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**Contact:**

Tom Pearce, Sierra Club (502) 489-4700 / Lauren McGrath, Sierra Club (202) 731-4373

Colette Henderson, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, (502) 767-5735

Elizabeth Crowe, Kentucky Environmental Foundation, (859) 986-0868

## **Hundreds of Concerned Citizens in Louisville Demand EPA Protections from Toxic Coal Ash**

**Louisville, KY** – Hundreds of people gathered in Louisville, KY on Tuesday urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to pass strong, federally-enforceable safeguards for coal ash, the hazardous remains from coal-fired power plants. Concerned citizens traveled to Louisville from across Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio and Missouri to demand strong safeguards at a public hearing, the last of seven the EPA has held in September on its proposed coal ash regulations.

Speakers at the hearing included Monika Burkhead and Terri Humphrey, homeowners in Riverside Gardens, a Louisville neighborhood adjacent to the Cane Run power plant and toxic coal ash pond. Despite high cancer rates in the neighborhood and evidence from the Kentucky Division of Waste Management that groundwater supplies are being contaminated with chlorides, sulfates, and other toxins, utility Louisville Gas and Electric (LG&E) is currently seeking permits to construct a new 5.7 million cubic yard, 14-story-tall coal ash pond at the Cane Run plant.

“Hundreds of people like me came to Louisville today to tell the EPA that unregulated coal ash is dangerous to our children and families,” said Monika Burkhead. “We’re asking the EPA to protect our neighborhoods from these toxic coal ash ponds.”

Also on Tuesday, celebrities and Kentucky natives author Wendell Berry and Jim James, lead singer of the band from “My Morning Jacket” spoke at a rally outside the hearing, decrying the harmful effects of toxic coal ash waste and calling for EPA to enact federal protection.

Coal ash is the America’s second largest industrial waste stream, with enough coal ash generated each year – approximately 150 million tons – to fill over 340,000 jumbo 747 jets.

Toxic chemicals in coal ash such as arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, selenium and others, have been linked to human health problems including cancer, organ disease, respiratory illness, neurological damage and reproductive and developmental problems. EPA studies show that living near a coal ash disposal site is worse for human health than smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.

“Coal ash is especially toxic to our children,” said Tim Guilfoile with the Sierra Club. “The incidence of lung disease, kidney disease, premature birth, birth defects, autism and other childhood developmental disorders are significantly increased in geographic areas surrounding coal ash impoundments.”

Kentucky has 44 known coal ash disposal sites -- the second highest number in the nation, after Indiana which has the highest concentration -- including 7 which are designated as a “high-hazard” by the EPA.

Despite these alarming statistics, the Commonwealth has little to no regulation of coal ash at the state level, causing concern for clean water advocates about the potential for coal ash toxins to seep into groundwater drinking supplies from unlined ponds. In addition to the Cane Run contamination, a recent [investigative report](#) found that groundwater at LG&E’s Mill Creek Plant in Louisville has been contaminated with arsenic at 1.5 times the federal limit, and groundwater at LG&E’s Trimble station in Bedford, KY, is leaking and has chlorides, sulfates, and total dissolved solids up to ten times federal limits.

“Kentucky's unregulated coal ash dumps are a serious threat,” said Jeff Stant with the Environmental Integrity Project. “We need the EPA to enact strong federal protections to keep our communities safe.”

In December 2008, a coal ash from a pond near Knoxville, Tennessee spilled more than 5.4 million cubic yards of toxic coal ash, destroying 300 acres and dozens of homes, killing fish and wildlife, and poisoning the Emory and Clinch Rivers.

On Tuesday, elected officials, scientists, legal experts and faith leaders also participated in the EPA hearing and urged the EPA to pass strong, enforceable federal regulations of coal ash.

“The coal industry will claim makes claims that stronger regulation of coal ash will be too expensive or is unnecessary,” said Deborah Payne, Energy and Health Coordinator for the Kentucky Environmental Foundation. “What the industry fails need to acknowledge is that autism, cancer, asthma and other chronic illnesses are also expensive and unnecessary, and a burden that Kentucky families should not have to bear. We need The EPA to must enact federally enforceable standards to better protect our families' health from toxic coal ash.”

The EPA is currently weighing two options for federal regulation of coal ash. While one option the EPA proposed would regulate this toxic substance with strong safeguards that protect public health, including water quality monitoring, record keeping and protections against runoff, the other – supported by power companies and other big polluters – would retain the failed status quo and do nothing to monitor the coal ash threat to drinking water and public health.

“I know that dumping this coal waste in neighborhoods and near schools and playgrounds is not the best we can do,” said Kentuckians for the Commonwealth member Jess Deis. “We have to make better choices and change the way we get energy and provide jobs for workers.”

***Organizations involved in Tuesday's hearing and rally include: Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light, Environmental Integrity Project, Kentucky Environmental Foundation, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace USA, Alliance Against Racism, the Ohio River Foundation, Hoosier Environmental Council, Restoring Eden, and students from Indiana University and University of Kentucky.***

***Additional information on coal ash can be found at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/coalash>***

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