



NEWS RELEASE
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REPORT CITES DANGEROUS COAL WASTE POLLUTION OF W.VA. STREAM; NOTICE GIVEN OF POSSIBLE LAWSUIT

According to a [just-released report](#) from Monongalia County, W.Va., coal combustion waste (CCW) and acid mine drainage (AMD) have seriously harmed aquatic life and ecosystems in a local stream, Crafts Run, which spans multiple miles and discharges into the Monongahela River.

The report's data—gathered at specific monitor sites along Crafts Run and [detailed in this map](#)—shows elevated levels of dissolved solids, aluminum, iron and manganese in water samples collected from the stream. High amounts of boron and selenium indicated CCW pollution specifically, and in certain places, the concentration of iron violated state surface water quality standards.

Self-monitoring data by Coresco LLC—the company that owns and runs the disposal sites adjacent to Crafts Run—showed that violations of state criteria have occurred in the past for dissolved aluminum, iron and pH, all indicators of AMD pollution.

Coresco's existing disposal sites were permitted and defined by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to accept CCW (commonly called "coal ash"), but Coresco is now asking the WVDEP to allow it to expand its disposal operations within the Crafts Run watershed.

Local environmental groups, the Sierra Club, and the national public interest law firm Public Justice are opposing the expansion.

The 46-page report states that "Coresco intends to drastically increase the amount of CCW disposed of through proposed revisions" to its existing permits with the WVDEP. As a result of those revisions, Coresco could potentially place 2.8 million tons of CCW and refuse waste within the watershed each year.

“The report data shows unequivocally that coal ash dumping is destroying these streams,” said Richard Webster, an attorney at Public Justice, which commissioned the report. “We’re concerned that the WVDEP will allow Coresco to actually *expand* its dumping operations—when that is the last thing that biologically degraded Crafts Run needs.”

Webster and Public Justice, along with Mike Becher of the Appalachian Mountain Advocates, are representing the Sierra Club, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and Fort Martin Community Association against Coresco.

“The Coresco operations are turning the Crafts Run watershed into one large dumping ground for coal waste,” Becher said. “This is being done without stringent pollution controls or adequate monitoring, as demonstrated by the report’s data.”

Said Jim Kotcon, Energy Chair for the West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club, “Coresco is trying to make the claim that dumping of coal ash is somehow a beneficial use. We want Coresco to clean up its pollution and operate the site without contaminating the water. Coal ash has to be handled responsibly and in compliance with the law—or else it endangers public health.”

A [notice letter sent today](#) details the groups’ position that Coresco must come into compliance with water quality standards. The letter was written to coincide with a WVDEP hearing tonight concerning Area No. 4—the area into which Coresco is hoping to expand—and states that Public Justice and Appalachian Mountain Advocates plan to file a lawsuit if the stream is not cleaned up within sixty days.

“After years of undemonstrated assumptions that dumping coal ash is a good thing, this report finally shows that there are indeed harmful impacts to waters downstream from mine and refuse sites,” said Cindy Rank, Mining Committee Chair of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. “Expanding Coresco’s current coal ash disposal practices will not only further pollute Crafts Run but will also add additional stress to the Monongahela River, a valuable resource for tens of thousands of people all the way to Pittsburgh, Pa.”

The potential lawsuit would allege multiple violations of the Clean Water Act by both Coresco LLC and Mepco LLC. (All of the waste disposal areas in the Crafts Run watershed are operated by Coresco on Mepco property. Both companies are subsidiaries of a common corporate parent, Mepco Intermediary Holdings.)

The lawsuit would also claim violations of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) by Coresco solely, and would seek both civil penalties and injunctions compelling Coresco and Mepco to come into compliance with the Clean Water Act, and Coresco with the SMCRA.

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Public Justice is a national public interest law firm that fights injustice and holds corporate and government wrongdoers accountable. See www.publicjustice.net.