherd, Faith in Place; Andrew Rehn, Prairie Rivers Network; Lan Richart, Eco-Justice Collaborative; and Alice Englebreetsen, Prairie Group, Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Coal Ash Legislation

Eco-Justice Collaborative joined forces with Earthjustice, Faith-in-Place, Illinois Environmental Council, Prairie Rivers Network, and Sierra Club to move coal ash legislation and/or rules forward as a 2019 priority. With the leadership of Senator Scott Bennett, SB 9, the Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act was drafted, negotiated with key stakeholders (industry, farm bureau, chamber of commerce, labor, the Illinois EPA, Illinois IDNR, and more); and passed by the General Assembly on May 31. The bill was signed into law by Governor Pritzker on July 30, 2019. SB 9 was drafted with input by frontline groups and passed with their support. Representatives

from these groups are living with the impacts of coal ash pollution in their communities, that affect their drinking water; the fish they eat; their health; and diminished recreation and business opportunities.

During this past year, EJC:

- Provided input to draft legislation, participating in legislative team calls (held two to four calls each week for three months).
- Ensured Senator Bennett was fully informed about the direction of the legislation, meeting with him both in Champaign and Springfield to obtain concurrence before sending the draft bill to the Legislative Review Board.
- Helped redraft the bill's fact sheet, with suggested change in messaging.
- Served on the leadership team for the community coal ash groups, hosting twice-a-month meetings; drafting and circulating a move-on.org petition; obtaining feedback on draft regulations, and discussing tactics for passing the bill.
- Organized legislative visits with Senator Scott Bennett and State Representatives Carol Ammons and Mike Marron with the Protect the Middle Fork Group.
- Solicited letters of support to state senators and representatives, as part of an overall campaign strategy developed with community groups.
- Helped plan and recruit people to attend the Coal Ash Lobby Day May 9 in Springfield.
- Organized attendance at May 9 Senate Conservation and Environment Committee Hearing, and followed the bill to the floor of the senate where it passed!
- Testified at May 16 House Energy and Environment Committee Hearing, at the request of Representative Carol Ammons.
- Spoke at Press Conference in Springfield on May 23, held to garner support in the House of Representatives before the floor vote.
- Contributed to the preparation and distribution of a media advisory and press release after the SB9 was passed.
- Helped organize listening sessions for coal ash rules. Included hosting two sessions to help those interested in making comments at hearings, developing posting sample comments on our website, testifying at the hearing, and submitting written comments.
- Organized and held "thank you" awards ceremony with participation by Faith in Place, Prairie Rivers Network, Protect the Middle Fork, and Sierra Club for Senator Scott Bennett and Representatives Carol Ammons and Mike Marron. Included preparing video and "sing-along thank you" (Karaoke style), and designing plaques for each official. Held in the City View Meeting Room at the Champaign Transit Station, the event was attended by 50 constituents.
- Met with Senator Bennett to obtain his support for re-establishing the Advisory Committee referenced in the Corridor Management Plan that authorizes the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to monitor and maintain that portion of the Middle Fork and adjacent open space classified as National Scenic River. Included preparing letter to the Director of the IDNR for Senator Bennet to sign and send. This Committee is, per state statute, given the authority to review development within the National Scenic Corridor and make recommendations to ensure the values for which the river received its designation are maintained.

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March 22-24 Downstate Caucus Retreat, Touch of Nature Environmental Education Center, Makanda, Illinois

Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Climate Table

Pam Richart continues to serve on the leadership team of the Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Climate Table. Other members of this team include: Scott Allen, Citizens Utility Board; Gregory Norris, ACES 4 Youth; Christina Krost, Faith in Place; and Amanda Pankau, Prairie Rivers Network.

Much of the focus of our work in the first months of 2019 was spent planning and carrying out a March retreat, focused on equitable, deep decarbonization. The summit, funded by RE-AMP and partner organizations, included a mandatory diversity training, and was limited to 30 attendees. EJC helped plan the agenda and carried out most of the logistics related to this summit, held at Touch of Nature Education Center in Makanda, Illinois. Two primary goals of this summit were to:

- Use the summit to reach out to leadership in low-income communities and communities of color in central and southern Illinois to expand and diversify our Caucus.
- Incorporate voices from low-income communities and communities of color in the development of initiatives that would form the deep-decarbonization policies of the Downstate Caucus.

These goals were met, and outcomes included the selection of 9 initiatives and beginning strategies that can be moved forward with municipalities, agencies, landowners / farmers, and businesses / industry. They will both support the pillars of the Clean Energy Jobs Act and lower greenhouse gas emissions and draw down carbon with natural climate solutions (e.g., diversion of organic waste, regenerative agriculture and afforestation). They include:

- **Afforestation / Reforestation** (planting trees where none previously existed, or where they were removed, to draw down carbon and stabilize our climate; protecting forests. Ranked #14 of top #100 Solutions, Project Drawdown).

