

# ASH POND NEWSBYTES



December 2021

Dear Readers,

The following is a collection of ash pond news from the month of December 2021. Our intent is to provide you with important news pieces to help inform your business decisions and keep you up to date about the coal and ash pond industry.

– Peter Alvey & The Roux Team



Waukegan Generation Station coal-fired plant in Waukegan, IL.

## CONTAMINATION, CONT.

In the United States, there are an estimated 511 coal ash ponds which are used to contain nearly 78.6 million tons of coal ash. Data by the environmental group **Earthjustice** shows that around 46% of known coal ash ponds are unlined and have been or will be closed in place. Nationwide, Earthjustice estimates that there are less than 40 coal ash ponds with a protective liner and that more than 200 coal ash ponds have contaminated groundwater. Earthjustice has compiled a map of 500 coal ash pond locations. [Map Link](#)

In the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, a coal ash lagoon owned by **Alabama Power** is sitting in one of the nation's most biodiverse areas. Environmentalists, members of the community, and scientists alike fear that someday an environmental disaster may occur in this area similar to that of the upriver Kingston, Tennessee disaster, where 5.4 million cubic yards of coal ash covered 400 acres of land in December 2008. Alabama Power has submitted a permit to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) for the capping in place of coal ash on-site, which has not yet been approved by the USEPA. [Link](#)

## CONTAMINATION

Residents in Waukegan, Illinois, are fighting years of environmental pollution from various industrial facilities, including a closed asbestos manufacturing facility, an active gypsum factory, and the **NRG Waukegan Generating Station**. Residents near the NRG Power Plant have complained of asthma in family members. A study conducted in Waukegan reported average concentrations of arsenic, boron, manganese, and other metals to be exceeding health-based thresholds. NRG has announced that the Waukegan coal plant is scheduled for closure in June 2022 and plans for remediation have been submitted. NRG has submitted two plans for remediation: the removal of coal ash, or the draining of the ponds and the subsequent capping of the coal ash with soil and drainage system layers. NRG plans to use the land for partial operations of gas-fired peaking units. [Link 1](#) [Link 2](#)

## SPECIAL REPORT

The USEPA has authorized a new wastewater rule requiring power plants to clean coal ash and heavy metals from wastewater prior to discharging to waterbodies. This rule is expected to impact around 75 US coal-fired plants. The USEPA estimates that this new rule will reduce pollutants in the nation's waterways by an estimated 386 million pounds per year. Since 2010, the U.S. Energy Information Administration has reported more than approximately one third of coal generation has been retired. [Link](#)

## COAL POWER PLANT ASH POND CLOSURE AND MODIFICATIONS

In Hallsville, Louisiana, **American Electric Power (AEP)**, **Sabine Mining Company**, local governments, and members of the public have met to discuss the closure of the Pirkey Power Plant in 2023. The closure is expected to eliminate an estimated \$22 million in sales and economic output from the area and is estimated to cause a \$2 million loss for local school districts. AEP is closing the plant and associated mine due to new federal regulations on coal ash disposal that require coal ash ponds and landfills be lined with solid barriers. Closure operations by Sabine Mining Company will include steps for remediation, such as the planting of trees and grasses around the areas where coal has been extracted. [Link](#)

Clean Technica reports that in the United States, 59 gigawatts, or 28% of coal power plants, are scheduled to retire by 2035. As coal-fired power plants have been identified as a source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, states with clean energy goals have required a reduction of coal-generated power, leading to an increase in the closure rate of coal-powered plants. [Link](#)

In Vermillion County, Illinois, the **Vistra** company has shared plans to transport the contents of three coal ash ponds to a landfill to prevent hazards associated with coal ash leaking into the nearby Vermillion River. The coal ash will be moved to an on-site elevated landfill located outside the river's floodplain. To make space for the landfill, Vistra is planning to demolish an on-site powerplant. They expect to have the project completed within the next eleven years. [Link](#)

