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Coal Ash Waste

By Erin Glynn, Beyond Coal Campaign

Coal Combustion Waste or "CCW" is often referred to as coal ash. This material is what is left over from burning coal. Despite its hazardous characteristics, coal ash and other coal combustion wastes are not subject to federal regulation, and state laws governing coal combustion waste disposal are usually weak or non-existent. Across the country, millions of tons of coal ash are being stored in precarious surface waste ponds, impoundments, and abandoned mines.

The State of Georgia alone is home to 28 coal ash waste ponds.

[The period for public comment on coal ash waste is now open. Submit your comment to the EPA today.](#)

Coal ash hit national news in December 2008 when a dam broke at a TVA coal ash storage facility in Kingston, Tennessee. This disastrous spill led to approximately 5.4 million cubic yards of coal ash waste dumped in nearby rivers and streams and on top of homes and businesses, ruining communities for miles. Please take some time to view a [video](#) of the Kingston, TN aftermath.

The current total volume of Georgia's 28 ponds (active and inactive) is roughly 50 million cubic yards of coal ash. **That is nearly ten times the amount of coal ash waste that ruined Kingston, Tennessee.**

In addition, Georgia is home to 13 coal ash ponds that are larger than the TVA Kingston Plant. [Click here to submit your comment on coal ash waste today.](#)

While the components of each type of coal ash vary depending upon both the type of coal and the coal plant itself, all coal ash waste will likely include certain amounts of toxic constituents, primarily heavy metals such as:

- Arsenic
- Beryllium
- Boron
- Cadmium
- Chromium
- Cobalt
- Lead
- Manganese
- Mercury
- Selenium

One water sample taken after the Kingston disaster showed arsenic at **149 times higher than what is considered safe.** Kingston was not a "freak accident." **The dangers of coal ash waste have been exhibited elsewhere, including right here in Georgia.**

According to the U.S. EPA damage case assessment, proven damage cases include Georgia Power's own Plant Bowen, located near Cartersville, Georgia.

"On July 28, 2002, a sinkhole developed in the (coal) ash pond of the Georgia Power Company - Plant Bowen Facility (coal-fired generating facility). The sinkhole ultimately reached four acres and a depth of thirty feet. The integrity of the ash pond dikes did not



appear to be compromised. The company estimated that 2.25 million gallons of ash/water mixture was released to an unnamed tributary of the Euharlee Creek, containing 281 tons of ash. Georgia's Department of Natural Resources alleges an unpermitted discharge of water containing approximately 80 tons of ash slurry entered Euharlee Creek through a stormwater drainage pipe resulting in a temporary degradation of public waters."

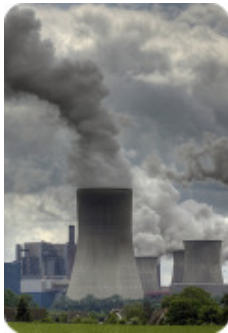
Exposure to the arsenic in coal ash has been referred to as "more dangerous than smoking a pack of cigarettes a day." Yet it remains difficult for Georgia citizens to find accurate and comprehensive information about the ash ponds located near their homes. Monitoring data is difficult to find if it even exists at all.

[Submit your comment asking for accurate monitoring and correct classification of this hazardous substance today.](#)

Quick Links

Coal Campaign Success!

The Sierra Club and allies, represented by Greenlaw and SELC, have won a key legal challenge to two state water permits for the proposed 850-megawatt Plant Washington coal-fired power plant in Sandersville, GA. A Georgia administrative court has ruled that both the water withdrawal and the water pollution discharge permits issued by Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for the proposed power plant are legally flawed. In a ruling issued Friday, July 23, Administrative Law Judge Ronit Walker said EPD failed to follow proper procedure for interbasin transfers by allowing Power4Georgians, LLC to withdraw an average of 13.5 million gallons per day from the Oconee River and return only 11 percent of that water to the river. This water would be for use at the plant, located in the Ogeechee River watershed.



On the wastewater permit, the judge ruled that EPD erred in allowing pollutants to be monitored and regulated within the facility, rather than at the point of discharge into the Oconee River as required by the Clean Water Act. Chlorine, chromium and zinc are among the pollutants of concern from the coal plant. "We are grateful that the Judge ruled against this attempt to take water from the Oconee River Basin and use it to build an expensive and unnecessary dirty coal plant in the Ogeechee River Basin. It is time for Cobb EMC and the other co-ops to stop pushing this coal plant on rural Georgia, and time to start saving money through water and energy conservation measures. Efficiency can meet our water and energy needs," said Erin Glynn, Associate Field Organizer for the Georgia Sierra Club. To read more on the recent coal success, please [click here](#).

