



No coal ash progress from 2021 legislative session EPD slated to permit long-term storage in groundwater before next session

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ATLANTA -- The legislature adjourned this week without passing legislation to address the widespread danger toxic coal ash poses to Georgia's waterways and groundwater.

"Toxic coal ash is sitting in groundwater around the state and yet the Georgia legislature failed to pass legislation addressing this problem," said Jennette Gayer, director of Environment Georgia and chair of the Georgia Water Coalition's coal ash committee. "To make matters worse, Georgia Power ratepayers are on the hook for a clean-up that will not solve our coal ash problems and protect Georgia's waterways."

Only one bill, HB 674 (Rep. Vance Smith) which required 50 years of monitoring around coal ash storage sites, successfully passed out of one house in the legislature, the bill failed to get a vote in the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

"Our communities are hurting and have been watching the legislature refuse to take action for years," said Fletcher Sams, the Altamaha Riverkeeper. "Last time I checked these folks were elected by their constituents, not the power company. It's time for them to act accordingly."

A recent report of federally required groundwater monitoring found toxins from coal ash in groundwater around the state. In fact, 92 percent (11 of 12) of Georgia's coal-fired power plants have contaminated groundwater with one or more toxic pollutants. At one power plant in Cobb County, these toxins have migrated offsite and onto adjoining property.

"Responsible coal ash clean up is happening at several sites in Georgia and in states like North Carolina and South Carolina," said April Lipscomb, senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center. "We know full cleanups are possible and the only proven way to protect people, but Georgia Power and the legislature are refusing to make that statewide commitment."

SB 230 (Sen. Jen Jordan) and HB 176 (Rep. Debbie Buckner) would require full coal ash excavation where it is in contact with groundwater and liners on all facilities storing coal ash. Neither bill received hearings in the House or Senate Natural Resource and Environment Committees to which they were assigned.

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The **Georgia Water Coalition** is a consortium of more than 275 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, businesses, and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia's water since 2002. www.gawater.org