

MOVE BEYOND COAL

THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT IN 2014





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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, grassroots movements against coal across the world have grown dramatically and proven they are a force to be reckoned with. Despite growing intimidation at the hands of corporations and governments, local communities continue to stand up and beat back violations on their land, air, and water. Thanks to their resistance, the inevitability of the coal expansion that the industry seeks to promote is far from a reality.

This report annually highlights the unsung heroes of the global anti-coal movement – those standing up and defending their rights against a deadly, dangerous, and corrupt industry. From the first report published in 2011 through 2014, various communities have been growing a movement and steadily winning. If anything has become clear, it's that this resistance is growing more powerful each and every year as outraged local communities protect their environment, health, and way of life from the rampant devastation of a destructive industry.



Women demonstrate at the Mahan Sangharsh Samiti (MSS) public meeting at Amelia. People from eleven villages around the Mahan forest area held a rally, Van Adhikar Sammelan, to tell Essar Power they won't allow coal mining in their forests, just as the inhabitants of Niyamgiri have stopped Vedanta from taking over their forests for mining. PHOTO: Jagori Dhar, Greenpeace India



Greenpeace activists dressed as Whitehaven Coal workers construct a mock coal mine on the grounds of Sydney University. PHOTO: Greenpeace



AUSTRALIA

Historic Alliance Blockades Maules Creek

Julie Macken, Greenpeace

Australia is no stranger to massive fossil fuel development, nor to massive grassroots movements to defend the country's land, air, and water. Over the past few years, the Lock the Gate Alliance, a coalition that works with rural communities to literally lock the gate to oil and gas developers, has arisen as a formidable opponent to the fossil fuel industry by securing moratoriums on fracking in key cities. That powerful movement has helped fuel opposition to mega coal mines in Australia's interior that would ship that coal from new and expanded ports through the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Site. It's this upwelling of grassroots strength that has held back the tide of Prime Minister Tony Abbott's new fossil fuel friendly government.

It should come as no surprise then that when Whitehaven Coal (WHC) decided to dig an open cut coal mine at Maules Creek in the middle of the Leard State Forest, they were stepping headfirst into the anti-coal uprising sweeping the country. Their proposed mine would — together with the neighbouring Boggabri mine — cover approximately 40 percent of a forest so rare and precious that the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Premier and Cabinet described it as having “irreplaceable, ecologically unique values.”

The area set to be mined provides habitat for at least 30 threatened fauna species, including the squirrel glider, koala, and some of Australia's rarest woodlands birds. The Regent Honeyeater, for example, is listed as nationally endangered with a total known population estimated between 800 and 2,000 individuals. The mining area would also affect the critically endangered ecological community of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland, of which only 0.05 percent remains in near to original condition.

But environmental concerns are just one of many issues that has turned the Maules Creek mine opposition into a historic and broad alliance of organizations. For the first time in Australian history, opposition to a coal mine has been so widespread that it has united Aboriginal Traditional Owners, veterans, farmers, religious leaders, doctors, and even mining industry businessmen into a truly powerful force.

These individuals have been joined by major environmental and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Australia. Organizations that actively support the alliance include Greenpeace, the Wilderness Society, GetUp!, the Nature Conservation Council, 350.org, and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC).

That power was unleashed on Whitehaven with a blockade whose goal was to stop construction. It began in November 2013, with well over 240 people arrested for trying to prevent the construction of the mine. The breadth of life experience of those arrested gives an indication of the wide-ranging nature of the opposition to the Maules Creek mine. Those who have been arrested include:

- Bill Ryan, a 93-year-old Australian WW2 veteran who took direct action, believing climate change is the biggest threat to Australia since he fought in the last world war.
- Seventy-five-year-old Raymond McLaren, the owner of a manufacturing company that builds equipment for the mining industry, took direct action, believing the coal industry should not be mining in the Leard State Forest.
- A group of religious leaders, including a Buddhist monk, a Catholic priest, and Uniting Church



Greenpeace activists dressed as Whitehaven Coal workers construct a mock coal mine on the grounds of Sydney University. PHOTO: Greenpeace

ministers, some of whom have been arrested on more than one occasion and who have led to the call by the Bible Society to stop the mine altogether.