## COAL POWER PLANT ASH POND CLOSURE AND MODIFICATIONS (CONT.)

**Ameren Corporation** announced they will close their Rush Island Power Plant in Jefferson County, Illinois by 2024, fifteen years earlier than anticipated. The announcement falls in the wake of a lawsuit filed against Ameren which required either closure of the plant, or up to \$1 billion dollars in clean up expenses. Ameren has stated that the retirement of the plant will be in the general interest of the public and will reduce the emissions of all pollutants. Additionally, Ameren has promised that it will invest \$8 billion in renewable energy over the next two decades, reaching "net-zero" carbon emissions by 2050. [Link](#)



*Ameren's Rush Island Power Plant*

## LEGAL AND REGULATORY

In Illinois, **Dynergy Midwest Generation (Dynergy)** has announced public meetings to discuss plans for the removal of coal ash from the Middle Fork of the Vermillion River. Earlier this year, due to Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) violations for the alleged coal ash dumping into unlined pits at the **Vermillion Power Station**, the state of Illinois and Dynergy reached an agreement that requires a plan for the removal of coal ash from the Middle Fork River. As a part of the plan, Dynergy will be required to conduct monthly riverbank inspections and provide bank stabilization as needed. [Link](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is investigating **Alabama Power**, their Plant Barry, and an ash pond near Mobile, Alabama. A recent news story by CNN reported that the USEPA is actively investigating the Plant Barry situation, and if coal ash is found to be in contact with groundwater it will require greater USEPA attention. [Link](#)

## IN OTHER NEWS...

The Houston, Texas-based **Kirby Inland Marine** has agreed to pay \$15.3 million in response to federal and state claims against the harm caused to natural resources due to a 2014 oil spill from a barge in the Houston Ship Channel. The spill resulted from a collision of barges and discharged approximately 168,000 gallons of oil into the water. The oil flowed from the canal and into the Gulf of Mexico, polluting waters and causing harm to the Texas coastline. [Link](#)

In Pawtucket, Rhode Island, an undetermined amount of coal tar oil has spilled a second time into the Seekonk River. A portion of the oil came from the **National Grid Tidewater Landing** redevelopment project. The site is the location of a former Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP). The quantity of the oil spill is unknown, but dead fish have washed up onshore and the river's surface was reported to be slick with a rainbow sheen. [Link](#)

Proposals have been made for carbon pipelines through the Midwest that would direct carbon dioxide to rock formations in North Dakota and Illinois. Geologists have determined that rock formations, such as the Mount Simon Sandstone, can store carbon dioxides for miles below the surface. Scientists have been studying the use of rock formations for decades and have determined that CO<sub>2</sub> will slowly dissipate into the rock formation water, where it can be stored for thousands of years. The Iowa-based company, **Summit Carbon Solutions**, and the Texas-based company, **Navigator CO<sub>2</sub> Ventures** are developing plans to inject liquified CO<sub>2</sub> deep into the earth for storage in rock formations. [Link](#)

## IN OTHER NEWS, CONT.

The per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) working group in Henderson, Kentucky have been learning of PFAS contamination at the **Shamrock Technologies** facility locations. A geologist for the Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection (KYDEP) has stated that samples collected at Shamrock Community Drive locations showed high levels of PFAS contamination, up to 345 million parts per trillion. However, KYDEP stated that there is no evidence that citizens in the area are consuming or exposed to groundwater with high levels of PFAS. As a part of the Shamrock site remediation, holding tanks and contaminated soil have been removed, although concern for the long-term quality of the groundwater has been stated by KYDEP. [Link](#)

The Navy Red Hill water crisis has created challenges for schools in Oahu, Hawaii as over 3,000 students are unable to use the water to drink, cook, or use for oral hygiene. This has caused schools to shut off water supplies and rely on bottled water donations. A water sample collected earlier this month by the Department of Health was found to contain petroleum product. The Naval **Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility** is the suspected source of the contamination and sits 100 feet above the aquifer which supplies 77% of Oahu's drinking water. The Hawaii governor has ordered the Navy to defuel the bulk fuel storage tanks and install a drinking water system. [Link](#)



*Tidewater Landing Site in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.*

## Contact Us

**Roux**

1200 Harger Rd., Suite 800

Oak Brook, IL 60523

(630) 572-3300

[palvey@rouxinc.com](mailto:palvey@rouxinc.com)

[www.rouxinc.com](http://www.rouxinc.com)