

March 7, 2010

Cass R. Sunstein, Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Administrator Sunstein,

I was on a phone call last month with representatives from OMB, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and the EPA. We talked about the dangers of coal fly ash, and how communities across the country deal with its daily impacts and risks. After the call, I wondered how often decision makers in DC get to hear stories of people like me.

To me, it seems impossible to truly understand the magnitude of coal ash's impact from your office in Washington. To help you understand, I invite you to join us in Greene Township, PA, to see how our community lives alongside one of the largest coal ash impoundments in the country. I trust that a visit to our home would better inform you about the dangers of coal fly ash, and why we so desperately need rules that protect citizens from it.

Since 1975, our community has been a depository for coal ash with a wet impoundment named Little Blue Run. At 1,300 acres in size, Little Blue Run is everything but little. As a small, agricultural community, we have been overwhelmed by issues related to this massive dump. Our groundwater, which sustains both people and animals, is contaminated; coal ash dust has blown across people's properties during wind storms; and health issues run rampant.

For 35 years we have put up with Little Blue Run, and now they want to put in another impoundment – right in my backyard. The proposed 1,000 acre impoundment of dry ash would border the fields where my horses and cattle graze. I moved here because it was an agricultural area, and now that may be taken from me.

Recently, I helped gather signatures of community members who also oppose this new dump. By the time I was finished, I had 536 signatures and an entirely new perspective on how desperate my community is for help. I met with people who were too sick to get out of bed, who couldn't breathe on their own, or write their own name; all of these people desperately wanted to sign the petition. We are already broken, how do they have the nerve to demand more from us?

I know that the EPA is planning to put in new rules to protect communities like ours from coal ash. But I also have read that your office at the OMB is holding up the process, and has met dozens of times with industry representatives.

Since you're a key player in this process, I'd like you to come and visit our community here in Western Pennsylvania. Please come visit our home and walk in our shoes for a day.

Sincerely,

Diane Neugebauer