- Marion Rose, a former solicitor for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), took action after researching the Maules Creek development and its environmental effects.
- Thirteen doctors and medical students who blocked the main entrance to the mine and were later arrested by Narrabri police. The group, called Medics against Coal, believes the proposed mine poses serious health threats.
- Eleven Greenpeace activists who took to the trees in the Leard State Forest in June 2014 to enforce rules requiring Whitehaven Coal to avoid winter and early spring land clearing.

James Goodman, Associate Professor of Social Inquiry at the University of Technology Sydney, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific recently the “blockade against coal mining at Maules Creek redefines climate

action in Australia and internationally. [...] The power of Maules Creek is in its insistence that extraction has to stop—a bottom-line politics of ‘leave it in the ground’, not a market management strategy of pricing carbon. We have all heard the elites talk of ‘unburnable carbon’, and here at last we have a place where we can learn how to put that into effect.”

“The police may charge me with interfering with mine equipment, but what kind of nation do we live in when mining equipment gets better protection than our kids and grandkids—who is protecting them and their future?” said Former DPP solicitor, Marion Rose.

While the fight continues, the groups were vindicated in October when the Department of Planning and Environment placed new restrictions on the mine, limiting land clearing to just ten weeks a year in an effort to protect wildlife. The people at the Leard Blockade know this is not enough, but it is a promising victory in the ongoing struggle.



MAHAN, INDIA

India's Supreme Court Sides With People and Forests of Mahan

Jagori Dhar, Greenpeace
This article was originally published on Yahoo

With bated breath, Sitaram flicked to one news channel after the other, stealing quick glances at the old Ajanta wall clock, waiting for the clock to strike 2. This penultimate minute before the Supreme Court spelled its verdict on India's biggest scam — "Coalgate" — seemed unbearable as the clock's needle trudged at its own snails pace.

For the last month or so, Sitaram and 50,000-odd forest dwellers from 54 other villages in Mahan forest, Madhya Pradesh, had been patiently waiting for this day, hoping for a reversal of fate. The Mahan coal block, which is a threat to the life and livelihoods of these forest communities, is one of the coal blocks that was allotted during the notorious coal scam era, and its allocation was deemed "arbitrary" by the highest judicial authority of India last month. Like millions of Indians, that day they waited for justice.

The popular metaphors that we commonly associate with justice are that it is either delayed or it is blind. But that day, its harbinger came in the form of a balding middle-aged man, adjusting his rimless spectacles as he emerged out of the court in his black lawyer's robes as hundreds of journalists sprinted towards him, thrusting their microphones to capture the verdict.

"The court has taken cognizance and has ordered that barring four, all other blocks should be de-allocated," he said. Sitaram, unable to grasp the nuanced judicial language, waited for his lawyer, Prashant Bhushan, to translate to Hindi: His petition had ensured that his home along with that of 213 others is saved from "illegal" coal mining.

The excitement, jubilation, happiness, and above all relief, hit Sitaram at once. It was so overwhelming for him that he actually made a trip to the Supreme Court to let it all sink in. At India's citadel of justice,

nobody confirmed or denied Sitaram's anxious queries but just the proximity to the Court made him believe that after all the suffering that his community members had gone through, it was justice at last. The famous quote from Hamlet that "there's divinity that shapes our ends" rings true for the people of Mahan.

Sitaram's mobile phone has not stopped ringing since the verdict was announced; first calling his family in Mahan and breaking the good news to each one individually, and then the elaborate discussions with the rest of the community members making plans on how to celebrate their big tryst with destiny. It indeed calls for celebrations. For months, these community members had been living on tenterhooks, dreading a new problem that would come their way. The final months had been full of uncertainties — midnight raids, illegal arrests (including of Sitaram's father in June), clamping down on their movement, hate speeches, and threats by local politicians — all because underneath their homes lies a precious mineral — coal. The same black gold whose lust cost India's exchequer a loss of Rs 1,86,000 crore (U.S. \$33.67 billion).

