

ASH POND NEWSLETTER



February 2020

The following is a collection of ash pond news from the month of February 2020. The intent of the newsletter is to summarize news regarding ash pond closure activities, lawsuits filed against utilities relating to their ash ponds, as well as regulatory changes impacting ash pond operations or closures. This newsletter is distributed on a monthly basis.

COAL POWER PLANT ASH POND CLOSURES AND MODIFICATIONS

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) has issued a permit to allow **Duke Energy** to construct a new onsite, lined landfill to dispose of coal ash at the Asheville Steam Electric Plant. The permit allows Duke Energy to move forward with plans to construct and operate a lined industrial landfill to store coal ash now contained in an unlined ash pond on the property.

<https://www.blueridgenow.com/news/20200211/duke-energy-coal-ash-landfill-at-asheville-steam-gets-state-approval-to-move-forward>

LEGAL AND REGULATORY

Montana regulators have given conditional approval to plans for injecting clean water underground around the City of Colstrip to flush out water reserves polluted by coal ash. The ash pond cleanup at Colstrip could cost an estimated \$400 million to \$700 million and is expected to last decades. The cleanup plan covers two of the power plant's four units. **Talen Energy** is required to post a \$107 million bond to ensure the work is completed. **Talen Energy** would monitor the plume of pollution to make sure it does not become a risk to human health or the environment. If **Talen Energy** cannot show the plume is decreasing, state officials said they would require additional work to remove the pollution.



Aerial photo of the Colstrip Power Plant near Colstrip, Montana (2013)

https://mtribune.com/northwest/montana-coal-ash-pollution-cleanup-plan-gets-state-ok/article_db46ae4e-0d4d-5979-941d-2d7921cba09b.html

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/montana-deq-approves-107m-plan-to-clean-up-colstrip-coal-ash-ponds>

https://trib.com/montana-coal-ash-pollution-cleanup-gets-state-approval/article_60982dcd-8328-5ce8-9d31-1b327f993539.html

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) announced a new proposed rollback to an Obama-era regulation dealing with coal ash. The USEPA's proposal would ease regulations for the liners at the bottom of coal ash ponds. The proposal also allows the use of coal ash in closing landfills, in some cases.

The USEPA has proposed a total of four amendments to the federal 2015 Coal Ash Rule, an Obama administration set of standards meant to provide comprehensive requirements for the safe disposal of coal combustion residuals. Updates were announced at the Global Waste Management Symposium.

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/483757-epa-proposes-additional-rollback-to-obama-era-coal-ash-regulation>

<https://www.waste360.com/legislation-regulation/epa-breaks-down-what-coal-ash-rule-means-waste-facilities>

The **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** (WDNR) voted to establish a coal ash permit program with approval of the EPA. State rules must be at least as stringent as current federal regulations. All but three of Wisconsin's coal ash sites have significant groundwater contamination.

https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/environment/dnr-seeks-to-take-over-coal-ash-regulation-from-epa/article_07c08d67-29de-5992-b65e-0813a8324da0.html

Duke Energy received final approval from North Carolina state regulators on a plan to permanently close all the company's remaining coal ash basins in the state. The agreement includes removal of coal ash from six plant sites. Almost 80 million tons of ash will be excavated from the sites and placed into lined landfills.

The estimated cost to permanently close all coal ash basins in North and South Carolina is approximately \$8-\$9 billion, of which \$2.4 billion has already been spent and the remainder is expected to be spent over the next 15 to 20 years.

<https://dailyenergyinsider.com/policy/24142-duke-energy-gets-final-approval-for-plan-to-close-all-coal-ash-basins-in-n-c/>

BENEFICIAL REUSE

In 2019, **Santee Cooper**, South Carolina's largest power provider, recycled 1,607,052 tons of coal ash and other coal combustion residuals, the highest amount of any year to date for the utility. Over the past decade, **Santee Cooper** has beneficially used more than 7.2 million tons of ash, and half of this was reclaimed from ponds.

https://thetandd.com/business/local/santee-cooper-has-most-successful-year-for-recycling-beneficial-use/article_321a1eb8-f0ff-5339-9b2e-45322138d1cb.html



Removing fly ash from the Santee Cooper Site (2017)

CONTAMINATION



Lowman Power Plant, Jackson, Alabama

The Tombigee River waters have been rising and are expected to continue rising above flood stage. Officials are saying the Tombigee River could be the highest it has been in 40 years. The Tombigee River floodwaters could affect the coal ash ponds at **Power South Cooperative's** Lowman Power Plant in Jackson, Alabama. The plant is scheduled to be converted to a natural gas plant in October 2020.

<https://myNBC15.com/news/local/coal-ash-raises-concerns-as-tombigbee-river-floods>

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