

Michael S. Regan, Secretary  
N.C. Department of Environmental Quality  
217 W. Jones Street  
Raleigh, N.C. 27603

Dear Secretary Regan,

The Environmental Justice and Equity Board was created by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to assist the Department in achieving and maintaining the State's mission of the protection of human health and the environment by engaging with communities. The goal to ensure just, equitable treatment when protecting human health and the environment in North Carolina will always be the rule, not the exception. Coal ash contamination, sitting in unlined pits near homes and vulnerable communities, remains a statewide issue for North Carolinians and one DEQ must address.

DEQ has presented three options for coal ash disposal: 1) excavation (with waste being moved to lined landfills either on- or off-site); 2) storage of the ash in place; or 3) a "hybrid" option that nevertheless keeps much of the ash in place. DEQ has been collecting public comment and says it will use this to inform its recommended closure plans for six coal ash impoundments in the coming months.

Thousands of people from communities across the state have participated in countless hearings, offering written and spoken comments on this issue, for several years. Regular people, with jobs and families and the demands of daily life, have continued to show up to hard-to-reach meetings and to raise their now-hoarse voices. Communities across North Carolina have spoken with a clear voice, and this Board has been listening. We now join our neighbors throughout North Carolina to offer our advice that complete excavation of all coal ash waste into lined landfills is the best and only method that will provide adequate protection for the people of our state.

There is no way to safeguard the health of North Carolinians while leaving harmful toxins to leach into our ground and water. Furthermore, the long-term costs of leaving toxic coal ash in pits alongside our lakes and rivers under a "cap in place" option, would far outweigh the cost of scientifically sound excavation to lined landfills on Duke's property. This includes maintenance costs, future liability costs, and the too often non-considered cost of human capital when disasters, such as the 2014 Dan River spill, occur.

We've come to the same conclusion as North Carolinians living with this toxic waste: excavation and movement to a lined landfill is the only viable answer that fulfills our legal, ethical, and spiritual mandates to safeguard and protect both human beings and the natural world in which we live. Our sister states of South Carolina and Virginia have taken steps to ensure the safety of their citizens. As a self-proclaimed leader in the region, North Carolina and its citizens deserve equal protection, nothing less.

Respectfully,



Madame Vice-Chair Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson

Date