

Testimony: Proposed Rules  
Standards for the disposal of coal combustion residuals  
in surface impoundments  
August 12, 2020

My name is Eileen Borgia, 606 Lenox Court, Champaign, IL 61822. I hold a PhD in Early Childhood Education from University of Illinois and for 40 years I taught teachers to follow 'best practices' in the care and education of children. Recent neurological research suggests the vulnerability of the young brain to polluted air and substances in their environment. Cancer causing pollutants are lurking in toxic soups in more than 74 coal ash impoundments and landfills throughout the State of Illinois and can silently damage the growth and health of young children.

Also, as a volunteer Master Naturalist, I learned that cancer causing pollutants are leaching in to the Middle Fork River....at Oakwood, Illinois....MY river... where thousands of people, including children, paddle, float on inner tubes, splash, catch fish, camp, and enjoy the Federally designated *Wild and Scenic river*. They can see the orange leachate leaking down the bank below the now closed Vermillion Power Plant. The owner of the plant, Dynegy, abandoned the facility after dumping tons of residue from coal production into inadequate storage pits, that seeps into groundwater eventually endangering everyone. It must be that Dynegy did not follow '*best practices*' in disposing all the waste in safely lined impoundments, at a safe distance from the everchanging bank of the Middle Fork of the Vermillion River.

Potentially, thousands of children playing in the river have been exposed to mercury, cadmium, arsenic, and other pollutants that can damage their developing brains and may lead to cancer and early death. In the future, even if they escape devastation from coal ash, those children might grow into adults who will inherit the sins of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coal companies, and **they** will have to continue to beg for removal of wet coal ash in ponds, groundwater, rivers, and beaches in the Illinois of 2030.

With Input from advocates, communities, scientists, and experts, the leaders in the Illinois legislature designed a bill with strict standards for removal (both wet and dry), of all coal ash from the earth in the State of Illinois. After several years, the result is SB 9, passed into Law in 2019. Congratulations to All!

Rulemaking is underway, and I thank the state agencies IDNR, IEPA, and the Illinois Pollution Control Board for heeding the call of thousands of advocates: that the rulemaking process be transparent; setting aside time for this testimony to be considered; and for including public input in all reviews, approval of all plans, programs and assessments. Some of the proposed rules need to be strengthened, such as not lowering the standards for complete removal of coal ash. Thankfully, the *Coal Ash Pollution Prevention act* does not permit the Illinois rules to be weaker than the Federal rule.

Following are some of the key protections written into the proposed rules that I support:

- **Comprehensive protections** for the health and safety of workers, and the general public affected during the cleanup and the transportation of residual dust or fly ash.
- Not allowing companies to 'consider' removal rather than **require clean up all remains of wet and dry ash.**
- **Monitoring** for all relevant pollutants in the groundwater during every monitoring period, until the groundwater quality meets the groundwater protection standards.
- Ensure that **polluters, not taxpayers pay** for the closure and cleanup of coal ash sites, and provides the Illinois EPA funds it needs to properly oversee closure and cleanup.

With strong, non-variable rules, the law in Illinois will ensure that coal ash will be removed completely, making the environment safer for everyone, especially the smallest and most vulnerable: the children of Illinois.

The time is now to have "no coal ash, no way, no how" in Illinois.

Eileen T. Borgia PhD