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From: [Toni Oplt](#)
To: [Brown, Don](#)
Subject: [External] Public comment on Case # AS 2021-006
Date: Monday, June 16, 2025 6:45:39 PM

Hello,

My name is Toni Oplt. I live in Edwardsville, IL and chair the local volunteer group Metro East Green Alliance (MEGA), which is a subcommittee of the Illinois Sierra Club Piasa Palisades Group, located in the Metro East. MEGA is focused on ending fossil fuels and building out clean renewable energy and, most importantly, holding polluters accountable for the environmental and human health harm they have done to communities as they have profited for years off their neighbors.

Many of MEGA's members, including myself, have spoken before you in the past and have submitted formal comments, often concerning the dangers of coal ash in our own Metro East area. However, we are well aware of the existential threat that exists around our state because of the existence of many coal ash ponds, impoundments and fills throughout Illinois. This is why MEGA is speaking out for the people of Marion in this formal written comment on Case # AS 2021-006.

In 2021, we saw the successful passage of the Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act, which contains regulations that require coal plant owners to safely reclinate or close ash ponds, monitor ponds for groundwater contamination, thoroughly clean up any contamination they discover and allow groups such as MEGA and individual local citizens to have a voice in their own safety through hearings and comments. This rule applies to all Illinois coal plants.

Yet for years, SIPC in Marion, IL, has skirted this law, arguing that eight of their ponds hold only insignificant amounts of coal ash. But from years of battling the fossil fuel industry over health and safety when it comes to coal ash, MEGA members believe neither the claim of an insignificant amount of toxic material in the eight ponds nor the idea that what SIPC considers insignificant keeps the community of Marion from harm.

SIPC wants the IPCB to exempt the eight of its coal ash ponds at the Marion coal plant from complying with the regulations in law because of this claim that the ponds contain "di minimis" amounts of CCR. But the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has twice rejected SIPC's arguments and recommended that IPCB deny SIPC's request. IEPA made their recommendations because the ponds are "CCR surface impoundments" holding large amounts of coal ash; none of them have closed in accordance with Illinois law; and SIPC's own data show they're contaminating groundwater with toxic pollution, including arsenic, boron, cadmium, and more.

The community that will inherit back this land and all the pollution that goes with it

deserves the support and financial assistance from the company who placed them in harm's way, while profiting greatly. Community members deserve clean water and soil; certainly their future generations--who will see no benefit from this plant--do. The Lake of Egypt is a public water source and is important for recreation and tourism for the area, not to mention economic prosperity. But the threat from these ponds could undermine community hopes for a bright future, while improper clean-up of the coal ash will limit site redevelopment opportunities, and, over time, could sharply reduce property values and local business viability.

Therefore, SIPC must comply with the Illinois coal ash rules at the Marion coal plant. The rules must be applied to these eight ponds.

As always, I, on behalf of MEGA, thank you for your time and attention to our concerns. We feel we have always been heard and hope we are again in this important instance.

Sincerely,

Toni Optl, chair Metro East Green Alliance, Pias Palisades Group