



**Insider's Update: Coal Ash in Georgia
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Over the past few months, One Hundred Miles has been working with a group of Wayne County citizens trying to prevent imported coal ash from contaminating local water supplies.

In late 2015, a permit application to the US Army Corps of Engineers revealed that Republic Services planned to expand operations at its Broadhurst Landfill in Wayne County. Broadhurst takes in about **1,800 tons/day** of household trash from coastal communities in Georgia. Landfill owners are hoping to expand operations in order to receive **10,000 tons/day** of imported coal ash.

Coal ash is not household trash. It contains 25 heavy metals, including arsenic, mercury, lead, and other toxic and carcinogenic chemicals. Studies have recently shown that coal ash also contains radioactive elements. Incorrect disposal of any of these toxins presents a grave risk to human health.

While it is true that lined landfills, like Broadhurst, are generally better for the storage of coal ash than wet ash ponds, in Georgia and much of the Southeast, there are no regulations that guide the proper evaluation of a waste site's suitability for storage or the transportation of coal ash into our community landfills. In the case of Broadhurst, the combination of large quantities of coal ash on our sandy soils with only an old liner that has a limited life span could be disastrous for our groundwater and surface water supplies.

Recognizing the potential threat 10,000 tons of coal ash at Broadhurst poses to Wayne County, local community leaders quickly began to mobilize. Comments were filed, lawyers were hired, and newspaper articles were written. Most importantly, residents of Wayne County from all walks of life (not just the so-called "traditional" environmentalists) came together to prove that the conservation of a place you love has no political, religious, or racial boundaries. They understood that Republic's economic benefit from the importation of coal ash did not translate into a *community* benefit. These were important revelations that will lead to a successful movement.

Despite this outcry, the battle isn't over yet. And that's the point of this email. There are many tools that community and advocacy groups use to accomplish a goal like this one. Those include public education, media outreach, collaboration building, and lobbying. These tools are so important because they build communities and positive relationships around common interests.

But they aren't the strategies most commonly associated with conservation. The tool that seems to get the most attention is litigation.

There are two reasons for that:

- Litigation is easy to understand. The public, mostly fed by the media, focuses on litigation because, boiled down, there are two clear sides to the issue, and it doesn't take long to know with which side you sympathize.
- The conservation advocacy movement has largely resorted to and emphasized the use of litigation as a way to protect our public resources and demonstrate that we are right. Litigation can bolster our organizations because a judge who rules with us can affirm and validate our position, work, and mission.

Together, these reasons have led to the dangerous theory (and sometimes practice) that conservation groups exist primarily to litigate. I want to emphasize that this could not be farther from the truth.

The truth is that we all hold a full hand of cards all the time. Anyone who has played cards knows that the best players only play the right card at the right time. In conservation, good players play their litigation card as a last resort, after all other options have been exhausted.

That's why, in the case of the Broadhurst expansion, One Hundred Miles is proud of this broad coalition we are helping to build because the first step to achieving a positive outcome is to educate the public and expand the number of people who care about Wayne County and coastal Georgia. There is a lot we can do together.

Our message is simple. **By allowing the storage of massive amounts of coal ash in our community landfills, we're putting at risk the water in our marshes, rivers, and aquifers.** All water is connected: if groundwater or surface water is contaminated in Wayne County, it will flow to the coast in Glynn, McIntosh, and Camden Counties and affect our wildlife, our people, and our economy. This is not a Wayne County issue; it is a *coastal* issue. Those of us who love our coast must unite to prevent the importation of 10,000 tons/day of coal ash into the Broadhurst landfill.

With this message, we can work together to influence state policy. Officials at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also see the storage of coal ash as an important issue – one that affects the entire state. On July 8, the Environmental Protection Division of the DNR released the second draft of rules to regulate the storage of coal ash in Georgia (the first draft was released in May). Unfortunately, despite massive public input to the contrary, these rules do not apply to municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills, the most prevalent type of landfills in our state. We must ensure the rules prevent the hijacking of our community landfills by out-of-state power companies seeking to skirt regulations and dispose of their toxic waste.

You can also help us influence decisions about the landfill at the local level where our connections are more direct. The Wayne County commission holds a contract for the use of Broadhurst that may serve as a point of leverage if the commissioners have the political will to use it as such. Waste also comes to the Broadhurst landfill from Glynn, Brantley, Ware, Pierce, Coffee, Bacon, Jeff Davis, Appling, Tattnall, Long, Effingham, and Liberty counties.

We all have a stake in what happens in Wayne County.

As a conservation organization in the fight to keep large quantities of coal ash out of Broadhurst, One Hundred Miles is committed to playing all of our cards. We do not have our eyes on litigation as an end goal but understand it is an option for the future. In the meantime, we are working to build the coalition, expand our network of friends, influence the political process, and possibly achieve our outcome without having to spend tens of thousands of dollars in court.

I hope you'll continue to follow our work on this important project. Look for additional updates and ways to take action. As always, we're grateful to all of you for your support and partnership on this and other critical issues affecting the coast we love.