

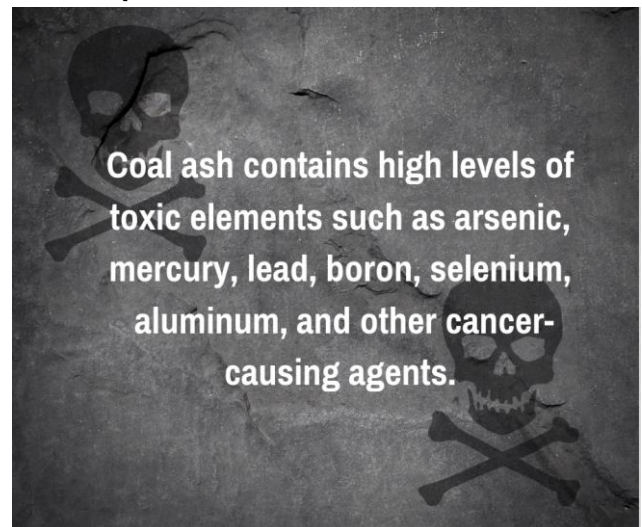
Protect Wisconsin's Water from Coal Pollution

We Energies and Alliant Energy have applied for updated water permits for the state's three largest coal plants, the Oak Creek and Elm Road Coal Plants (Oak Creek) in southeastern Wisconsin and the Columbia Coal Plant in (Columbia) in Pardeeville. Unfortunately, as written, the permits allow We Energies and Alliant to continue to pollute to our waterways and don't adequately implement new federal rules for protection from coal plant pollution. Annually, coal plants cumulatively release 2.2 billion pounds of contaminated wastewater directly into our rivers, lakes and bays due to wet ash handling.

We need the Wisconsin DNR to include the latest technological standards for treatment of coal ash waste because we deserve protection of our waterways from coal ash pollution.

Coal Plants = Dirty Water

In 2015, the Obama Administration announced new federal rules that would safeguard communities from water pollution caused by coal plants. The Steam Electric Effluent Limitations and Guidelines (ELG) rule found that it was feasible for all coal plants to eliminate the release from coal ash waste of toxins such as arsenic, mercury, selenium, and lead into our rivers and streams. One of the ways it does this is by including a requirement to eliminate wet coal ash handling by 2020, with an option to push it back to 2023 only if they can prove that it would be "technically and economically infeasible" to comply with the law by 2020. Wet ash handling is a process that treats coal ash by mixing it with water which then flows into ash ponds or impoundments.



The water permits are up for renewal for the first time since the ELG rule went into effect. **Neither permit** (issued by the Walker Administration last year) **requires adequate implementation of the ELG rule.** Instead, the current permits force Wisconsinites to pay for the pollution by allowing the coal plants to continue to leach pollution into our water bodies.

The Columbia permit completely ignores the ELG rule and has no requirements around eliminating wet-ash handling. Any possibility of coal ash pond overflow puts the Wisconsin River and other bodies of water at risk. This has been a problem for a long time and the DNR is now required to step in and fix it. [Ecological studies](#) in the late 1970s identified devastating impacts on aquatic life in a stream receiving discharge from ash ponds wiping out nearly all aquatic insects for 2.2 miles downstream.

The Oak Creek water permit as currently drafted allows We Energies to continue using wet ash handling until the latest possible date, 2023. Additionally, the Oak Creek permit requests permission to add more mercury into Lake Michigan (an already impaired water body) more than triple the wildlife standard and nearly triple the human health standard. If the permit moves forward unchanged, this decision would give We Energies the green light to continue putting Wisconsin waters, including Lake Michigan, at risk of contamination from heavy metals, nutrients and other toxic pollutants until the last possible date under the rule, even though we believe they are capable of complying by November 2020.

In a separate but related issue, We Energies is requesting a new exemption from state water discharge standards, called a variance, for mercury. The DNR sets standards for discharge of water containing mercury into nearby surface waters. The background level of mercury in Lake Michigan is high enough to be already considered impaired by the DNR, at 0.39 ng/L. The wildlife safe standard is 1.3 ng/L and the human health standard is 1.5 ng/L. We Energies is requesting a variance more than triple the wildlife standard and nearly triple the human health standard, up to 4.1 ng/L.



Background Level	Wildlife Standard	Human Health Standard	Requested Variance
0.39 ng/L	1.3 ng/L	1.5 ng/L	4.1 ng/L

According to the DNR's draft permit, between 2005 and 2008, discharges from the Oak Creek-Elm Road facility met state guidelines for mercury. However, discharges have consistently exceeded the limit since 2012. **While improving best practices around coal ash handling may not completely eliminate mercury pollution, it will go a long way.**

“The Year of Safe Drinking Water”

It's a new administration and a new day for water protection here in Wisconsin (Governor Evers has even announced that 2019 will be the 'Year of Safe Drinking Water') so we're hopeful that a big turnout and lots of comments will create the political will to improve these permits and protect all of us from mercury and coal ash pollution.



You can make a difference!

There are 2 public hearings for each of these permits where people can come and call on the DNR to fix and improve the permits.

Oak Creek Coal Plant	Columbia Coal Plant
<p>Monday, February 11, 2019 Rally at 12:30 PM Hearing starts at 1:00 PM</p> <p>Oak Creek Community Center 8580 South Howell Ave Oak Creek, WI 53154</p>	<p>Tuesday, February 12, 2019 9:30 AM</p> <p>Portage Public Library 253 West Edgewater Street Portage, WI 53901</p>
<p>Major concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ELG rule isn't enforced until the latest date · More mercury into Lake Michigan 	<p>Major concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Completely ignores ELG rule and the pollution from the plant, putting the Wisconsin River at risk
<p>Submit comments by 2/18/2019</p>	<p>Submit comments by 2/19/2019</p>

Once the hearing begins, each person will have five minutes to testify before the DNR and express their opinion about the draft permit. You do not need to be an expert to speak! This is an opportunity for every member of the public to be heard. By adding your voice to the chorus, you can make a difference.