

My comments on Coal Ash Hearing.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak today. My name is Dorelle Ackermann and I am a retired science teacher and life long resident of Illinois.

I appreciate that the Illinois EPA has been a strong advocate for me in protecting the environment and I recognize that your job has not gotten easier with so many funding cuts and the seriousness of the looming climate crisis. So, thank you for your work.

We all need to enjoy the outdoors and recreation is one reason to protect open space. Besides the local economic benefits it revitalizes citizens who will become lifetime advocates for the environment.

I thrive outdoors. I can't tell you the thrill I experience when paddling a river and observing an eagle, or rounding a bend and seeing a deer taking a drink. I have been canoeing and kayaking rivers for over 50 years and a favorite river is the Middle Fork of the Vermillion river which was designated a national scenic river way. **The only national scenic river way in Illinois.**

Many outdoor enthusiasts don't realize the dark, towering banks as you near Kickapoo State Park contain toxic coal ash which seeps into this beautiful river. This is the problem. Superficially the area is pristine and advertised by the DNR:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/Kickapoo.aspx>

as "crystal clear ponds and luxuriantly forested ridges. During the past 50 years, trees and vegetation have reclaimed the former mined land."

No mention that the surrounding coal ash ponds and landfills contain mercury, arsenic, selenium, chromium, and cadmium, which can cause cancer and brain damage in humans and are harmful to the 24 endangered species that inhabit the area.

No mention that this coal ash waste is 10 to 100X more concentrated than even the climate warming coal originally produced. Did I mention a quantity equivalent to 1000 olympic size swimming pools.

My mother told me “clean up your mess” and she was wise enough to catch me hiding my junk under the bed as I stood proud of my superficially clean room.

We need to tell Dynergy and every one of the companies that own the 80 coal ash pits in Illinois to clean up your mess! Do it the right way. Don't cap and run which leaves the pits forever exposed to groundwater. This waste must stay dry to protect the environment. The mines surrounding the Vermillion river are located in a flood plain. The Vermillion river's meandering course is eroding the banks at a rate of 3 feet/year. according to Dynergy's very own 2018 report.

(https://prairierivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Color_2017_11_07-Dynergy-Vermilion-Riverbank-Stabilization-Rept.pdf)

which could result in a catastrophic breach.

Cap and run is not a permanent solution but it's the favored method of the fossil fuel companies to save them money and leave the cost of doing it right to future tax payers. Have we not learned the economic sense of responding before crisis mode?

Dynergy has had a history of violations and even after 8 years, their 2012 groundwater violation is still unresolved. The community is still at risk and no assurance they won't be left with the cost.

Illinois's Coal Ash Bill gives us the opportunity to close loop holes and hold the polluters financially accountable. However, the bill will only do that if you, the Illinois EPA pass strong regulations.

I ask you to require a permanent solution, with public input and a guarantee that companies will pay for the waste.

This means:

1. No wet ash.
2. State standards stronger than the ever weakening of the federal standards
3. Regulations that include landfills and dumps, not just pits.

4. Community and worker protections need to be included for the safe removal and transportation of dust ash removed.