Doing It Right
Colstrip’s Bright Future with Cleanup

Northern Plains Resource Council

MIDWEST CONVENING
JUST TRANSITION FUND
SEPTEMBER 18, 2023
Coal Ash and Cleanup Jobs Study

- Partnership of Northern Plains and IBEW 1638
- Can cleanup jobs be a significant part of a community’s economic transition?
- How are other sites cleaning up coal ash ponds?
- Are certain strategies better for job creation? For groundwater cleanup? For the community?
Where is Colstrip, Montana?
Colstrip Ash Pond Problem

• ~ 800 surface acres leaking 367 gallons per minute

• Extensive groundwater contamination

• Coal ash leaches arsenic, chromium, radium, selenium, boron, and sulfates into water\(^1\)

• 2022 Retirement of Units 1 & 2
Contamination from the ash ponds

- Boron is representative of the entire plume
- 1 of 3 sites
- Over 900 capture and monitoring wells
Stopping the Pollution

Cap and Abandon

- Cover over ash
- Does not address leaking from bottom of the ponds
- Industry preferred method

Excavation

- Dig up and remove ash
- Move ash to a secure landfill or reuse (concrete)
- More labor intensive and more foolproof method
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pond Size</th>
<th>Cleanup Jobs</th>
<th>Power Plant Jobs</th>
<th>Cleanup Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riverbend Station, NC</td>
<td>69 acres</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>Excavation + Transport + New Treatment Plant + Water Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheville Plant, NC</td>
<td>76 acres</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Excavation + Transport + Water Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belews Creek, NC</td>
<td>283 acres</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Cap-in-place + New Treatment Plant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colstrip Station, MT</td>
<td>~800 acres</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>Cap-in-place + Expand Capture System</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The philosophy goes back to one simple point.

The most important thing we can do is remove the source material from the unlined ponds that are impacting the aquifers.”

– Jim Landreth
Vice President
Fossil Hydro Division, SCE&G
Economics of Remediation

- Hiring local workforce is an economic benefit for the community → less unemployment, wages are spent locally, and families get to stay in the community.

- Clean water helps agricultural producers.

- Thorough cleanup helps stabilize property values and encourages future commercial development.

- Most companies prefer to hire a contract labor force, but this isn’t usually the best option for the community as a whole.
Many cleanup jobs are shorter in nature than power plant jobs, BUT . . .

• Some of the jobs, like groundwater monitoring, will be done for decades

• Bigger site → more years of dewatering and earthmoving

• Even a few extra years of employments helps people plan for the future and their next steps → Bridge Economy
What’s Next?

1. POWER Retraining Grant

2. Excavation requirement through legislation and/or regulation

3. Cleanup Jobs campaigns in other coal communities?
Overall Goals

• Make robust cleanup as beneficial for the community as possible

• Change the narrative: Environmental protection is a job creator.

• Work with communities to hold corporations accountable for economic and environmental damage.

• Work on building a more diverse, resilient economic future for rural communities.
Thank You!