Right after the Supreme Court's verdict, the people's movement in Mahan got another shot in the arm after the National Green Tribunal cancelled the forest clearance of Mahan coal block. However, this is only an interim breather in the long-drawn battle that the forest community is waging with the mining companies and the government. Though the coal blocks have been cancelled, they may all be re-allocated within six months, throwing the people back into the rigmarole of securing Mahan from coal mining. And the government seems to be losing no time to make up for the windfall losses, which market watchers are calling a body-blow to India Inc.



The Essar coal-fired power plant is pictured behind the village of Bandhaura near the Mahan Forest.
PHOTO: Jagori Dhar, Greenpeace

On the eve of this landmark judgment, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, was seen hard-selling the “Make in India” dream. But this should not be made a pretext for a select few to “Make (money) in India” through a mad coal rush to feed India’s industrial giants — and swallowing the environment, the forest, the wildlife, and the forest rights of people like Sitaram.

The founding fathers of India have etched laws to safeguard the rights of people who live in and make a living from India’s forests. But the greed to plunder the country’s natural wealth in the name of development is not lost in the thick forests of India. In fact, it is induced in the face of the apathetic indifference of our representatives who are hit by sporadic bouts of selective amnesia when it comes to recognising the rights of the people living in the rural heartlands of the country.

As Sitaram boarded the train to go back home from the New Delhi railway station, he knew it was a fight to finish, and there was no going back on this one. The last six days in the national capital had been full of new adventures, which have now become interesting anecdotes that he shares over a glass of

Mahua liquor back home. Stories of singing in front of a thousand-plus urban crowd at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar during India’s biggest climate march last weekend, photos of the event itching to be uploaded on his freshly opened Facebook account.

What has become an anthem for the people of Mahan, “Purkhoon se nataa jodenge...Jungle zameen nahi chodenge” (we will unite with our ancestors by holding onto our bond with our land and our forest), seemed to play in a loop his mind when he waited for hours outside the office of the Minister of Tribal Affairs in another sarkari landmark in Lutyens Delhi — Shashtri Bhavan. The appointment never came from the minister, who ironically has been appointed to safeguard the interests of people like Sitaram, but this endless wait did not dampen Sitaram’s resolve. Sitaram knows his concerns will not prompt an action from the government, but he also knows that he is not alone in this fight to save Mahan.

At 23, Sitaram nurtures an ambition to complete his engineering degree and work in the city, but like the anthem, his bond with his ancestor’s land is unwavering.



KOSOVO

Kosovo Tests The World Bank, US Government's Commitment to Ending Coal Finance

Andrew Linhardt, Sierra Club

In Downtown Pristhina, the capital of Europe's youngest nation, Kosovo, sits a golden statue of Bill Clinton. This young country still reveres the U.S. government for its efforts in the Balkan conflicts of the early 2000's. However there is growing concern over a new push for dirty coal that threatens the health and future of this young nation.

This country, born out of a brutal civil war, has dreams of joining the European Union. However, Kosovo has many hurdles to clear in order to achieve that goal—including meeting increasingly strict EU renewable energy targets and, more importantly, emissions standards for dirty coal plants.

That's a big problem because in its quest for energy, Kosovo has relied heavily on their main

natural resource, lignite coal. While Kosovo has plenty of lignite coal, it is incredibly dirty. Unfortunately, the World Bank—with the support of the U.S. government and several European governments—wants to build a new coal plant that will ultimately lock Kosovo into a dirty energy future for the next 50 years.

Luckily, the people of Kosovo are not just going to allow this happen. The Kosovo Civil Society Consortium for Sustainable Development (KOSID) wants to make sure its voice is heard. With 11 organizations on board, KOSID has been working to ensure that Kosovo's future isn't left out of the global conversation and that their countrymen and women have a chance at a clean energy future.



KOSID (www.kosid.org) works with The Illuminator (theilluminator.org) to project ads on the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC on April 17th, 2013 in protest of the Bank's support of the proposed Kosovo C coal-fired power plant, despite grave health concerns raised by Kosovars. PHOTO: Justin Guay



KOSID (www.kosid.org) works with The Illuminator (theilluminator.org) to project ads on the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC on April 17th, 2013 in protest of the Bank's support of the proposed Kosovo C coal-fired power plant, despite grave health concerns raised by Kosovars. PHOTO: Justin Guay

This grassroots power has helped keep the project from moving forward for several years. It has also successfully made Kosovo a test case of both the World Bank, and the U.S. government's commitments to recently enacted coal finance restrictions.

