EARTHJUSTICE

Minnesota and Coal Ash Disposal in Ponds and Landfills

Plant[i]	Operator	Site	County
Black Dog Power Station	Northern States Power Co.	4 unlined ponds	Dakota
Clay Boswell Power Station	Minnesota Power Inc.	8 ponds/3 landfills 2 ponds rated "poor"[ii] 1 unit unlined 5 significant hazard ponds	Itasca
Fox Lake Generating Station	Interstate Power & Light Co.	1 pond	Martin
NSP-M Minnesota Valley Plant	Xcel Energy	4 ponds	Granite Falls
Riverside Power Station (NSP)	Northern States Power Co.	1 pond/landfill*	Hennepin
Sherburne County Power Station	Northern States Power Co.	4 ponds/1 landfill 3 significant hazard ponds	Sherburne
Syl Laskin	Minnesota Power Inc.	2 ponds (1 unlined) 1 significant hazard pond	St. Louis
Allen S. King	Northern States Power Co.	3 ponds/1 landfill (one unit unlined)	Washington
High Bridge	Northern States Power Co.		Ramsey
Taconite Harbor Energy Center	Minnesota Power Inc.	5 ponds	Cook
Silver Bay Power Co.	Cleveland Cliffs Inc.	landfill*	Lake
Hoot Lake	Otter Tail Power Co.	8 ponds	Otter Tail
Austin Northeast	City of Austin	1 unlined landfill	Mower
Hibbing	Hibbing Public Utilities Comm		St. Louis
Silver Lake	Rochester Public Utilities		Olmsted
Virginia	City of Virginia		St. Louis
Willmar	Willmar Municipal Utilities		Kandiyohi

*indicates one or more coal ash landfills.[iii]

Amount of coal ash generated per year*:* MN utilities generate over 1.5 million tons annually. MN ranks 26th in the country for coal ash generation and hosts 17 coal-fired power plants.[iv]

Coal Ash Ponds in MN

Number of Coal Ash Ponds: 40 ponds at 17 plants as of July 2012. This represents a significant increase from the 21 identified previously by EPA.[v]

Pond Ratings: Nine coal ash ponds in Minnesota are rated "significant hazard."[vi] This ranking indicates that a failure at the pond can cause economic loss, environmental damage, or damage to infrastructure.[vii]

Age of Ponds: 17 ponds are over 30 years old and 5 of those are over 40 years old.[viii] The age of these ponds makes it unlikely that they have safeguards like liners and leachate collection systems.

Capacity: According to the EPA surface impoundment database, 21 of the 34 ponds in MN cover an area of over 2,497 acres. The 19 ponds for which EPA has storage capacity data can store up to 27,611 acre feet of coal ash--nearly 9 billion gallons.

Pond releases: The EPA database mentions three releases at the ponds: one at the Clay Boswell Power Station in 2008, when coal ash overflowed into a nearby lake; another at the Sherburne County Power Station in 2007, involving a 600-gallon spill; and a second at Sherburne County in 2008 in which 8,000 gallons of water and ash was discharged onto the ground.[ix]

The Sherburne County Power Plant[x]

Deficiencies in MN Coal Ash Regulations: Minnesota regulations do not adequately protect public health and the environment from the toxic substances in coal ash. State regulations: (1) fail to require all coal ash ponds and landfills to conduct monitoring of groundwater for leaks; (2) fail to require all new ponds and landfills to install composite liners to prevent migration of hazardous substances; and (3) fail to require all coal ash ponds and landfills to have financial assurance (bonds) sufficient to cover cleanup costs if contamination occurs.

Documented Damage at Coal Ash Disposal Sites:

According to the U.S. EPA damage case assessment,[x] at the Xcel Energy/Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Sherburne County Generating Plant, groundwater was found to exceed federal drinking water standards for arsenic, cadmium, chromium, fluoride, lead, and nitrate and secondary drinking water standards for chloride, copper, iron, manganese, sulfate, and zinc at the site.

At the Boswell Energy Center, groundwater monitoring data obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request show a history of exceedances of state and/or federal standards for boron and sulfate.

An additional coal ash-contaminated site—the Big Stone power plant in South Dakota—is located near the Minnesota border. The Big Stone plant contaminated on- and off-site groundwater with arsenic, boron, lead, strontium, and sulfate. Big Stone City, South Dakota now imports drinking water from Ortonville, Minnesota.[xi]

Coal Ash and Environmental Justice in Minnesota: Statewide in Minnesota, low-income individuals are over-represented in zip codes hosting coal fired power plants by 43%.

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[i] U.S. EPA. Database of coal combustion waste surface impoundments (2011). Information collected by EPA from industry responses to Information Collection Request letters issued to the companies. Available at http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/industrial/special/fossil/surveys/index.htm.

[ii] U.S. EPA, Coal Cobustion Residuals Impoundment Assessment Reports, http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/industrial/special/fossil/surveys2/ (last visited Oct. 31, 2011).

[iii] U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-767, Annual Steam-Electric Plant Operation and Design Data. 2005.

[iv] U.S. EPA and United States Department of Energy (U.S. DOE). *Coal Combustion Waste Management at Landfills and Surface Impoundments, 1994-2004* (August 2006).

[v] U.S. EPA. Database of coal combustion waste surface impoundments (2009).

[vi] *Id.*

[vii] U.S. EPA, Coal Cobustion Residuals Impoundment Assessment Reports, http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/industrial/special/fossil/surveys2/ (last visited Oct. 31, 2011).

[viii] U.S. EPA. Database of coal combustion waste surface impoundments (2009).

[ix] U.S. EPA. Database of coal combustion waste surface impoundments (2009).

[x] U.S. EPA, Office of Solid Waste. *Coal Combustion Waste Damage Case Assessments* (July 9, 2007).

[xi] Environmental Integrity Project, Earthjustice and Sierra Club, In Harm's Way: Lack of Federal Coal Ash Regulations Endangers Americans and Their Environment 184-189 (2010).