



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: Feb. 27, 2014

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Latest Update on Dan River Coal Ash Spill Activities

RALEIGH – The latest state water quality tests show that concentrations of iron and aluminum in the Dan River near the site of the Eden coal ash spill continue to decrease, but aluminum still exceeds surface water quality standards at all upstream and downstream sampling locations.

Iron concentrations are now within state surface water quality standards at three of the four sampling stations. Iron exceeds surface water quality standards at the Milton, N.C. site, which is the site farthest downstream from the spill, staff with the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources reported Thursday. DENR's latest test results come from water quality samples the state agency collected through Feb. 10 upstream and downstream of the coal ash spill site.

Of the 28 metals DENR is testing for near the coal ash spill, iron and aluminum are the two metals at or above surface water quality standards. Some initial water quality samples taken downstream of the spill site indicated exceedences of state surface water standards for arsenic, iron, aluminum and copper. However, subsequent tests taken at the same sites have shown that neither arsenic nor copper exceed surface water standards.

Iron and aluminum have been high in historic water quality sampling conducted prior to the coal ash spill and are naturally occurring in soils in North Carolina.

Duke Energy discovered the coal ash spill at its Dan River power plant Feb. 2. The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been conducting tests to assess the spill's effects on the river since staff members in DENR were notified of the spill Feb. 3.

In addition to testing water quality in the Dan River, DENR staff are collecting and testing sediments in the river and collecting and testing fish tissues to determine whether fish are safe to eat. Meanwhile, state public health officials have advised people not to eat fish from the Dan River and avoid prolonged contact with the water.

“These tests will help us better understand the extent of the damage to the Dan River caused by the coal ash spill,” said Tom Reeder, director of the N.C. Division of Water Resources. “Characterizing the spill's impacts on water quality as well as fish and sediment will better inform cleanup efforts.”

On Wednesday, Duke Energy resumed removal of some of the 300 cubic yards of coal ash deposited in the shallow areas of the river near where the initial coal ash spilled into the Dan River. Efforts to remove portions of the coal ash deposit in deeper water have been halted and will resume when river conditions are safer. Assessments are ongoing to identify other areas in the Dan River where larger coal ash deposits can be removed.

To see a map of all the locations where DENR is sampling water quality and sediment, and collecting fish for testing, visit <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/guest/dan-river-spill> and click on the sampling sites map.

DENR staff created the web page to provide the public with updates on the agency's response to the Dan River coal ash spill.

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