

June 30, 2025

TO: The Illinois Pollution Control Board

Public Comment RE: #AS 2021-006

For nearly fifty years I have been involved as a volunteer environmental protection advocate because of my life experiences with my parents' cancer and COPD and my love of nature. Critical factors showed devastating family health conditions linked to pollution sources and local area air quality. I am Co-Conservation Chair for Heart of Illinois Group Sierra Club, past Conservation Chair for Illinois Chapter Sierra Club, and serve as Secretary for the Central Illinois Healthy Community Alliance (CIHCA). CIHCA was formed nearly 15 years ago to raise area concerns about the thousands of air pollution exceedances and on-going groundwater pollution at the Edwards coal plant south of Peoria, where I live.

Water Is Life. Illinois must stop taking its groundwater for granted. I have seen too many rural locations be required to turn to expensive, regional piped water systems, after area groundwater was contaminated by coal mines and other uncontrolled pollution sources. Rural residents relying on their own water wells, farms with livestock, and towns needing groundwater resources must be protected, not just from past pollution risks, but the toxic toll that will continue if pollution is not dealt with. The Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC) Marion coal plant has the added very serious issue of bio-accumulative soluble radioactive particles. This is just one critical reason to apply the fully established Illinois coal ash regulations for their coal ash ponds.

This letter is to urge the Illinois Pollution Control Board to deny the SIPC request to exempt its eight coal ash ponds from the established State of Illinois coal ash regulations. This coal plant wishes to get permanent exemption from our state coal ash rules which were finalized in 2021. This will mean decades more of toxics being released to the area environment increasing the on-going harm and pollution already existing at this plant. I see it as essential the IPCB consider the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency recommendations that the full protections of the existing regulations be upheld. These regulations were approved by the state and put into law in 2021 after considerable existing and ongoing major groundwater pollution problems from coal ash ponds became better publicly known and better understood for the serious harm they cause.

I do not think excusing the established laws relating to ash ponds at SIPC Marion is acceptable or remotely reasonable. Please consider the documented monitoring proving the groundwater is already being polluted by over 11 contaminants. Concerns for the Lake of Egypt public water source and popular recreation area must be included. Many of the SIPC Marion coal ash ponds' pollutants have known harmful impacts on animals, people, and the environment and will continue to present groundwater concerns for generations to come. With ongoing rapid climate change, protection of water resources is essential. Work must be done now to deal with known toxic locations like these coal ash ponds. No one really knows how drastic future climate conditions will become. It is no good "kicking the can down the road" on known contaminants issues through variances.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. I urgently ask you to deny the SIPC Marion request for Adjusted Standard.

Sincerely,

Joyce Blumenshine, Peoria, IL