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From: [Rachel Cantin](#)
To: [Brown, Don](#)
Subject: [External] Public Comment: AS 2021-03: Adjusted Standard for the Waukegan Station
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Attachments: [Public Comment AS 2021-03 Adjusted Standard for the Waukegan Station - Cantin.docx](#)

To the Illinois Pollution Control Board,

My name is Rachel Cantin. I am here as a community member of Waukegan. I am an Assistant Planner for the City of Waukegan. In my position with the City I work on a variety of environmental and sustainability focused projects. I am writing to you today to advocate for complete removal and clean up of coal ash in Waukegan.

During my time here in Waukegan I have experienced an incredibly vibrant community, despite historic injustice, disinvestment, and pollution. Waukegan has been overburdened by pollution and other environmental injustices for years and years. Continuing to allow coal ash ponds along our lakefront will continue the cycle of environmental racism. It will continue the cycle of disinvestment. And it will continue the cycle of a public health crisis.

Approximately 5 miles South of the NRG Plant and the poisonous coal ash ponds, is Naval Station Great Lakes and the Captain James A. Lovell Health Care Center. Naval Station Great Lakes is the only basic training installation for the Navy. 40,000 recruits go through there annually. That's 40,000 future Sailors. 40,000 people who raised their right hand and promised to support and defend this country. 40,000 people drinking water from Lake Michigan, the very same Lake Michigan that is at risk from NRG's coal ash ponds. Lovell Health Care features mental health care programs, intensive care unit and emergency rooms, in addition to being the only VA facility with a pediatric unit. In addition to serving Veterans, Lovell also services active and reserve military members and their families. These people deserve to have safe drinking water. As a Sergeant in the Illinois National Guard myself, I find the threat of coal ash remaining on the shores of Lake Michigan, so close to the Great Lakes and the VA, to be appalling. The coal ash ponds in Waukegan impact more than just the City. It reaches far beyond and must be fully removed and cleaned up.

Waukegan is an overburdened community. We have 5 Superfund sites and plenty of Brownfields. It feels like we are finally making progress on some of these sites, but we are about to take a huge step backward if NRG is not held to the highest of standards. Multiple census tracts in Waukegan are in some of the highest percentiles in the state and country for Air Toxics Cancer Risk, Toxic Releases to Air, and Superfund Proximity. Leaving coal ash in Waukegan will negatively impact the welfare of our community, especially sensitive populations. People in Waukegan already face significantly lower life-expectancy, higher rates of asthma, cancer, diabetes, and more, than our more affluent neighbors who unsurprisingly, don't have the kind of pollution as we do. Anything short of a total cleanup is unacceptable.

Our lakefront is not an industrial area. It is our area for recreation, for exploration, and for future living. Leaving coal ash in Waukegan will hinder our economic development. According to 2022 Illinois Department of Employment Security, Waukegan has a 6.1% unemployment rate, with Illinois having an unemployment rate of 4.9%. Although Lake County has a median family income of \$122,042, according to ACS, the median household income for Waukegan is only \$64,299. That is a significant disparity that cannot be allowed to remain alongside the coal ash.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written comment.

Very Respectfully,
Rachel Cantin
rachel.a.cantin@gmail.com