

PLANT SCHERER'S TOXIC COAL ASH: A DISASTER IN THE MAKING

The Plan to Close-in-Place = A Forever Pollution Problem

Georgia Power intends to leave 16 million cubic yards of toxic coal ash at Plant Scherer in an unlined pit next to Lake Juliette, where the company's own data shows groundwater is already contaminated with coal ash pollutants. The closure plan includes so-called "advanced engineering methods" such as:

- Leaving coal ash **submerged in groundwater** tens of feet deep;
- Constructing a new berm on the north side of the coal ash pit;
- Consolidating the coal ash into a slightly smaller footprint; and
- Installing a cap and fake grass on top of the coal ash.

Georgia Power's So-Called "Advanced Engineering Methods" Are Anything but Advanced

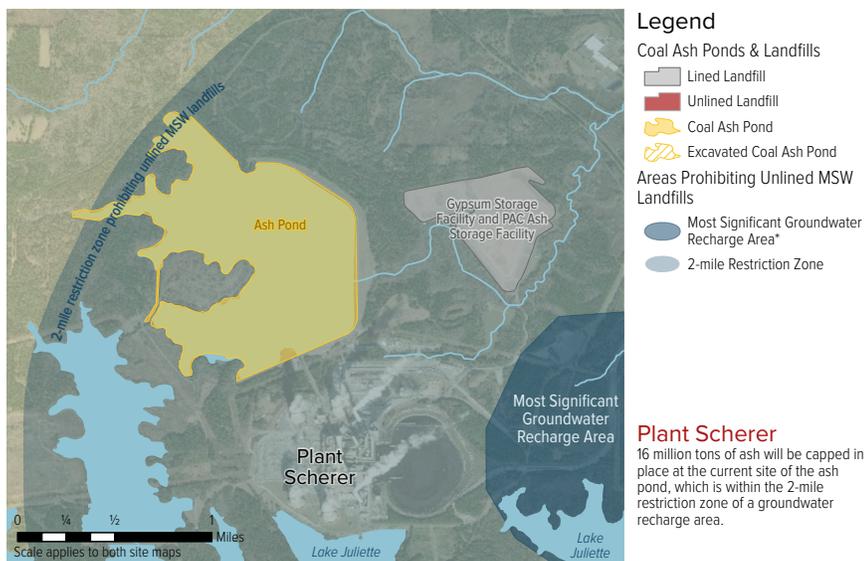
Leaving coal ash sitting in groundwater and capping it on top is hardly an advanced solution and will not stop pollution. The closure plan also **ignores** critical information:

- A buried creek flows through the bottom of the coal ash. This creek will continue to infiltrate the coal ash after closure, creating a constant stream of contaminated water.
- Plant Scherer's coal ash pit is located in the 100-year floodplain. Major flood events could result in catastrophic coal ash spills into Lake Juliette and nearby streams.
- Even minor flood events will result in groundwater pollution as floodwaters enter and leave the unlined waste pit through the bottom and sides, carrying dangerous heavy metals with them.

Unlined Household Garbage Landfills Are Banned by Law in the Same Area

Plant Scherer's coal ash is located next to a "most significant ground-water recharge area," which is an area that EPD has identified as extremely vulnerable to groundwater pollution from surface activities.¹

- Under Georgia law, municipal solid waste landfills are prohibited in most significant groundwater recharge areas and **within two miles** of those areas unless they have bottom liners and leachate collection systems.
- At Plant Scherer, Georgia Power is proposing to leave toxic coal ash in a massive, 776-acre **unlined pit** (essentially, an unlined landfill), even though an unlined landfill for household trash would be prohibited in that same area.
- Toxic coal ash should be treated at least the same as household garbage like banana peels and coffee grounds; coal ash must be stored with bottom liners and leachate collection systems!



If banana peels and coffee grounds must be disposed of in lined landfills with leachate collection systems, toxic coal ash should be disposed of in lined facilities too.



For more information, please contact

Fletcher Sams
fletcher@altamahariverkeeper.org

¹ See Kenneth R. Davis et al., Envtl. Protection Div., Ga. Dep't of Natural Resources, HYDROLOGIC ATLAS HA-18 (1989).

Concerns for Surrounding Communities

- Plant Scherer is surrounded by homes where residents rely solely on groundwater for drinking, cooking, bathing, and gardening. These families are the most at-risk from Georgia Power's flawed plan to leave toxic coal ash sitting submerged in groundwater.
- In recent years, Georgia Power has started purchasing the homes closest to its coal ash pond at Plant Scherer and filling in the drinking water wells.
- Altamaha Riverkeeper has tested drinking water wells at other homes surrounding Plant Scherer and has consistently found coal ash contaminants such as:
 - Boron and strontium, which are strong indicators of coal ash pollution; and
 - Vanadium and hexavalent chromium at concerning levels.
- Arsenic and lead have also been detected in Lake Juliette near the coal ash pond.



Debunking Georgia Power's Unfounded Assertions

Georgia Power Says:

“Based on the extensive data collected [from groundwater monitoring wells], the company has identified no risk to public health or drinking water.”

“In limited cases, we have had detection of substances that we have been required to monitor, and we have elected on our own to go beyond the monitoring point to be sure we haven't impacted anyone.”

In Fact:

Georgia Power is only monitoring groundwater on its own property. As contaminated groundwater continues to migrate off-site, it will create real risks for downstream communities. Private tests of drinking water wells near Plant Scherer consistently show elevated levels of coal ash contaminants.

Expert analysis shows that Georgia Power has attempted to game the system by placing monitoring wells in inappropriate locations and taking well samples from inappropriate depths. And yet, Georgia Power has still detected unsafe levels of heavy metals at nearly all of its coal ash sites.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division must deny permits for Georgia Power's closure plans and instead ensure that all coal ash is removed to lined, dry facilities away from Georgia's waters