



Please be advised that this SOC is in legal and, most of all, ethical error. As drafted, this SOC is an egregious affront to the people of Stokes, Forsythe, and Rockingham Counties affected by the coal ash waste at Belews Creek Steam Station. Please be advised that the type of coal ash mismanagement in which the SOC currently participates has a human toll, kept track of at a national and international level. The ponds, pits, and polluted releases of ANY form of coal waste—into US waterways OR what will go into the groundwater table affecting residents within at least a 9 mile radius—are UNACCEPTABLE and UNLAWFUL at Belews Creek Steam Station. The decanting process is not an excuse to bend the law in Duke Energy’s favor, at the LITERAL cost of thousands of people’s health, and hundreds of people’s lives.

Please be advised of the attached report, based on my multi-year doctoral research with communities at Belews Creek Steam Station. Research has been adapted and presented at medical schools and hospitals across the state, inclusive of this report to the US Commission on Civil Rights. The USCCR held its annual hearing in Stokes Co., at Walnut Cove Public Library, to assess the human toll of Duke Energy and NC Government’s JOINT mismanagement of coal waste, resulting in loss of life, health, and property. The entire USCCR hearing was characterized by residents’ and panelists’ shock and hurt at Gov McCrory’s corruption and DEQ’s corruption under van der Vaart. Both were clearly “in lockstep” with Duke Energy officials—who influence policy making for their own shareholders’ benefit/profit NOT the benefit of the human health of families nearby Belews Creek Steam Station.

For both the McCrory and Cooper administrations it must be reiterated: *\*Rhetoric\** about environmental justice, and even appointed advisory teams about environmental justice, or publicity stunts about environmental justice are *\*different\** than *\*action\** that *\*ensures\** environmental justice, especially as it relates to racial justice, economic justice, and health justice.

It is SUCH a PROFOUND disappointment that the Gov Cooper administration and DEQ as a whole have also failed the people surrounding Belews Creek Steam Station with this SOC approach. This failure has only been to lift up the private utility that needs no more hand-outs from our state (!), Duke Energy. All of us were hoping things would change—and we do pray that this comment period will turn the tide as necessary to a pro-health economy and pro-people morality in NC, led by your agency.

Gov McCrory was voted out because of coal ash controversies piling up in his tenure, one after the other; and then because of HB2 as the strange, bigoted cherry on top. Gov Cooper and your DEQ: what do you expect will happen if you follow the same missteps?

To be clear:

- All of the toxins from coal ash—which you must know by now—should be listed clearly as illegal pollutants, with monitoring and PREVENTION efforts in place for effluent, discharge, and decanting.
- Waterways are not sourcepoints for pollution. All un-permitted pollution is illegal, under federal law. Why put yourselves in a position to be sued, DEQ? This wastes everyone's time and energy, when you've got vital work to do.
- The decanted toxic coal ash water from ponds must \*not\* be dumped into water ways irresponsibly and illegally. Directly and indirectly, this is people's drinking water!
- It's in your hands to change the pattern of corruption for which our state has now become a worldwide symbol:

e.g., Nationally acclaimed documentaries (Epix "America Divided") have focused on Duke Energy buying off NC politicians as THE thing that characterizes our state in this era, featuring residents at Belews Creek Steam Station as a prime example of those having to pay the human cost of Duke Energy and NC administrations' cronyism for profit. <http://www.workingfilms.org/projects/america-divided/>

e.g., Newsweek published as its cover story, again with Belews Creek Steam Station as its example, a report on the inability of current science to unequivocally prove "cancer clusters" even when cancer from toxic exposures is clearly taking place. This is a limit of method, not of people's lived facts and true suffering from improperly managed coal ash waste. <http://www.newsweek.com/2016/07/29/geographic-cancer-clusters-industrial-polluters-481423.html>

Honestly: you can check up on ANY of the prior hearings these communities have pulled it together to blow out of the water with their power and illuminating testimonies. Residents, patients, clergy, scientists, advocates, youth, elders, clinicians. All the info is ALREADY there for you to take right action, NC DEQ. This is getting quite exhausting. Can the people of NC trust any of their policy makers and regulators? It is your job to solidify a pattern of \*accountability\* and harm-prevention, rather than willful destruction and government-abetted robbery by Duke Energy.

Thank you for your time and consideration in making these urgent corrections to the SOC.

Marie Garlock, PhD Candidate  
IRB 15-2371

Communication (Health) UNC-CH

---

ATTACHED REPORTS FOR YOUR REFERENCE:

US Commission on Civil Rights [2016 Hearing](#), held in Walnut Cove, NC: **Examining Health and Environmental Issues Related to Coal Ash Disposal in North Carolina**. Entire [audio of hearing testimony here](#) by panelists, affected residents, community leaders.

[“Creative Advocacy and Oral History in Issues of Health, Cancers, and Coal Ash Disposal.”](#) U.S. *Commission on Civil Rights*. Federal docket submission on behalf of UNC IRB 15-2371, Breast Cancer Action, NAACP NC. May 2016

With "[Oral Histories addendum: Danielle Bailey-Lash, Shuntailya Imani Graves, James and Priscilla Smith](#)"

For compilation of USCCR's submission to office of U.S. President and U.S. Congress, 2016 federal report: [Environmental Justice: Examining the Environmental Protection Agency Compliance and Enforcement of Title VI and E.O. 12,898](#).

---

More information on coal ash in Walnut Cove, Walnut Tree, Stokes Co., NC:

3 minute mini-documentary: [At What Cost?](#) Stokes County NC residents near Belews Creek Steam Station (by Appalachian Voices)

7 minute mini-documentary: Residents' organizing to improve conditions for themselves and their kids, while living near coal ash waste--[Climate Listening Project, "The Story We Want" with Tracey Brown Edwards, Caroline Rutledge Armijo](#)" (by Moms Clean Air Force US)

[The Lilies Project](#), ArtPlace America "Creative Place Making Fund" National Award Winner for Stokes Co. Team - 2017-20 (by The Lilies Project)

---

Marie Garlock  
9196075533, NC  
<http://itisinyou.org>

