

Update on Moncure Coal Ash

by Judy Hogan

For three years I've been the chairperson of the Chatham Citizens Against Coal Ash Dump. We now have about seven million tons of coal ash at the site in Brickhaven on Moncure-Flatwoods Road. We have fought the permits to dump this much ash from Wilmington and Charlotte areas by truck and train, in court, but we have yet to stop it, even though Judge Carl Fox in Superior Court ruled for us. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality has defended the permits given under McCrory in court. The Court of Appeals said we had to go back to the first two courts and start all over. Meantime the state DEQ is trying to pass a law that would "solve" the coal ash problem by landfills and "cap in place." These are both bad ideas. I wrote to the head of Waste Management, Ms. Lorschieder, to let her know why we opposed landfills. Here's the gist.

As we know bitterly here in Moncure, the creating of landfills to dispose of coal ash is not a solution. It means spreading the pollution around. The Brickhaven coal ash landfill was forced upon us, as our Chatham County Commissioners voted against it, and then learned they had no power to stop it. They ended up taking money from Duke — \$19 million in exchange for 12 million tons of dirty coal ash, not only dumped in a so-called mine reclamation—actually a landfill—as designated by EPA, but with all the evidence given in the open hearings already that it was a bad idea: Landfills always leak; the liners could be torn during construction, twelve kinds of bacteria eat them.. We got coal ash poison in the air

and in the groundwater in the neighborhood of Brickhaven and along all the transport routes by truck down Moncure-Pittsboro Rd, Old U.S. #1, and Corinth Road and Moncure-Flatwoods Road and by train.

Then we had Hurricane Florence in mid-September drop many inches of rain on the Brickhaven's landfill, and that caused slump faults (like sink holes), which our Chatham citizen supporter caught in his drone photos, with coal ash showing through in places. Charah is apparently shutting down its operation at Brickhaven at the end of 2018, at about seven million tons. No explanation, but we wonder if it's because they know they've messed it up. And what are they leaving us to deal with for years into the future?

Landfills don't work, and they do pollute the air, the water, and the groundwater. They are not a solution, so why is the DEQ calling them a solution? It must be because they would rather sacrifice a few poor and/or black, Hispanic, Indian lives in order not to offend Duke, the big polluter. Let Duke store its coal ash on its own property.

I also don't understand why the state is putting in polluting Star facilities to re-burn the coal ash near the very places where we've already suffered too much pollution. These plants pollute the air every time they are turned on or off. The scientists at NC A&T in Greensboro have discovered a way to make materials which could be used in building and without having to reburn the coal ash. Why not let them set up processing plants?



Upper Neuse River near Goldsboro after Hurricane Florence.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW STARR, UPPER NEUSE RIVERKEEPER, WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE, INC.

They should never have called Brickhaven's coal ash dump a mine reclamation. Nothing is reclaimed; it's ruined. Nothing could be built on top of such a mess. How about a little honesty in government? When I met staff at the DEQ building last year, I was hopeful that they would listen to those of us trying to take care of our communities. But apparently that was just talk and meant nothing. We thought, if we had Cooper for governor and got rid of McCrory, that the DEQ would actually look after environmental quality. No such luck. They have disillusioned us, as they press toward the very worst solutions to a problem that only gets worse with time. It's time DEQ took a close look at Brickhaven, and instead of defending McCrory's bad decisions

in court, began investigating the groundwater contamination there since the beginning. The monitoring wells should have been closer together with intersecting zones of capture. Before they do more landfills, they'd best learn exactly what happens to the ones they have, e.g., also the new one in Wilmington, which Hurricane Florence ruined very quickly. Due to climate change, we expect more and more big hurricanes, and N.C. is in a vulnerable geographic location.

Judy Hogan is a poet and mystery novelist living in Moncure and fighting coal ash as the most recent polluting of her community. She teaches creative writing. Blog: <http://postmenopausalzest.blogspot.com> web: <http://judyhogan.home.mindspring.com>

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Tree bark

BY LOU LIPSITZ

Long ago,
before I knew
very much
around the time my parents
had forgotten me

I wondered about talking to the trees
especially the ones with rough bark.

I imagined they were
listening —
their leaves were like
many attentive ears
and somehow
the bark expressed
their feelings.

I talked
to an apple tree
for about two years I think

It said:
"Don't wither."

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Buscamos artículos y noticias de acontecimientos en español e inglés. Fotos son bienvenidas también, con información en ambas lenguas.

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We need articles and press releases in Spanish and English. Photos are welcome also, with caption information in both languages. Email them to editor@chathamcountyline.org

CHATHAM County Line

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ESTABLISHED IN 1999
PO Box 1357, Carrboro, NC 27510
phone: 919.740.5231
editor@chathamcountyline.org

Chatham County Line is a community newspaper serving all of Chatham County as well as the southern part of Orange. Our mission is to inform our community by providing a forum "where all voices are heard." We seek all views and ideas about our community, and we report on important matters — including our cultural life — comprehensively and in-depth. Our commitment is to create the best-written, best-edited and most stylish community newspaper anywhere. Chatham County Line is published ten times a year.

Editor and Publisher: Julian Sereno

Business Manager: Randy Voller

Ad Design: Lesley Landis Designs

Page Design: Hart Palmer Design

Website Design: UniqueOrn.com

Social Media Editor: Chris Bouton

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