- **Community Resilience Planning** (community-driven response to climate change, where solutions most relevant to the community's unique assets and threats are identified and implemented).
- **Electrifying the Transportation System** (moving our automobile fleet from gas-powered vehicles to those powered by solar-powered electricity; encouraging mass transit in downstate Illinois to power fleets with solar electricity; facilitating the installation of charging stations in downstate Illinois to meet the demand of electric-powered vehicles; and working with the Illinois Climate Table to implement the Illinois Electric Vehicles for All program. Ranked #26 of top 100 solutions, Project Drawdown).
- **Energy Efficiency** (reducing energy consumption by using less energy to attain the same amount of useful output through techniques such as insulation and weatherization; energy efficient lighting, appliances, heating and cooling systems; water savings devices, solar water heating and tankless hot water systems; smart meters that help consumers control their energy use; and passive solar design. Energy efficiency saves consumers money and creates jobs).
- **Energy Transformation and Jobs Creation** (moving municipalities to 100% renewable energy with rooftop and community solar and the Illinois Solar for All program; tackling the municipal and rural electric cooperatives, which have leases tied to coal; and workforce development. Ranked #10 of top 100 solutions, Project Drawdown).
- **Environmental Justice** (making sure environmental justice is incorporated into all DSC work; working on just transition policies for workers and communities in coal plant and coal mining communities).
- **Organic Waste Diversion** (diverting food and other organic waste, such as landscape materials, from landfills, where they produce carbon and methane; reducing volume of food waste in the supply chain through education including rotting on the farm or while in storage or willful waste associated with disposal of bruised or discolored food and over-ordering. Ranked #3 of top 100 solutions, Project Drawdown).
- **Plastics Recycling** (determined to be as important climate, solutions include reuse and a pilot project that will break down single-use plastics and reconstitute plastics back into usable products to help close the loop on single-use plastics and help divert waste from the landfill or surrounding environment).
- **Regenerative Agriculture** (enhancing and sustaining the health of the soil by incorporating permaculture and organic farming practices, including conservation tillage, cover crops, crop rotation, composting, mobile animal shelters and pasture cropping; increases food production and farmers' income; and sequesters carbon. Ranked #11 of top #100 solutions, Project Drawdown).

In addition to working on these initiatives, the DSC has continued to participate in the Listen, Lead, and Share campaign of the State Table. This campaign was designed to obtain feedback from communities, organizations, and individuals across the state on four pillars of the Illinois Climate Table:

1. 100% renewable energy by 2050.
2. Sustainable and equitable job creation.
3. A carbon-free power sector by 2030.
4. A major reduction in pollution from the transportation system (via electrifying).

EJC worked with the leadership team to ensure confidentiality related to policy discussion associated with these pillars, and created a second listserv for that purpose. This list is also used by members who have also signed the Climate Table norms to caucus around policy initiatives proposed by ICAT, providing valuable feedback from the perspective of downstate residents to the larger Climate Table.

The Caucus also provided input to policy concerns and decisions related to the Clean Energy Jobs Act as it has continued to be modified since its introduction. This input was provided through the lens of those who live and work outside Chicago, and resulted in a bill that does not support meeting our electricity demand from new natural gas plants or nuclear power as coal plants in the state of Illinois are retired.

EJC led the leadership team through the process of updating its norms, working to ensure norms are in alignment with those of the Illinois Climate Table, and solve problems with confidentiality, grievances, limitations on participation for government groups (e.g., emails that are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and inability to sign a document as a representative of a large institution), and branding. This year, EJC plans to work on a website, marketing materials and orientation documents that will help promote the work of the Caucus and grow its membership and reach. This will include identifying a new name for the DSC.

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Rally in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building during the second Clean Energy Lobby Day, October 29, 2019. Photo by Pam Richart, EcoJustice Collaborative.

Clean Energy Jobs Act

The Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) is one of the most comprehensive energy bills in the country and, if adopted, will immediately ramp up renewable energy development in our state by committing Illinois to 100% renewable energy by 2050, cutting carbon from the power sector by 2030, reducing gas and diesel vehicles from the transportation sector, and creating jobs and economic opportunity. Although there are other bills that have been proposed to step up the

production of renewables in Illinois, the Clean Energy Jobs Act is the only bill that includes provisions for economic development and jobs creation, with a focus on equity and worker and community transition.

