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DEP Issues Permit Requiring Closure of FirstEnergy's Little Blue Run Impoundment

PITTSBURGH -- The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), today issued a Closure Permit to FirstEnergy Generation, LLC, imposing a mandatory closure plan for the Little Blue Run Impoundment.

The plan requires the company to complete all work associated with closing the site by Dec. 31, 2028, three years earlier than proposed by the company.

FirstEnergy must end disposal of waste into the impoundment by Dec. 31, 2016 and will begin capping activities in some areas next year. The Closure Permit requires the company to increase the groundwater and surface water monitoring points from 74 monitoring points to over 300, implement controls for noise, odors and particulate emissions, conduct quarterly seep reconnaissance, institute corrective actions when contaminated seeps are found, pursue groundwater remediation measures and conduct post-closure monitoring and maintenance for as long as environmental problems remain at the site.

FirstEnergy has posted a financial assurance bond of more than \$169 million, the largest bond for a waste management facility ever required by DEP, to ensure that all work is properly completed. Funds will be held by DEP until no further post-closure activities or monitoring are needed for the site.

DEP is requiring the company to install an impermeable geomembrane liner over the waste, then a cushion geotextile layer to protect the liner, a one-foot thick layer of soil, and a vegetative cover. The final elevation of the cover will be a gradual grade to eliminate infiltration into the waste and ensure that stormwater remains uncontaminated. Additionally, the company will reduce standing liquid behind the dam from the 214 acre pool to 100 acres to create a drainage area behind the dam.

Monitoring data from the site began to pick up changes in groundwater attributable to the Impoundment that required a complete groundwater assessment in January 2011. The closure permit approves specific measures to address the contamination. Sulfates, sodium, calcium, magnesium, chloride and arsenic in varying amounts were detected in groundwater near the Impoundment.

"The process to close the largest coal combustion waste disposal impoundment in the country was strenuous and thorough, involving citizens, who provided numerous comments, DEP staff and FirstEnergy," Waste Management Program Manager for DEP's Southwest Region Mike Forbeck said.

The Closure Permit is concordant with a Consent Decree entered by the US District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania on Dec. 14, 2012 that outlined steps that FirstEnergy would take to cease waste disposal, close the Impoundment, and offer to make public drinking water available to several residents living near the impoundment.

The Little Blue Run Impoundment is located in Greene Township, Beaver County. It covers 975 acres in a site located south of the Ohio River at the Pennsylvania - West Virginia border and consists of a 420 foot rock and earthen dam with an impermeable core, and 135,420,000 cubic yards of capacity for the disposal of coal combustion byproducts generated by the Bruce Mansfield power plant.

DEP, then Department of Environmental Resources (DER), originally permitted the impoundment on July 26, 1974.

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us