

Cindy Shepherd

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Good afternoon. My name is Cindy Shepherd. Thank you for the opportunity to address this group as you amend and finalize the Coal Ash rules for Illinois. I appreciate that you listen to citizen concerns.

I am the Central Illinois Outreach Director for Faith in Place, a faith based environmental justice organization. We resource over 350 diverse communities of all faiths, across the state. Country, city, suburb, church, temple, mosque. They are made up of families whose faith includes the moral obligation to care for Earth, and protect its life-giving power for future generations.

Many are impacted now by their proximity to old or active coal fired power plants. In East Peoria, a pastor friend worries about members disabled by heart, thyroid and neurological problems, and wonders, are these linked to arsenic, cobalt, and lead from the Edward's plant? Because of the threat of contamination of ground and surface water which we all share, water is vital to life and health, all of us are touched by the work that you are doing.

I want to thank you for including strong and vital protections for these communities in the proposed rules. Particularly, I applaud your groundwater monitoring details, and the fact that there is no time limit placed on the responsibility of polluters to clean up contaminated sites.

This is important, because these toxins have the potential to affect generations to come.

But I urge you to strengthen the rules in a couple of important ways. Who knows when Illinois will get another swipe at making such important regulations.

So first I'd ask that you recognize that coal ash is not only present and dangerous in the nasty unlined and poorly designed coal ash ponds and impoundments, but in many cases has been used as fill on power plant sites, such as the Crawford plant in Little Village. You can help by making polluters responsible for cleaning up the CCR that permeates the ground at sites such as this.

Second, I'd ask that you strengthen the protections associated with the cleanup process. People who are willing to do this tough work deserve to be protected not only on the site, but during the transportation process. And the rule should mandate transporting ash be done using the mode that produces the least amount of harmful pollution. Barges, trains and electric trucks (a new technology that may be quite viable by the time all of these sites are addressed) should be used whenever possible.

As people of faith, we recognize our responsibility to care for others, religious and non-religious alike, as the best way to live. I encourage you to write protections that promote that best way for all of Illinois.