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**Kentucky Report Highlights Water Pollution Caused by Coal  
Combustion Waste**

*Report Finds Dangerous Groundwater Contamination Beneath Waste Disposal Sites and Severely Inadequate Regulatory Programs Addressing Growing Threat*

**(Louisville, KY)** – A report issued today calls attention to an ongoing “slow motion spill” of hazardous coal combustion waste in Kentucky. The report, issued by the Sierra Club, Kentucky Waterways Alliance and Global Environmental, LLC, studied groundwater monitoring data for “ash ponds” and dry landfills in Kentucky and found that the coal combustion waste being stored at these sites is dangerously contaminating water in the state. Kentucky has 44 “ash ponds,” the second most in the nation after Indiana.

“Coal combustion waste is polluting our water and threatening school children,” said Wallace McMullan, a Sierra Club volunteer who lives in Louisville. “Some schools in Kentucky, like the Robert Frost Elementary School in Louisville, are located right next door to some of these ponds. Someone needs to step in and make sure we are protecting these kids- not only from the potential catastrophe we would see if a pond dam broke, but also from the pollution the ponds seem to be releasing every day.”

According to the report, coal combustion waste is a national problem. Every year, coal plants across the country produce more than 130 million tons of waste, laden with hazardous chemicals, including arsenic, boron, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury, selenium, and thallium. Some of this waste is stored in landfills, which often are unlined or poorly designed. Often, wet ponds – colloquially referred to as ash ponds or CCW ponds – are used. These ponds, generally unlined, pose particularly acute water risks. Chemicals leaching from CCW in landfills or ponds can cause organ damage and cancer and many are connected with brain damage in children.

“This report clearly demonstrates that coal combustion waste is a tremendous environmental problem,” said Craig Segall, an environmental law fellow with the Sierra Club’s Environmental Law Program who researched and helped to write the report. “From dangerous mines to polluting power plants to the inadequately regulated disposal of combustion waste, from start to finish, coal is one of the dirtiest and most dangerous ways we can produce power.”

(more)

"Kentuckians pay the price for coal with their health and a toxic environment," said Jason Flickner, water resources program director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance. "The regulators in Frankfort should be aware of the documented health concerns brought by coal combustion waste and should act to make certain it is handled in the most environmentally protective way possible in order to safeguard human health."

In addition to analyzing the negative effects the storage of coal combustion waste has on the groundwater quality in Kentucky, the report also assessed the inadequate regulatory programs in place to control the growing problem. Because the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not yet regulate coal combustion waste (an EPA rule is currently pending), and most states don't fill the gap, power companies are largely free to dispose of their waste how, and where, they like.

"It is clear that something is badly wrong with the water under these waste facilities, and that the pollutants in that water are consistent with coal combustion waste contamination," said Mark Quarles, P.G., a licensed professional geologist in Tennessee and a contributor to the report. "Worse, the state does not have a regulatory program that is addressing this threat. This is a serious public health issue that needs to be addressed immediately."

A full copy of the report can be found at:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/environmentallaw/lawsuits/docs/SC-KY-CCW-Report.pdf>.

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For more information about the Sierra Club or the Beyond Coal Campaign, please visit [www.sierraclub.org/coal](http://www.sierraclub.org/coal).

For more information about Kentucky Waterways Alliance, please visit [www.KWAlliance.org](http://www.KWAlliance.org).