KOSID has also teamed with non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and EU to help stop those governments from continuing to support this terrible new coal plant. Together, the groups have helped put out several alternative energy reports, including a brand new report conducted by the University of Berkeley, that shows that under no circumstances does the new coal-fired plant need to be built. The new report shows that between energy efficiency and clean energy, Kosovo can meet its current and future demands.

A second report published by Dr. Ted Downing, president of the International Network on Displacement and Resettlement (INDR), released a report earlier this year that sheds light on the potential involuntary displacement over 7,000 Kosovars will face if Kosovo Power Plant is constructed. These thousands of people from the Obiliq municipality would be displaced in favor of an expanded open pit mining operation, called New Mining Field (NMF).

This grassroots movement has done much to stop this plant, but the fight is not over. This year, the government of Kosovo, with the help of the World Bank, started the first steps in a draft scoping study for the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment. The work continues.



PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES

Dirty Coal in the Philippine's Last Ecological Frontier

Palawan Alliance for Clean Energy (PACE)

The island province of Palawan is widely considered the Philippines' last frontier. It has a rich marine and terrestrial environment that is home to a highly diverse and unique assemblage of flora and fauna, and it is perhaps the single most important reason why the Philippines has been included among the world's top 17 Megadiversity hotspots.

It is a hotspot because the threats to Palawan's environment are daunting and multi-faceted. Forest and coastal marine degradation top the many challenges facing the province, driven in part by the rapid incursion of resource extractive industries such as mining, commercial fishing, large scale plantations, and similar enterprises.

Faced with the challenges and opportunities for economic development, the debate on how to minimize environmental effects of large scale projects such as power and infrastructure development currently rages in Palawan. One such struggle pertains to the need to improve the power situation on the island and the necessity of supplementing the existing power generation capacity in the existing power grid of the province.

A plan to put up two separate coal-fired power plants in Palawan has faced stiff opposition from communities and the Palawan civil society.

A company with strong ties to the local political leadership, DMCI Powers Inc., was awarded in 2012 a power supply agreement to sell to the local electric cooperative a total of 25-megawatts of electricity ostensibly to ensure the availability of power in the future.

VICTORY IN SIGHT

Since 2012, the anti-coal campaign spearheaded by the Palawan Alliance for Clean Energy (PACE) has been working with communities and engaging local government units and agencies to push for more acceptable alternatives to address the power needs of the province.

The anti-coal campaign has so far managed to put on hold the immediate construction of the controversial power plants through a court injunction compelling authorities to properly address legitimate issues on environmental impacts and related concerns.

PACE has staunchly opposed the construction of new coal-fired power plants in the province. Among the issues being raised against the coal-fired plants are:

- The pollutive nature of coal and its adverse effects;
- No safe way to dispose coal fly ash;
- The blemished reputation of DMCI showing its incapacity to deal with pollution problems and other environmental risks;
- The location of the coal power plant near Rasa Island, a declared protected area, and home to 25 percent of the remaining cockatoos in the world; and
- The inappropriateness of coal power plants vis-à-vis Palawan's existing environmental management and conservation programs and policies.



Mr. Dongdong Badilla, the tribal chieftain pictured here, recounts how sustainable fishing practices have been passed down to him from his forefathers. To this day, he and his family still use the panti, the traditional fishing net hanging behind him. PHOTO: Cynthia Sumagaysay-Delrosario, PACE

The campaign has had several small but emboldening successes. Widespread public opposition, despite key political leaders' support of DMCI, has compelled the company to withdraw from a site off Rasa Island which it initially identified as the location of the first of two coal-fired power plant facilities.

A state university and the local Catholic Church are leading the fight against the establishment of the plant in the alternative site in Aborlan town identified by DMCI, even as the provincial government of Palawan continued to exert

pressure on Aborlan political leaders and the communities to agree to hosting the power facility.

LOOKING AHEAD

PACE continues to engage local governments to push for more viable alternatives such as renewable energy development. It has lobbied for the development of a comprehensive energy development plan for Palawan independent of coal and compatible with Palawan's unique biodiversity and biogeographic character as well as with existing conservation and resource management efforts in the province.



