

Conservation Groups Seek Clean Up of TVA's Coal Ash Pollution in the Cumberland River

Press Release

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Nashville, TN – The Southern Environmental Law Center filed a motion in Davidson County Chancery Court asking that its clients, the Tennessee Clean Water Network and Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, be permitted to participate in a state enforcement action against TVA. The enforcement action was brought by the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) against TVA for the coal ash pollution of the Cumberland River and nearby groundwater from TVA's Gallatin power plant.

On January 7, 2014, the State of Tennessee and TDEC filed suit against TVA for violations of the Tennessee Solid Waste Disposal Act and the Tennessee Water Quality Control Act of 1977, stating under oath that TVA was in violation of its permit and the laws of the state for releases of coal ash into the groundwater. The state was prompted to file its lawsuit by the conservation groups' notice of intent to file a citizens' suit against TVA for violations of the Clean Water Act. For decades before now, TDEC has failed to stop TVA's ongoing coal ash pollution into the water.

"TVA was responsible for the largest coal ash spill in the country six years ago, and yet it has not learned its lesson," says Anne Davis, Managing Attorney at SELC's Nashville office. "TVA can no longer continue to store over fifty years' worth of toxic coal ash waste next to a major river in leaking, unlined pits on unstable ground."

"As a government entity established to serve the public interest, TVA has let down the citizens of Tennessee with its irresponsible coal ash management. TVA must be held fully accountable, and it must put an end to years of toxic pollution of our waters," said Stephanie Durman, General Counsel for the Tennessee Clean Water Network.

"The Cumberland River is a source of drinking water for over 1 million people downstream from TVA's coal ash pollution," said James Woodall, President of Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association. "We cannot allow TVA to continue to

threaten the waters that our communities rely upon for drinking water, fishing, and recreation.”