Conservation Retreat

Enjoy a fun weekend August 20th - August 22nd with many other Sierra Club members at the annual Conservation Retreat. It is taking place at Camp Wahsega in Dahlonega with guest speaker Steve Willis, Vice Chair of the Georgia Chapter and Chair of the Coastal Group. We'll spend our days swapping ideas on how to save the planet one stream, neighborhood, bus route, Senate seat, and power plant at a time. We will have some time out for hiking in our beautiful woods, identifying scat and tracks, and eating some great camp meals. Secure

your spot soon - send in your [registration form](#) by August 4th. For more information please [click here](#).



Chapter Calendar

Our efforts to improve our communications with our members and volunteers have continued and we hope you will take advantage! Our Georgia Chapter calendar includes all Chapter events, committee meetings, group meetings, and more. You can view the Chapter Calendar on the Chapter website where you can view the specific group or chapter events. To learn what is happening at the Georgia Chapter

please [visit here](#).



Sierra Club Meetings

Smart Energy Team Meeting, Monday, August 2nd, 6:30p.m refreshments,

7p.m. start, Colleen Kiernan - Chair, colleenkiernan@mindspring.com

Wildlands & Wildlife Committee, Tuesday, August 10th, 7:00p.m., Phil Zinsmeister, pzinsmeister@oglethorpe.edu

Fundraising Committee Meeting, Sunday, August 22nd, 11:00a.m., Erin Wetty Chair, call 404-607-1262 x 225, gregory.schwartz@sierraclub.org

RAIL Committee Meeting, Monday, August 23rd, 6:45p.m., Jim Dexter Chair, call 678-313-2407, jimdex@aol.com

Environmental Events



Atlanta BeltLine Braves Night

Thursday, August 5th, 7:10p.m.

Turner Field, Monument Grove ([map](#))

Join the Sierra Club for the Atlanta Beltline Night at the 1st Place Atlanta Braves vs the San Francisco Giants. Tickets are \$10.00 for \$12.00 seats. If you would like tickets please contact Ashley Robbins at 276-780-3748. For more information please click [here](#).

Centennial Group Monthly Meeting

Thursday, August 5th, 7p.m.

Life University, 1269 Barclay Circle SE ([map](#))

The Centennial Group of the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club was organized in 1992, the one hundredth anniversary of the Sierra Club. Our members from Cobb, Cherokee, and North Fulton counties volunteer to educate, help, and encourage our fellow citizens to protect Georgia's environment for our children, grandchildren, and beyond. For more information on monthly meetings, please [click here](#).



Connally Nature Park Hike

Saturday, August 7th

Connally Nature Park, East Point, GA ([map](#))

A nature walk through a 27-acre forest, preserved in part by Sierra Club members, and including state champion white oak. Bring your cameras, plus plant and animal guide books. Families are welcome. For more information please [click here](#).

Outings Leader Training

Saturday, August 7th

Georgia Chapter office, Decatur, GA ([map](#))

Do you have that special place that you would like to share with likeminded people? Would you like to be part of an outings program that has existed since 1901? Then join us at our next training session. You will learn the skills you need to lead safe, successful trips. For more information or to sign up, please [click here](#).



Metro Atlanta Group Meeting

Tuesday, August 10th, 7:00p.m.

Church of the Epiphany, Atlanta, GA ([map](#))

Join the Metro Atlanta Group for their monthly meeting featuring speaker Ted V. Jackson from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. Mr. Jackson is currently the Manager in charge of Environmental Emergency and Radiation Program. There will be a discussion on understanding the BP oil spill and the potential impacts to Georgia's coast. For more information please [click here](#).

ICO Training & Strategic Planning

Saturday - Sunday, August 14th-15th

Georgia Chapter Office, Decatur, GA ([map](#))

The Inner City Outings program is a community outreach program providing opportunities for urban youth and adults to discover the beauty of wild places, to foster an appreciation for nature, and to help them acquire the necessary skills to enjoy these places safely through active involvement with nature. If you would like to be involved as a volunteer leader with ICO this is the training session for you. For more



information about volunteering with ICO Atlanta, please contact Allison Williams at adwilliams8@yahoo.com or [click here](#).



Savannah River Group Meeting

Tuesday, August 17th, 7:30p.m.

Unitarian Church on Walton Way, Augusta, GA ([map](#))

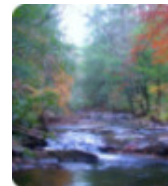
The Savannah River Group started in 1981 and over the years has focused most of their conservation activities on Savannah River issues. SRG monthly meetings frequently feature environmental issues such as programs on both national and local problems: mountaintop coal removal, support of local markets, and the World-Wide 350 Rally. For more information please [click here](#).

Greater Gwinnett Group Meeting

Thursday, August 19th, 7:00p.m.

Berkmar High School, Lilburn, GA ([map](#))

The Greater Gwinnett Group holds monthly meetings for socializing, sharing personal environmental interests and concerns, and to learn about environmental issues. The group serves residents in Gwinnett County and surrounding areas. For more information please [click here](#).



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