

https://www.fltimes.com/news/epa-says-ash-landfill-cleanup-at-greenidge-not-optional/article_4c8bfc22-dfc1-5191-b6ae-4d0265a53995.html

FEATURED

EPA says ash landfill cleanup at Greenidge not optional

By DAVID L. SHAW dshaw@fltimes.com

Dec 13, 2019



The Greenidge power plant burned coal until its 2011 closing. The current owner of the property is converting the fuel used at the electricity-generating facility from coal to natural gas.

Spencer Tulis / Finger Lake Times

DRESDEN — While it “appreciates” the offer from owners of the Lockwood Hills Ash Landfill to meet Coal Combustion Residual Rule requirements, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the company really doesn’t have a choice.

The 44.2-acre landfill is on the west side of Route 14, across from the Greenidge Generation power plant. The plant was built in 1937 and used coal to power its electricity-generating turbines until 2011. Coal residue from that process was deposited in the nearby Lockwood Hills Landfill. The plant was closed for several years before new owners reopened it in 2016, using natural gas and biomass to power the generators.

Lockwood Hills officials told the EPA that no coal ash has been deposited in the landfill since October 2015. In a May 2019 letter from company lawyer Danielle Mettler-LaFeir of the Barclay Damon law firm in Rochester to the EPA, she argued that the CCR Rule does not apply to the Lockwood Hills Landfill because no CCR material has been received by that landfill since October 2015. Despite making that assertion, Lockwood officials said that “in order to expedite resolution of the agency’s inquiry, Lockwood will comply with CCR rule requirements applicable to existing landfills” and would let the EPA know when they have completed the CCR requirements.

Seneca Lake Guardian claims the landfill is an immediate threat to the Keuka Outlet and Seneca Lake. They say the landfill already violated standards and has been discharging heavy metals into groundwater.

Seneca Guardian Research Director Mary Anne Kowalski reported Lockwood to the EPA in October 2018.

The EPA responded in an Aug. 1 letter to Mettler-LaFeir that they “appreciated the willingness to comply, but EPA disagrees with your assertion that Lockwood is not covered by CCR Rules” and compliance was really not an option. Barnes Johnson, director of the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, wrote that an existing CCR landfill is one that received CCR both before and after Oct. 14, 2015.

“Based on EPA review of materials, including maps and visual descriptions from your annual reports, the EPA has determined that CCR was placed in the landfill in 2015, 2016 and 2017,” Johnson wrote. “We do not consider ponds and basins located in historic areas of CCR placement or planned future cells of a landfill in which construction has not commenced to be part of the existing landfill; however, excavating the materials in and under those ponds and placing them into active cells of a landfill constitutes placement of CCR in a landfill.”



“We take our responsibilities as environmental stewards seriously, and that includes addressing the issues at Lockwood,” said Michael McKeon of Mercury LLC, a New York City public relations firm representing Greenidge and Lockwood. “As part of our commitment to meet high environmental standards, we have recently completed a \$1 million project that includes upgrading and installing a new liner under the leachate treatment pond.”

While the EPA and Lockwood disagree on the applicability of the CCR Rule, McKeon said the company “nevertheless agreed to comply with the CCR Rule and we have put in place CCR Rule requirements related to reporting, certifications, notifications and monitoring, for example.”

“However, the CCR Rule does not require remedial activities to be conducted at Lockwood,” he added.

Joseph Campbell, president of Seneca Lake Guardian, said recent reports indicate landfill has exceeded limits for a number of heavy metals, despite a consent order signed in 2015, and the Lockwood site is not monitoring for all the EPA-mandated groundwater contaminants related to coal ash.

“Seneca Lake Guardian will continue to test and monitor this situation,” Campbell said.