KRABI, THAILAND

Anti-Coal Activists Hug Krabi

Chariya Senpong, Greenpeace

Thailand, known to many as a country of bountiful beauty, has a dirty little secret. The government is planning a huge new 870-megawatt coal plant, to be built by the Electricity Authority of Thailand (EGAT) in the Nuea Klong district of Krabi province. The new project in Krabi poses great risks to natural resources, wildlife, and the health of Krabi local people. The meager benefits from the proposed coal power plant would in no way compensate for the losses for Krabi's economy, local livelihoods, and tourism.

Thailand is at an energy crossroads. People are keeping a close eye on the country's decision makers — will they steer Thailand towards becoming a renewable energy leader or stay on the dirty old path of fossil fuels?

Widespread opposition and mass protests have organized in the region with the message that the proposed plan to build a new coal-fired power plant and coal seaport in Krabi is clearly a step in the wrong direction.

Villagers of the Laem Hin village in the southern province of Krabi are in the direct impact area of an proposed coal sea port that may be approved along with the coal power plant. Coal imports from Indonesia, Australia and Africa would be transported right through Laem Hin village. That village is in a "Ramsar Site" area — a wetland of international importance to be protected by national governments according to a treaty signed in 1971 at the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Despite that fact, Laem Hin villagers were not informed about the coal sea port, prior to March 9, 2014, the day of the first public hearing.

The National Human Rights Commission has investigated EGAT's failure in governance, and local residents began to stand up to EGAT. Yet, by April, EGAT had resumed construction on the coal sea port. At this time, villagers and local fisheries brought their own boats to block EGAT. The locals hope to impact

the coal transportation route and sea port in order to stop new coal power plants from the ground up.

On September 26, the Stop Global Warming Association and community representatives from Southern Thailand lodged a complaint against EGAT for seemingly attempting to mislead communities about the planned coal seaport project. The main issue highlighted in the complaint was a substantial amendment to the details of the coal port's operations which had not passed through the required initial public scoping process.

Following this, Krabi local communities unfurled a banner with the message, "Protect Krabi — No Coal," and presented over 40,000 signatures — via Greenpeace petitions and Change.org — of those who pledged to protect Krabi and its communities from the ill-effects of coal. That protest was organised during the third public review process where stakeholders determined the extent of environment impact assessment (EIA) of the Ban Klong Ruo coal seaport project.

Over the past several months, the Krabi anti-coal network has stood against the Krabi coal project, and at the last public hearing, they stood in solidarity in the face of the military and EGAT supporters. Over 500 people rallied outside a public hearing called by the EGAT to discuss the Krabi coal plant. There, tourism leaders and residents alike opposed the expected pollution from the proposed power station and associated coal port, protesting with their mouths covered to demonstrate that their voices have been ignored in the public hearings.

A press conference supporting Krabi Marine Biodiversity research was organized by local community researchers and activists on October 9. There, representatives of the National Sub-Committee of Wetlands and a Member of the National Reform Council, National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) jointly supported policy work for the Krabi Ramsar



Hundreds of fishermen in boats gather at the Krabi River to unfurl a giant banner with the message “Protect Krabi” in the mangroves area of Krabi’s river estuary. The local fishermen are taking action against a coal-fired power plant project. PHOTO: Greenpeace

Site Extension and pushed to move together alongside Krabi local fishery associations and academics. The goal was to protect the Ramsar site, which includes the region of the Laem Hin village, and block the Council of Ministers’ approval of the coal project.

Yet even after an inadequate Environmental Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) process, the government and EGAT still plans to expand coal in Krabi in spite of the area being renowned as a global marine biodiversity hotspot and a Ramsar site. The coal plant and sea port are slated for construction in 2015. They will be operational in 2019 – unless Krabi’s anti-coal activists have their say. Already, the EHIA failed to identify effects on Krabi’s local tourism as well as the local economy, obscuring the hidden cost of coal for Krabi residents.

In November, a new phase of the project with a new petition website was launched at HugKrabi.org. It will serve as the new hub to organize signers and increase the number of voices fighting against the coal project. Since the launch of the petition, new audiences have been inspired and engaged – but we will need your help to reach to a wider audience all around the world.

