



PRESS STATEMENT

Approved Permit to Dewater Coal Ash Ponds Poses Threat to the James River

January 15, 2016

On January 14, 2016, the State Water Control Board approved the permit to release 356 million gallons of wastewater from coal ash ponds at the Dominion Bremo Power Station into the James River. The permit limits set by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality are as much as fifteen times higher than for toxic metals than those proposed for dewatering coal ash ponds in neighboring states. The permit also includes the use of a mixing zone within the James River to meet the state's water quality standards. During the public comment period on the draft permit, the James River Association joined with hundreds of citizens from across the watershed to voice concerns about the permit, and addressed the Board directly during the hearing.

"The James River Association is deeply disappointed by the permit approval without additional protections for the James River," said Bill Street, CEO for the James River Association. "We believe our James River deserves the same level of protections as other waters from the toxic pollution contained in coal ash."

Downstream of historic Bremo Bluff, river users frequently fish, paddle, tube and swim. During parts of the year, the hot water discharge from the power plant attracts fish and anglers to the very part of the river that will be receiving the coal ash discharge. Freshwater mussels, including threatened and endangered species, also inhabit the river nearby, and the mussel larvae likely pass through the discharge area. Mussels provide important filtering for the river much as oysters do for the Chesapeake Bay, and have already suffered damage from Bremo's historic and continuing thermal pollution.

"The approved permit falls short of protecting the health of the James River. We are considering all options for possible next steps including an appeal of the permit," said Street.

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ABOUT THE JAMES RIVER ASSOCIATION:

The James River Association is a member-supported nonprofit organization founded in 1976 to serve as a guardian and voice for the James River. Throughout the James River's 10,000 square-mile watershed,

James River Association works through its core programs – Education, Outreach, Watershed Restoration, River Advocacy and the Riverkeeper program – to help people of all ages enjoy, appreciate, and protect the beauty and health of the James River for future generations to enjoy. For more information, visit www.JamesRiverAssociation.org.