

# ASH POND NEWSLETTER



January 2021

The following is a collection of ash pond news from the month of January 2021. 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.

## SPECIAL REPORT

This month, the Sierra Club published a data-heavy report investigating whether the electricity sector in the US is on track to reach its climate goals, or if superficial “greenwashing” is at play. The report specifically looked at utilities’ plans to retire their coal plants, their plans to stop constructing new gas plants, and their plans to build new, clean energy. According to the study, 79 operating companies which own half of all remaining coal and gas generation in the US have only committed to retiring 25% of coal generation by 2030. Read more details, including a list of climate goals of the major parent utility companies, in the report:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/>

## CLOSURES AND MODIFICATIONS



Dewatering Plant at Plant Mitchell in GA.

**Georgia Power Company's** Plant Mitchell in Dougherty County, Georgia will begin the process of draining their three ash ponds next month. The plant was in operation from 1948 to 2016, with coal- and gas-powered generators on-site. The three ponds in Dougherty County will be dredged and cleared of nearly 2 million tons of coal ash and eventually filled in and planted with grass. The removed ash will be

blended with Portland cement in a reuse effort. During the dewatering process, third-party contractors will check the water quality and ensure the purification system is working, as not to cause contamination to the river where the ponds will discharge. The process has been approved and will be overseen by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

<https://www.albanyherald.com/news/>

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/>

In McLennan County, Texas, the Lake Creek Power Plant which was owned by **Luminant**, a successor to **Texas Power & Light**, along with **TXU** and **Oncor**, and sits on an 1,875-acre site, which includes a 550-acre lake. The chemical company **BASF** just purchased this site for \$14 million with plans to expand their geographic footprint—**BASF** is not yet providing information on what this could mean for the site and its infrastructure. The key asset of this property is the Brazos River water rights, meaning **BASF** will have priority when water is scarce in the Brazos basin. **BASF** uses the Brazos River at their Freeport plant for cooling purposes.



View of the Lake Creek Power Plant near Riesel, TX.

<https://wacotrib.com/>

The Gibbons Creek power plant in Grimes County, Texas owned by the **Texas Municipal Power Agency (TMPA)** stopped producing electricity in 2018. One of its four owners, the City of Bryan, Texas, approved the sale of the power plant to Charah Solutions, and its subsidiary Gibbons Creek Environmental Redevelopment Group (GCERG). The GCERG plans to redevelop the plant into renewable energy, agricultural, and unidentified commercial and industrial uses. The information provided at approval city council meetings noted that the sale will save more than \$48 million dollars in environmental remediation costs.

<https://wtaw.com/>

## LEGAL AND REGULATORY

**Duke Energy** is in the process of permanently closing its remaining coal ash basins in the state of North Carolina. A recent settlement detailed a plan for coal ash management cost allocation between 2015 and 2030, with a reduction in customers' costs by approximately \$1.1 billion. Consumers will be expected to shoulder the \$3 billion that **Duke** is not covering, or roughly 75% of the total cost of the cleanup.

The estimated total undiscounted cost to permanently close all coal ash basins in the Carolinas ranges between \$8 billion and \$9 billion. By the end of 2019, around \$2.4 billion had been spent. The settlement was an agreement between the North Carolina Attorney General, North Carolina Public Staff, Sierra Club, and **Duke Energy**.

<https://news.duke-energy.com/releases/releases-20210125>

## CONTAMINATION

The General James M. Gavin Power Plant in Cheshire, Ohio is one of the United States' largest coal-fired power plants, with a capacity of 2.6 gigawatts of electricity. It emits 13 million metric tons of greenhouse gases each year. In the early 2000s, **American Electric Power**, the plant's previous owner, paid residents to relocate, and many of Cheshire's residents fled the pollution. The ones who remain worry about long-term health effects. However, with the projection of the plant's lifespan stretching to just 2025, there is hope for a move toward renewable infrastructure and cleaner air.



Gen. James M. Gavin Power Plant in Cheshire, OH.

<https://www.dispatch.com/in-depth/news/>

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality created a plan to clean up 5.7 million cubic yards of coal ash from Colstrip, Montana in November 2020. **Talen Energy** manages the Colstrip Power Plant in Colstrip, Montana. However, they recently challenged the plan, stating that the price tag of \$285 million for their two retired units is excessive. The decision to issue a cleanup plan comes after the discovery that the ponds discharge 400,000 gallons of contaminated water per day.

<https://www.publicnewsservice.org/>

In Rowan County, North Carolina, residents are testing their water after lead was found in the water supply. This discovery comes several years after residents were asked to switch from well water due to suspected local coal ash contamination from the former Buck Steam Station, which is owned by **Duke Power**. Although the station has been retired since 2018, the contamination was evidentially not fully addressed.

<https://www.wsocvtv.com/news/local/>

## BENEFICIAL REUSE

**Dominion Energy** just awarded a contract to **Charah Solutions** for the beneficial reuse of up to 8.1 million tons of coal ash from its Chesterfield Power Station in Chester, Virginia. **Charah Solutions** will install processing and transportation infrastructure to haul ash product to cement kiln feed markets, helping the growing demand for concrete in the construction industry while saving virgin materials from use. The contract will run until 2032 and helps Chesterfield Power Station meet its state requirement to remove coal ash from the site within 15 years.

<https://www.globalcement.com/news/>

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