

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

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State issues first-ever permit to drain coal ash ponds
State protects environment with most stringent permit in nation

RALEIGH – State environmental officials issued a critical permit today that will serve as a model for the safe closure of all coal ash ponds throughout the state.

After more than a year of delays, state officials finally received approval from the federal government to issue the permit, which provides for the safe removal of water from coal ash ponds in preparation for closure. Dewatering of ash ponds is done under strict monitoring by state environmental officials and is an essential step in removing the threat coal ash presents to the environment and public health.

“The permit issued today is the most stringent in the nation in regulating the safe closure of coal ash ponds,” said Donald R. van der Vaart, secretary of the state environmental agency. “State regulators are ensuring the environmentally responsible closure of all coal ash ponds throughout North Carolina through strict oversight and regulation of closure activities.”

The permit applies to Duke Energy's Riverbend Steam Station in Mt. Holly. State regulators plan to use the Riverbend permit as a template for the permanent closure of coal ash ponds at other facilities.

North Carolina's coal ash law requires that impoundments at Duke Energy's Sutton, Asheville, Riverbend and Dan River facilities be permanently closed by Aug. 1, 2019. The remaining 10 sites will be prioritized for closure based on the level of risk they present to the environment and public health, with all coal ash ponds and discharges from those ponds eliminated no later than 2029.

To read the permit, [click here](#).

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