

Illinois Pollution Control Board Second Hearing on Coal Ash Rulemaking 10-1-2020

My name is Mary Ellen DeClue and I live in an area surrounded by coal-fired power plants and coal mines. I would like to share some observations on how coal-fired utility and coal mining operators mislead and manipulate the public and officials in Illinois.

Denial of coal's toxicity is an integral part of the business plans for the coal industry. The coal entrepreneurs do not acknowledge the toxicity of coal in any form whether coal dust, coal ash or CCR, slurry, tar, or coal emissions. As members of the Pollution Control Board, you are forewarned that the goal of protecting the health of communities from coal ash damage will be greatly challenged by coal stakeholders. For decades, they have been allowed to set policies that were a benefit to them often with harmful consequences to the health and well-being of local communities.

The most toxic chemicals in coal, both organic and inorganic, are not monitored in community air and water and are not widely known. Inhaled particulate matter is very detrimental to health, but especially particles that contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These chemicals are classed as carcinogenic and extremely toxic. The reality that coal mining communities are exposed to coal dust with no enforcement of the Clean Air Act is shameful. Unfortunately, coal ash exposure to the lungs of workers and neighbors are treated in the same careless manner as coal dust.

Coal ash has been produced for decades, but just until very recently, there were no regulations on how to properly dispose and store coal ash. A huge problem exists now.

It is public record that coal operators have spent millions on propaganda that denies climate change and helps to prevent a necessary transition to renewable energy sources. The money spent was an excellent investment for them with favorable legislation, more subsidies, deregulations with minimal responsibility to communities.

My belief is that the CCR rulemaking is a challenge mainly because there is a conflict between coal's business plan and the communities' health goals. I heard familiar comments about coal ash clean-up, like what are reasonable and viable solutions to CCR contamination. I fear the same old inadequate excuses used by coal mining will be applied to coal ash clean-up. Coal mining operators are only responsible for coal mining damage to the extent that the mitigation is "economically and technologically feasible" as determined by the coal operator. This loophole not only adversely affects health, but also brings many questions on how to setup financial assurances that protect the economy of coal communities. Their health, safety, and economy are already compromised by the way existing regulations are applied.

The Pollution Control Board must be up to this demanding challenge of placing community health and safety foremost in their future decisions and rulemaking. I thank you for your enduring work and efforts to maintain healthy communities.

Mary Ellen DeClue
366 Westlake Trail
Litchfield, IL 62056