

Avert Disaster at Illinois' only National Scenic River and Connect a Vibrant River Corridor

Community members have long been concerned about the coal ash stored at the Dynegy Vermilion Power Plant in Oakwood, Illinois. Through December 2011, the plant dumped coal ash in three pits, two of which are now structurally failing, in the western floodplain of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, the state's only National Scenic River.

Two of the ash pits were built in the 1960s without liners and are breaking down due to flooding and erosion from the river. Leakage of coal ash pollutants (including boron, sulfates, iron, and manganese) has been noted in the groundwater and discolored seeps can be readily seen from the river.¹

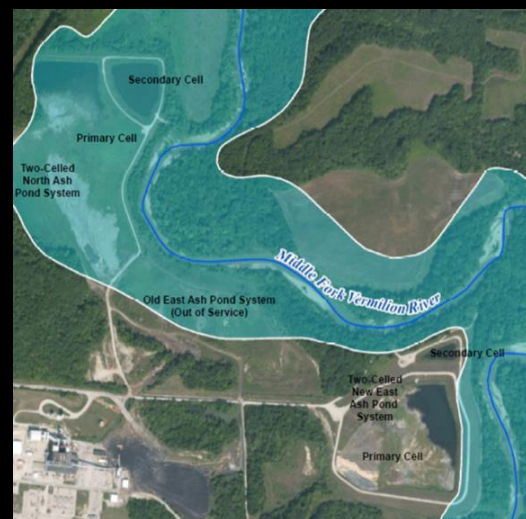
Ash pit discharges have been permitted from the third lined ash pit to the river for decades, but critically important monitoring for common coal ash pollutants of concern was never required. Like the two older pits, the third pit has been worn by the force of the river and may also be vulnerable to subsidence of underlying voids from old coal mines.

Dynegy has proposed to simply cap these pits and walk away from the liabilities. This proposal would leave the coal ash in place at the dump site, with only a cap over the pits to prevent additional pollution. This plan would allow groundwater contamination, seepage to the river, and direct discharges of coal ash to continue in perpetuity, while presenting the threat of a catastrophic breach.

Leaving coal ash in the floodplain, vulnerable to the force of the river, with the proposed "cap closure option" for the impoundments is not sufficient to protect local residents and Illinois taxpayers from the burden of ongoing pollution and a potential breach.

In order to support the integrity of the vibrant Middle Fork river system, and the communities and businesses that rely on it, complete removal of this dangerous waste from the floodplain is necessary.

Moreover, complete removal and responsible closure would allow for the acquisition of the land, completing the 17-mile river corridor and connecting the protected recreational lands for the benefit of Illinois citizens and wildlife.





Protect a vibrant river system and the Community that relies on it

Avert disaster at Illinois' only National Scenic River

- ▶ **The river system provides the benefits of a strong recreation economy to Vermilion County.** The Middle Fork is one of the most popular water trails in the state and enjoys visitors for canoeing, kayaking, wildlife viewing, photography, hunting, angling, hiking, and horseback riding.
- ▶ **The Middle Fork river corridor also supports a diverse and healthy fish and wildlife population.** The river system is inhabited by 24 species officially identified as state and/or federal threatened or endangered species.
- ▶ **Vermilion County Government and County Entities have called for responsible closure at the site.** The Vermilion County Board, Soil & Water Conservation District, Vermilion County Conservation District, Vermilion County Conservation Foundation, and Lake Vermilion Water Quality Coalition unanimously passed resolutions calling on the state agencies to address concerns of stability and pollution of groundwater and surface water.²

- ▶ **The Vermilion Generating Station complex is impacting groundwater quality and water quality of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River.** Class I groundwater quality standards have been exceeded for boron, iron, manganese, sulfate, total dissolved solids, pH, and arsenic.

Groundwater is known to move through and under the ash pits toward the river, coming into direct contact with coal ash during times of flood.³ Increasing erosion of the banks is likely to increase input of elements at concentrations that may exceed surface water quality standards

- ▶ **The Illinois EPA issued a Violation Notice alleging violations of groundwater standards onsite** in July 2012, followed by a Notice of Intent to Pursue Legal Action in December 2012. Dynegy has not completed additional analyses concerning the closure plans for the Vermilion old east and north surface impoundments requested by the Illinois EPA.

Connect protected recreational lands for the benefit of Illinois citizens and wildlife

The proposed “cap closure option” for the ash pits is shortsighted and irresponsible, failing to address the deteriorating 40 ft-high dams which are tenuously holding back millions of gallons of waste. The continued storage of coal ash in the floodplain would allow groundwater and surface water contamination in perpetuity – with the additional threat of a catastrophic breach.

In order to protect the river system and those communities which rely on it, complete removal of this dangerous waste from the floodplain, with proper disposal in a “high and dry,” lined landfill is necessary.

Pushing Dynegy to clean up the site would relieve local residents and Illinois taxpayers of the dangerous liability of cleanup costs, while making reclaimed land area available for the completion of a vibrant river corridor to be safely managed by the county and IL Department of Natural Resources.

1. <http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/ash-impoundment/documents/ash-impoundment-progress-102511.pdf>
2. Resolutions available online <http://prairierivers.org/articles/2014/07/vermilion-county-passes-resolutions-on-coal-ash/>
3. <http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/industrial/special/fossil/surveys2/dynegy-vermilion-final.pdf>