

## Help Protect Water from Toxic Power Plant Pollution

With the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 Congress set a national goal to eliminate all water pollution by 1985. We are now 28 years past Congress' deadline and it is time to end the power plant industries' unlimited permit to pollute, which stands in the way of cleaning up our rivers, streams and lakes.

- Every year, **power plants dump billions of pounds of toxic metals and other harmful chemicals** into lakes, rivers, and streams. <sup>1</sup>
- According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), **power plants contribute more than half of all the toxic pollutants discharged into surface water.** <sup>2</sup>
- Power plant wastewater contains toxic metals like arsenic, boron, cadmium, selenium, lead and mercury. Exposure to these harmful metals can cause birth defects, cancer and other health problems.
- Right now, **more than 23,000 miles of rivers and streams are contaminated with power plant wastewater.**<sup>3</sup>
- It is also **unsafe to eat fish in 38% of our nation's surface waters** because of these toxic discharges, which accumulate up the food chain.<sup>4</sup>
- There are numerous documented cases of environmental damage from coal ash wastewater discharges and spills, such as groundwater and surface water contamination and fish kills.
- **Despite the extent of this pollution problem, 4 out of 5 coal plants in the United States currently have NO limits on the amount of toxic metals they are allowed to dump in our water.** <sup>5</sup>

## EPA's New Power Plant Pollution Standards

In April 2013 EPA proposed power plant water pollution standards to begin to fix this problem. These new water pollution limits will, for the first time, set technology-based national standards that limit the amount of toxic metals that are dumped into our rivers, lakes and streams. EPA has proposed eight different technology-based options to address this problem, though they vary significantly by which waste streams they cover, and the stringency with which they cover those waste streams. **The weakest option would only control 468 million pounds of pollution per year while the strongest option would control 5.3 billion pounds of pollution per year. Southern Alliance for Clean Energy supports the strongest option, which would require "dry handling" of fly ash and bottom ash and evaporation treatment of all scrubber sludge to eliminate the most toxic metals and other pollutants.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/Steam-Electric\\_EA\\_Proposed-rule\\_2013.pdf](http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/Steam-Electric_EA_Proposed-rule_2013.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/steam\\_prepub.pdf](http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/steam_prepub.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/proposed\\_factsheet.pdf](http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/proposed_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/steam\\_prepub.pdf](http://water.epa.gov/scitech/wastetech/guide/steam-electric/upload/steam_prepub.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Analysis of EPA Data