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Contact: Jennette Gayer

jennette@environmentgeorgia.org

www.gawater.org | 404-370-1764

Required Groundwater Report Running Behind Schedule Threats from Toxic Coal Ash Continue to Grow

ATLANTA, GA(July 11, 2017)—During the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session the House of Representatives passed [House Resolution 1198](#), which required the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to issue a report detailing its review of current underground drinking water regulations by June 30, 2017. **The report has yet to be issued by EPD, but new groundwater contamination has been identified since 2015 as a result of leaking coal ash ponds at coal fired power plants round the state.**

“In the one and half years since this report was commissioned we’ve uncovered dangerous levels of hexavalent chromium in the groundwater that Georgians rely on as a result of leaking coal ash ponds,” said Jen Hilburn the Altamaha Riverkeeper. “Hopefully the report will confirm what we already know—we need more protections for Georgia’s groundwater and drinking water supply.”

Georgia’s economy runs on water. About 20 percent of the water used in Georgia homes and businesses is pumped from wells tapping our state’s underground aquifers. Communities from the mountains to the coast depend on these pristine sources that require little disinfection and treatment to make drinkable. This is especially true in coastal and south Georgia, where most residents get their drinking water from the Floridan aquifer. This massive underground “lake” spreads beneath 100,000 square miles of land from South Carolina to Mississippi and south into Florida.

“Our aquifers face a variety of threats; toxic contamination from leaking coal ash ponds is certainly the most recent to come to light, but practices like aquifer storage and recovery—which involves injecting treated surface water into our aquifers—have been a threat since the moratorium on the practice ended in 2014;” explained Jennette Gayer, Director of Environment Georgia.

Coal ash, a by-product of burning coal, contains toxic and carcinogenic metals and is stored in landfills or ponds at power plants around the state. [Georgia Power](#) and [EPD](#) have detected groundwater pollutants—like arsenic and vanadium—around coal ash storage ponds and municipal solid waste landfills that have accepted coal ash.



Senate Bill 36, the [Underground Water Supply Protection Act](#), was also introduced in the 2015 legislative session and would have required new rules to fix gaps in our current laws—many of which focus only on surface water and water quantity, not quality, and/or insufficiently regulate certain types of wells—to protect groundwater into the future. The bill passed the Senate by a wide margin—48 to 3—but [stalled](#) when it reached the House Natural Resources Committee under the threat of a veto by the Governor. In place of SB 36, legislators agreed to push forward [House Resolution 1198](#).

About Georgia Water Coalition:

The Georgia Water Coalition’s mission is to protect and care for Georgia’s surface and groundwater resources, which are essential for sustaining economic prosperity, providing clean and abundant drinking water, preserving diverse aquatic habitats for wildlife and recreation, strengthening property values, and protecting the quality of life for current and future generations.

For further details, please contact

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