

Coal Ash Hearing - Public Comment Email

My name is Dorelle Ackermann and I am a resident of Will County. I want to thank the Illinois EPA and the Pollution Control Board for your work in protecting our citizens and our environment. I was thrilled when the Illinois legislature passed the Coal Ash Bill designed to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for the serious, negative impacts of coal mining in Illinois.

Now, it is left to you to carefully craft the details to that law so that the public is indeed protected, our streams returned to health and taxpayers are not left with the cost of cleanup. I might add that it is essential to do it right so our children are not faced with solving another problem created by our excessive reliance on fossil fuels.

I have observed first hand the need for a regulatory body like the EPA after attending a public meeting set up by NRG at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Joliet on August 27, 2019. The glossy posters displayed by NRG were the most biased I have ever witnessed. It painted a rosy picture of complete compliance with all federal and state laws. One poster showed that capping the quarry was the perfect solution to the coal ash problem and two posters showed the evils to the community of removal of coal ash. No mention that the former was the cheap solution for the company.

Worse, was their treatment of the local residents who were predominantly people of color. After the residents assembled in the church parking lot the spokesperson from NRG refused to answer their questions. She seemed visibly shaken that the community wanted accountability and totally unprepared. NRG quickly brought in a spokesperson that admitted he had just been hired yesterday but he would find answers to their questions. A year later, I am not aware of any follow up to this meeting.

NRG's surprise at the number of concerned residents might have been due to the fact that they flagrantly disregarded their responsibility to notify the community about the meeting. Or, is this yet another example of the lack of environmental justice when communities of color are discriminated against and their health is not considered?

The residents, many elderly and disabled were then told to return to the basement presentation area where their questions were again deflected. It took NRG 30 minutes to scramble and find another spokeswoman. One resident brought a water sample from his home and asked the spokeswoman if she would drink it. It was the color of urine. Residents also described a history of contaminated water and pollution run off in the area, showing the need to address cumulative environmental impacts.

We need tough rules to support the Coal Ash Bill because we cannot trust NRG to monitor contamination of the Des Plaines river. Their poster says "no groundwater flows in the direction of the neighborhood to the Northeast. Yet Earthjustice cited 2006 tests showing contamination of residential wells, and said: "Midwest Gen's consultants recognized then, and continue to acknowledge now, that contaminated groundwater is flowing not just north and west into the Des Plaines River but also southeast, toward an elementary school and

businesses.” According to the Heralld News 11.30.2018, arsenic (in that groundwater) exceeds safe levels in groundwater monitoring wells by over twenty-three times.

In 1994, former site owner Commonwealth Edison had reported to the pollution control board that coal ash in the quarry was 20 to 30 feet below the adjacent water table, “meaning that groundwater is perpetually flowing from that higher water table into the Quarry.”According to NRG’s glossy posters the bottom layer of the quarry will have a “low permeability” layer. Low is not impermeable. And, that means, as of now the quarry is not lined even though the quarry is located in fractured bedrock, making it very insecure.

Can we trust NRG’s glossy poster that states “significant reduction of contact between ash and water when we know that it is the combination of coal ash and water is a toxic blend..... so “a little water” is OK? Isn’t that analogous to being a little bit pregnant?

In conclusion, I’m asking you to include:

- a permanent solution,
- a voice with public input and
- a guarantee that companies will pay for the waste.

Thank you.

<https://www.theherald-news.com/2019/08/28/residents-hear-plans-to-remedy-coal-ash-pollution-at-old-lincoln-stone-quarry/ahr9mx1/>

<https://energynews.us/2018/02/27/midwest/illinois-residents-say-no-more-coal-ash-in-old-quarry/>

Industry data compiled. 22/24 were polluting against safe drinking and ground water.  
[https://illinoiscoalash.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/capandrun-ilcoalash\\_web.pdf](https://illinoiscoalash.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/capandrun-ilcoalash_web.pdf)