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BILLS TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES FROM COAL WASTE INTRODUCED

Georgia Water Coalition applauds legislators for taking steps to protect communities and waterways

ATLANTA, GA (February 13, 2018)—The Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) applauds state Representative Jeff Jones (R-Brunswick) and a bipartisan list of cosponsors for their work to protect communities around Georgia from the toxic contaminants found in coal ash. After working to address concerns from Georgia Power and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division regarding legislation filed last year, Representative Jones introduced two bills that will help keep coal ash out of the water in which we swim and from which we drink, and people informed about coal ash present in their communities.

The first bill HB 879 would require Georgia Power and other power generating utilities to notify local communities when they plan to drain coal ash pits into local waterways. The second, HB 880 would require notification and more stringent testing at landfills that are accepting coal ash. It would also prohibit municipal solid waste landfills located in floodplains or too close to shallow aquifers from accepting coal ash.

“Keeping coal ash out of our public waters is a top priority for the Georgia Water Coalition,” said Juliet Cohen, chair of the GWC’s legislative committee and Director of the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. “More than half of the state’s major river basins are affected by coal ash. This is something that the 200 plus groups in our coalition are very concerned about.”

“These are common-sense bills that will ensure that Georgians know what is going on in their communities,” said Representative Jones. “Georgia is one of the country’s largest repositories of coal ash. Some is already here, and some is shipped in from other states. We must make sure, by law, that this ash does not contaminate our waters.”

Coal ash is the toxic-laden waste left behind after coal is burned to generate energy. Coal ash waste contains many heavy metals and other toxic elements, which are concentrated in the ash when they are prevented from escaping through the plants’ smokestacks. The toxic contaminants in coal ash have been linked to serious health impacts and include arsenic, lead, mercury, selenium, cadmium, and chromium. Georgia Power has 29 unlined coal ash pits and roughly 90 million tons of coal ash.

Following major spills and damage in North Carolina and Tennessee, a federal rule is requiring dry storage of coal ash moving forward in most cases. This is driving utilities across the southeast, including Georgia Power, to drain their coal ash ponds, and it also means Georgia landfills are now accepting coal ash from inside and outside of the state.

The GWC plans to make HB 879 and HB 880 top priorities on March 1, when the GWC hosts Capitol Conservation Day. Water lovers from all over the state will visit the Capitol to discuss important legislation with their representatives.

About Georgia Water Coalition:

The [Georgia Water Coalition's](http://www.gawater.org) (GWC) mission is to protect and care for Georgia's surface water 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. The members of the Georgia Water Coalition work collaboratively and transparently with each other to achieve specific goals conservation goals.

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