Krabi is in the position to be a leader in developing a decentralized, hybrid renewable energy system including biomass, biogas, solar and wind. Thailand

was among the first countries in Asia to introduce incentives for the generation of electricity from renewable energy (RE) sources. Programmes for small power producers created stable conditions for RE investors to sell electricity to the grid. That’s a good start to expand investments in renewable energy, and should continue to be pursued by the government.



Communities in Krabi hold flags with the message, “Protect Krabi No Coal” to show their opposition to the proposed coal sea port project. The communities protested with their mouths covered to demonstrate that their voices have been ignored in the public hearings. The protest was organised in front of the district office during the third public reviewing process (c.3) where stakeholders determined the extent of environmental impact assessment (EIA) of Ban Klong Ruo coal seaport project. PHOTO: Sittichai Jittatad, Greenpeace



SOMA, TURKEY

Activists Stand Up to Turkey's Deadly Coal Industry

Pinar Aksogan, Greenpeace

In the worst mining disaster in Turkey's history, 301 miners were killed in May 2014 following a power transformer explosion that triggered a blazing underground fire at a Soma Komur Isletmeleri mine in Western Turkey. The tragedy was enabled in part by a lack of safeguards following the liberalisation of the electricity market, which prioritized using coal resources quickly — putting profits before safety.

Turkey has the highest number of deaths per ton of coal extracted worldwide, and the situation is not getting better. In October, another tragedy struck when 18 mine workers died after being trapped underground amid rising waters when a mine in southern Turkey collapsed.

Five months after the Soma disaster, villagers are struggling against yet another coal mine at the same location. This time, the Turkish Cabinet used a mandate that is supposed to be reserved for homeland defence and the public good to expropriate 388,000 square meters of olive groves to build a thermal power plant. This unilateral decision ignored the needs and rights of the local people, and a confrontation between construction workers cutting down the trees and villagers headed to the groves to pick olives ended with 11 villagers severely beaten and handcuffed.

We traveled to Yırca Village to meet the people and visit their thousands of olive trees that are about to be destroyed, and we could not help but ask:

- Is there a demonstrated need for this energy in our country?
- Are there really no other options other than building coal-fired power plants here?

- Is this truly an issue of national defence?
- Will there actually be trouble if we keep the olive trees and reject the coal-fired power plant?

For us, the answer is clearly no. Therefore, cutting thousands of olive trees down in order to build a coal-fired power plant should not be a decision made without local communities.

WHY THE RUSH?

There is no war, calamity, or any states of emergency close at hand. So what is the rush? The sites that are being urgently expropriated for destruction are agricultural fields, natural areas, forests, and olive groves — and all are being sacrificed for an energy policy based on coal expansion. The government's push for coal is absolute. 2012 was even declared "The Year Of Coal," and Turkey's energy strategy relies on using all lignite and hard coal resources until 2023.

But it doesn't have to be this way. After the Soma disaster, many alternatives to this deadly energy source were proposed. But instead of looking at viable alternatives, the government is preparing to go even further to speedup the headlong rush to calamity. Legislation has been introduced that, if approved by Parliament, will remove official protection for olive groves smaller than two and a half hectares, despite the fact that most olive groves in Turkey are less than half that size. A European Union rule considers plots larger than one hectare to be olive groves. The draft law also seeks to remove a limitation stipulating that energy facilities must be built at least three kilometers away from olive groves.



Kolin Illegally Destroys Olive Grove for Coal Expansion in Turkey. Yirca villagers hold olives as activists plant saplings to replace some 6,000 olive trees illegally bulldozed by the Kolin Group only a couple of days ago. They are working in solidarity with the villagers who resisted the state's efforts to expropriate their land so that Kolin could build a coal power plant. PHOTO: Umut Vedat, Greenpeace

It's time to listen to the Yirca people. They already live with one deadly coal-fired power plant — they don't want another one. Villagers are taking the necessary measures towards a legal resistance. They care about their life and health, and when developers challenge them they respond by saying, "Our organized industry is our olive groves."

Olive trees are a hundred years old, thus this is unlawful a hundred times!

