Coal ash threatens Ohio River, future drinking water supplies

“EPA’s longstanding and consistent policy across numerous regulatory programs has been that groundwater contamination is a significant concern that merits regulatory action in its own right, whether or not the aquifer is not currently used as a source of drinking water. Sources of drinking water are finite, and future users’ interests must also be protected.”

U.S. EPA, Preamble to final federal rule on CCR (coal ash) disposal, April 2015

On the banks of the Ohio River, in the shadow of Floyds Knobs outside of New Albany, sit eight coal ash disposal sites — 7 surface impoundments (ponds) and one coal ash landfill — containing about 9 1/2 million tons of toxic coal ash. Groundwater has infiltrated the lower levels of the unlined Gallagher Generating Station surface impoundments, saturating the ash, and contaminating the underlying aquifer. Water elevations in the site’s monitoring wells are as much as 30 feet above the bottom of ash. The shallow aquifer at this location exchanges water with the Ohio River, so the coal ash contaminants are flowing into the river.

Groundwater at the Gallagher coal ash ponds is contaminated with arsenic, cobalt, lithium, molybdenum, radium, and boron. Arsenic – a poisonous metal that causes cancer — has been measured at concentrations as much as fifteen times the national drinking water standard. Molybdenum was measured at 47 times the groundwater standard. Arsenic that reaches the Ohio River can accumulate in the food chain, resulting in sport fish being unsafe for consumption, particularly by children, women of child-bearing age and pregnant women.

Pursuant to federal regulations, Duke Energy must close these coal ash impoundments. Despite the existing contamination and long-term health and environmental risks from improperly stored coal ash, Duke is planning to cover the ash and leave it in place forever, or until future generations are forced to clean it up in order to use this aquifer for drinking water.

HEC and other organizations are demanding that Duke clean up these polluting coal ash ponds by excavating the ash, recycling as much as possible, and moving the remainder to a lined, modern landfill out of the river’s floodplain. This is exactly the course that Duke Energy is taking for its leaking coal ash ponds in North Carolina. Hoosiers should be entitled to the same level of protection as the people of North Carolina.

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**TAKE ACTION**

Contact Brian Rockensuess, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (brockens@idem.in.gov) and insist that IDEM require a complete clean-up of the contaminated coal ash impoundments at Duke Energy’s Gallagher Generating Station, comparable to the cleanup actions underway at Duke’s sites in North Carolina.

**SEND A COPY OF YOUR EMAIL OR LETTER TO:**

Gov. Eric Holcomb
GovHolcomb@gov.in.gov

Mayor Jeff Gahan of New Albany
mayor@cityofnewalbany.com

Sen. Gary Byrne, s47@iga.in.gov

Rep. Ed Clere, h72@iga.in.gov

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

www.indianacoalash.org