

7/16/10

Dear Editor,

I'm following up about the amounts of pollutants in the coal-ash pile for the proposed Plant Washington. Jac Capp, Director of the Air Division of the Georgia EPD, replied by mail on June 21st to questions I asked at the EPD public hearing last October. I picked two example pollutants, mercury and arsenic, to get a relative idea how pollutants would accumulate in the ash pile. Mr. Capp stated that over the 30-year life of the plant, 8 tons of mercury and 800 tons of arsenic will accumulate in 23 million tons of ash and gypsum that will occupy 17,000 acre feet. Mr. Capp's staff arrived at these figures by estimating from the theoretical amount of coal that would be scrubbed and burned over the life of Plant Washington.

Simple arithmetic shows that 533 lbs of mercury would be deposited on the ground per year, while as the Power4Georgians' permit states, 63 lbs would go into the air per year. What gets scrubbed and put in the ash pile is about 8.5 times as much mercury as would go into the air. If you have any doubt that, if this plant is built, the power generated will go elsewhere and the pollution will stay in Washington County, these figures should dispel that doubt.

The volume of this pile would be something like 42 feet high and cover 400 acres. Mr. Capp's letter states that the pile is to have a liner and there will be ground-water checks for leaks. I wonder what can be done after leaks are detected? Do you pick up a mass that large and put another liner under it? Mercury and arsenic last forever – that's a lot of liners, and who will remember to replace it in 1000 years?

The EPA is currently considering regulating coal combustion waste (hazardous contents of ash piles) and has opened a public comment period. If you are concerned about the health hazards that the Plant Washington ash pile would bring to Washington County, you might want to look at the EPA website and send in a question or comment. Here's the link:

<http://www.epa.gov/wastes/nonhaz/industrial/special/fossil/ccr-rule/ccr-rule-prop.pdf>

Thank you,

Lyle Lansdell, FACE Board Member