EJC helped recruit people from central Illinois to lobby their state senators and representatives on May 9 and October 29, two Clean Energy Lobby Days, designed to promote passage of this 700-page bill. These lobby days and associated rallies drew over 500 and 300 people, respectively, from groups and organizations across the state.

As a member of the Illinois Climate Table (ICAT), EJC provided input to the worker and community transition portions of the bill, particularly as it relates to the coal severance tax proposed, along with a pollution fee on coal plants, to help fund worker and community transition in power plant and coal mining communities. This transition program:

- Establishes an Energy Community Reinvestment Act that will:
 - Provide up to \$100 million in new investment to communities that lose property taxes because of a closed plant or mine.
 - Allocate \$9 million to assist displaced workers find new employment.
 - Establish a Displaced Energy Workers Bill of Rights with requirements for plant or mine operators to provide advance notice of closure, health care, financial planning services, retirement security, scholarships and other benefits for displaced workers. Create the Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs, a network of frontline organizations that provide direct and sustained support for minority and disadvantaged communities.
- Creates a Contractor Incubator program that focuses on the development of underserved businesses in the clean energy sector.
- Provides property tax relief for up to three years after a coal plant, coal mine, nuclear power plant or natural gas plant closes.

EJC worked with ICAT representatives to educate and mobilize frontline coal ash community groups (who have lived with the impact of coal power plants) to lobby for the transition components of the bill, and to sign on to a letter to Governor Pritzker asking him to support the transition components of the Clean Energy Jobs Act.

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GRID Alternatives partners with Millennium Solar Electric in 2017 to bring solar energy to Chicago's South Deering neighborhood

Bringing Illinois Solar for All to Downstate Communities

Illinois Solar for All is part of the Future Energy Jobs Act, which became law in 2016. It is a forward-looking program that will provide incentives for solar development in low-income and environmental justice communities, offering households and the organizations that serve them measurable savings on their energy bills. This includes residential rooftop solar, community solar, as well as solar for nonprofits and public agencies that serve these communities. Installations associated with Illinois Solar for All must include FEJA job training program graduates. It's the first program of its kind in Illinois. The budget for the program is \$30 million per year.

Eco-Justice Collaborative received an \$18,000 grant from the McKnight Foundation in 2018 to organize and lead educational forums / focus groups at three downstate locations. The purpose of these focus groups and forums is to help low-income urban and rural communities take advantage of the Illinois Solar for All program, while also recruiting community leaders to the Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Climate Table.

"Without targeted work and engagement of low-income, frontline, and/or rural communities, the Future Energy Jobs Act will fail to bring benefits to those that need it most. If those communities do not benefit, our political power to accomplish more in the future will be greatly diminished."

There were many delays in the rollout to the Illinois Solar for All program. However, we intend to bring Solar for All to Danville and Decatur, communities that fit the criteria in our grant. Work has been initiated in Danville, where one Listen Lead Share session was held and EJC presented information on the Solar for All program. A meeting has been scheduled with the Mayor of Danville to talk about the benefits this program can bring to the City of Danville. We hope to subsequently meet with the City Council and Vermilion Advantage (Chamber of Commerce) to help identify stakeholders.

Our proposed work program will lead these communities through the process of identifying, stakeholders, assets, challenges and opportunities, then connect them with the resources and experienced leadership to lay out an implementation plan for bringing Solar for All to the community. Up to three meetings would be held in each of the three communities. Each set of meetings would include identification of key stakeholders (12 to 15 community leaders); preparation of educational materials and handouts that would draw upon slides and fact sheets prepared for the recent downstate forums; invitation and outreach to key stakeholders (phone, email, and possible pre-meetings); and preparation and distribution of meeting notes.

We plan to work with [Elevate Energy](#), the newly appointed administrator for the program, and a solar energy vendor. Our hope is [GRID Alternatives](#) will be approved as a vendor for this program, and we can collaborate with them. GRID's vision of a successful inclusive transition to clean energy is based on a framework of social, economic and environmental justice. GRID Alternatives is committed to:

- Advancing an **EQUITY** agenda both within GRID Alternatives and in the energy industry and policy arenas by examining and addressing systemic inequities; seeking out and amplifying the voices of the communities we serve; and expanding access to solar energy and career and leadership opportunities.
- Creating an **INCLUSIVE**, welcoming environment on our jobsites, in our workplaces, and board rooms where staff, volunteers, trainees, clients and community representatives are heard, supported, respected, and valued.
- Building a culture of equity and inclusion that supports and fosters **DIVERSITY**. We aim to reflect the communities we serve at all levels of the organization, especially leadership, and promote these values within the energy industry. Our focus areas for diversity work include, but are not limited to: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, education level, veteran status, dis/ability, and those impacted by the criminal justice system.

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