The Yirca people do not want to have another legal discussion. Indeed, there is no need to discuss, because the administrative process is as unlawful as the age of each olive tree. That is why Soma's case on the olive groves is also their case.

WEST VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

Communities Demand Action to Address Toxic Coal Ash Spills and Polluted Waterways

Sierra Club

ELK RIVER, WEST VIRGINIA AND DAN RIVER, NORTH CAROLINA

On January 9, 2014, a chemical from Freedom Industries' 48,000 gallon chemical storage tank leaked into West Virginia's Elk River, contaminating the drinking water of more than 300,000 West Virginians. That chemical — used to treat coal before it's burned in coal-fired power plants — polluted the waterways and left thousands without water for weeks.

Following the Elk River spill, volunteer water distribution became the only relief for rural communities. Local activists set up a donation center to help support volunteer water distribution efforts, and local communities held several events in the weeks following the spill in solidarity with the people affected.

Unfortunately, this spill was a product of weak regulatory enforcement by the coal industry. The tank which leaked at the Freedom Industries site was placed directly above the largest drinking water intake in West Virginia, and the site itself had not been inspected since 1991.

Throughout January, West Virginia residents witnessed a blame-game in Congress along with growing health concerns, followed by Freedom Industries filing for bankruptcy. On January 24, Freedom Industries admitted to knowing about a second chemical that had been leaked into the water during the initial spill, and continuing into February, schools were shut down due to contaminated water. On February 8, residents protested the West Virginia American Water company for continuing to bill them even though the safety of their water was still in question.

Unfortunately for West Virginians — and countless others in coal mining communities across the

country — polluted waters are all too common.

That same month, just weeks after the disaster in West Virginia, coal ash from a retired Duke Energy coal-fired power plant spilled more than 82,000 tons of arsenic into North Carolina's Dan River. That disaster, again, left residents without clean drinking water for weeks.

In the wake of these disasters, frightened families have been faced with a sobering reality — the state agencies they were counting on to keep their water safe have actually had their hands tied behind their backs for years, thanks to decades of pressure from the coal industry. In North Carolina, the Sierra Club worked with a number of organizations to gather more than 9,000 petitions from Duke Energy customers calling on the company to clean up its toxic coal ash. The signatures were delivered at a dramatic rally at the Duke headquarters where officials from the utility initially refused to accept the petitions. Thanks to pressure from activists and the media, officials eventually accepted the petitions.



Water delivery to the residents whose water supply was contaminated. PHOTO: Bill Price, Sierra Club



Aerial view of Duke Energy's retired Dan River coal power plant. PHOTO: Waterkeeper Alliance

On August 20, 2014, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Coal Ash Management Act, which secures the complete removal of wet coal ash at four “high risk” sites across the state, sets forth guidelines for structural fill/beneficial reuse of coal ash, and requires dry ash handling at all operating coal plants in the state.

Following the news of so many chemical spills, several anti-coal activists and organizations have mobilized for more transparency and stronger safeguard enforcement on coal companies. Many organizations and communities are calling on the United States Environmental Protection Agency to act and propose strong safeguards against toxic coal ash. This year, on December 19, the EPA will be finalizing its first-ever federal safeguards for the disposal of coal ash.

PHOTO OPPOSITE: Communities in Krabi hold flags with the message, “Protect Krabi No Coal” to show their opposition to the proposed coal sea port project. The communities protested with their mouths covered to demonstrate that their voices have been ignored in the public hearings. The protest was organized in front of the district office during the third public reviewing process (c.3) where stakeholders determined the extent of environmental impact assessment (EIA) of Ban Klong Ruo coal seaport project. PHOTO: Greenpeace



The site of the Dan River spill in North Carolina. PHOTO: Waterkeeper Alliance

A GROWING MOVEMENT

The anti-coal movement has grown immensely worldwide. As seen in the narratives of this report, public opposition drives crucial victories to dismantle the power of the industry. Communities are seeking alternative answers to their energy needs where investment in coal has only provided them with more pollution, lands rights abuses, and inefficient sources of power. As we continue to expand our use of clean energy worldwides, the dark days of coal power will soon be behind us. And when they are, we will all look back and thank the courageous activists who fought for a clean future for the generations to come.



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