



Prairie Rivers Network is Fighting for Stronger Safeguards and Responsible Clean Up of COAL ASH Dumps



Illinois generates 4.4 million tons of coal ash each year



Illinois' 83 coal ash ponds and dozens of minefills threaten clean air and water statewide



Coal ash ponds discharge potentially toxic heavy metals to rivers and streams

Coal Power's Deadly Waste

Behind Illinois' coal-fired power plants lies a dirty secret: **coal ash**, the solid by-product that is left over after coal is burned for electricity. Coal ash is full of heavy metals like mercury, arsenic, selenium, chromium and cadmium which can cause cancer and brain damage in humans and are harmful to fish and wildlife. **And yet, there are fewer safeguards on coal ash disposal than on municipal landfills for household garbage.**

Contamination Cases Mounting Statewide

Illinois generates 4.4 million tons of coal ash every year and imports ash from at least 6 states. Most coal ash is dumped in wet impoundments at power plants that hold millions of gallons of coal ash sludge, and that discharge coal pollution to nearby rivers and lakes. Coal ash is also dumped in coal mines and quarries, directly threatening local air and groundwater. Since 2009 when Illinois EPA first required groundwater data to be collected at power plants, **contamination from coal ash pollution has been found at every site investigated** - that's 22 out of the 24 coal plants in the state.

Coal Plants Need to Invest in Water Pollution Controls

As coal plants install air pollution controls, much of the coal pollution winds up in the ash instead of the air. This means more heavy metals like mercury and selenium are being sent to coal ash ponds that discharge to local lakes and rivers, where metals build up in fish and animals, **threatening the health of hunters and anglers that rely on healthy wildlife.** Coal fired power plants need to implement advanced air and water pollution controls together to keep harmful coal ash safely contained.

For more information on coal ash pollution and how you can help, please contact:

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Prairie Rivers Network is Illinois' advocate for clean water and healthy rivers.

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WET ASH PONDS

Many coal fired power plants use water to move their coal ash to dump sites. In Illinois this practice is still widespread, even though it is the riskiest method of handling ash.

Drinking water contaminated with ash is 9 times more likely to cause cancer as smoking a pack of cigarettes every day. Additionally, coal ash ponds threaten health decades after they are closed.



The most dramatic threat from wet ash ponds is the possibility of catastrophic failure. In 2008, over 1 billion gallons of coal ash sludge spilled into the Clinch and Emory Rivers in Tennessee from the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant when that impoundment failed, costing over \$1 billion to clean up - see before (above) and after (below).



CLEANING UP A TOXIC LEGACY

Existing Coal Ash Dumps Must Be Closed Responsibly

In communities across the state, Prairie Rivers Network is working with local residents to push for the responsible closure of coal ash ponds and dumps to make sure this legacy pollution does not pose a threat to future generations. Examples include:

- **Joliet, Illinois** where Midwest Generation dumps coal ash into an old stone quarry. Coal ash is placed directly in contact with an aquifer that local residents rely on for clean drinking water.
- **Vermilion, Illinois** where Dynegy's ash ponds are located in the floodplain and contaminated groundwater is leaking towards the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, Illinois' only river that is recognized as a National Wild and Scenic River.
- **Newton, Illinois** where Ameren's new air pollution controls are capturing more mercury and heavy metals and sending them into Newton Lake, which is a State Fish and Wildlife Area.

COMMONSENSE PROTECTIONS

End the Coal Industry's Free Ride

Unlike every other major industry, coal burning power plants have not had to clean up their mess. Thanks to pressure on Capitol Hill from the coal lobby, there are no minimum nationwide safeguards in place to make sure people and wildlife are safe from coal ash pollution. Along with our allies across the country, Prairie Rivers Network is advocating for the adoption of commonsense minimum safeguards that would eliminate this threat to clean water, including provisions to:

- **Phase out dangerous wet coal ash ponds**
- **Require liners and daily cover to keep coal ash on site**
- **Implement siting rules to keep coal ash out of sensitive floodplains, wetlands, and groundwater resources**
- **Monitor water to detect pollution before it spreads**
- **Responsibly close coal ash dumps to protect future generations**

Our partners in the campaign to stop coal ash pollution include:

