



Prairie Rivers Network is Protecting Clean Water in Illinois from the Devastating Impacts of COAL MINING

STRIP MINES



Strip mining in Illinois destroys streams, wetlands and groundwater as coal companies blast and dig through solid rock to reach the coal below.

LONGWALL MINES



Longwall mining is an underground mining technique that removes the entire coal seam, causing the land above to sink by 4-8 feet.

In addition to destroying buildings and roads on the surface, longwall mining can damage shallow aquifers that rural residents rely on for drinking water. The fracturing of bedrock has also led to the catastrophic dewatering of streams, aquifers, and reservoirs in other states.

Coal's Resurgence in Illinois

Dwindling coal reserves in Appalachia and surging overseas demand are spurring a rush of new coal mining in Illinois. Unfortunately, coal mining comes at a high cost for local communities. Today's coal mines use bigger machines to dig more coal while employing fewer people than ever, and the consequences for Illinois' land and water are mounting.

Destroying Streams and Wetlands

Mining for coal destroys Illinois' natural watercourses that are essential for protecting drinking water and providing high quality habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip mines and coal processing plants frequently mine through or fill in headwater streams and wetlands, even though these areas provide critical habitat, flood protection, and water filtration benefits. Coal mines also dam headwater streams and pump groundwater to dilute their polluted wastewater, diminishing how much clean water is available for local residents.

Coal Mines Need to Invest in Water Pollution Control

Unlike most other industries, coal mines in Illinois have not updated their water pollution controls in decades. Instead, they rely on settlement ponds, which do not remove all of the harmful pollution in minewater before sending it into local rivers, lakes and streams. The water coming from a coal mine can contain acidic water, as well as elevated levels of harmful salts and metals, including sulfates, chlorides, iron, mercury, arsenic and selenium that can harm people, livestock, fish and wildlife. Coal mines need to adopt advanced technology to keep coal pollution out of Illinois' rivers and streams.

For more information on coal mining 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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COAL MINE WASTE

Most coal mines in Illinois process coal onsite to separate the coal from the surrounding rock. Coal processing is water intensive, consuming up to two million gallons of clean water every day at a single mine.

Together, coal mining and processing generate huge quantities of coarse refuse (gob) and coal slurry that can contain elevated levels of harmful pollution.



Coal waste is often dumped in wet above-ground pits that can tower up to 80 feet tall and cover over 1 square mile. Mining companies will dispose of hundreds of millions of gallons of harmful coal slurry behind a typical coal slurry dam, which will remain behind permanently after the mines close.



Most coal slurry pits in Illinois do not have protective liners. Because so many lack this basic environmental protection, harmful pollution from coal waste has polluted local groundwater and streams across Illinois.

Discharges from coal slurry pits also send harmful pollution to rivers and streams.

ENSURING THE LAW IS FOLLOWED

Targeting Illinois' Worst Polluters

In communities across the state, Prairie Rivers Network is working with local residents to push for the dirtiest coal mines to clean up their act or shut down:

- Industry, Illinois where Springfield Coal Company and their affiliates have racked up over 621 Clean Water Act violations for discharging pollution above the legal limit.

Protecting Illinois' Natural Treasures

We are also fighting to stop proposed mines that threaten clean water and wildlife habitat, including:

- Shawneetown, Illinois where Peabody Coal is pursuing a deal with the US Forest Service that would allow it to strip mine nearly 400 acres along the Saline River - home to endangered mussels and Indiana Gray Bats.
- Canton, Illinois where an affiliate of Springfield Coal Company is proposing to open a strip mine just over a mile upstream of Canton Lake, which is the drinking water source for over 20,000 Fulton County residents.

FIGHTING FOR BETTER PRACTICES

End the Coal Industry's Free Ride

Unlike Illinois' other major industries, coal mines have not been required to clean up the mess they leave behind. Along with our allies across the Illinois Coal Basin, Prairie Rivers Network is advocating for commonsense safeguards and practices that make sure people and wildlife are safe from coal mine pollution, including provisions to:

- Clean up pollution problems at existing mines
- Phase out dangerous coal slurry impoundments
- Require liners and daily cover to keep coal pollution on site
- Protect floodplain habitat, streams and wetlands by avoiding mining and coal waste disposal in these sensitive areas
- Invest in advanced wastewater treatment technologies

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

