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Kingston Recovery: Next Steps



TVA is working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to manage the cleanup of the Kingston ash spill in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA).

Applying this federal law ensures that actions necessary to protect public health and welfare and the environment are carried out at Kingston. CERCLA also provides a structured approach to community involvement in the cleanup. Here's an overview of how the cleanup will progress:

TIME-CRITICAL WORK

Under CERCLA, the major recovery work necessary at Kingston is divided into time-critical and non-time-critical activities. The time-critical work has focused on removing the ash from the Emory River's main channel and from the waters directly east of the site's ash-storage area. To date, more than two-thirds of the ash spilled into the river and related bays and sloughs east of Dike 2 has been removed. That amounts to more than 2 million cubic yards. TVA expects to complete the time-critical removal of ash from the river in the spring of 2010.

NON-TIME-CRITICAL WORK

TVA, EPA and TDEC staff members have also developed a work plan for selecting the preferred non-time-critical remedy for the ash in the embayments and on land west of Dike 2. This plan is known as the CERCLA Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) Work Plan. Though not required to do so, TVA is asking for public comment on this plan through December 20. Both the EE/CA Work Plan and the draft Community Involvement Plan are available for review at the Kingston Outreach Center, the Kingston and Harriman public libraries, and online at www.tva.com/kingston.

The EE/CA Work Plan presents a range of alternatives that are being developed for long-term restoration at the site:

- Excavation of the Swan Pond embayment and off-site disposal. Under this alternative, about 2.7 million cubic yards of ash in the embayment and from the test embankment within the failed dredge cell would be removed and disposed of off-site. A dike would be built to keep ash in the dredge cell from entering the embayment in the future, and the dredge cell would be graded for drainage and closed.
- Excavation of the embayment and portions of the dredge cell, both with off-site disposal. This alternative would remove the 2.7 million cubic yards of ash from the embayment and test embankment, plus enough ash from the dredge cell to limit the long-term need for a dike. A total of 6.3 million cubic yards of ash would be removed and disposed of off-site, and the dredge cell would be graded to a gradual slope and closed.
- Excavation of the embayment and on-site disposal in the dredge cell. This alternative would use the dredge cell as a disposal facility, and no additional material would be taken off-site. The ash in the embayment would be removed and stacked in the dredge cell. A dike would be built to keep ash in the cell from entering the embayment in the future.

TVA will compile and respond to the comments received on the EE/CA Work Plan in a Responsiveness Summary that will be issued in January 2010.

The target for issuing the actual CERCLA-required EE/CA is also early 2010. Unlike the EE/CA Work Plan, which covers the range of alternatives but not the effectiveness or cost of each alternative, the actual EE/CA will provide detailed feasibility, risk and cost assessments for each, along with estimated timelines for completion. The EE/CA also will identify TVA's preferred alternative.

In 2010, another public comment period and a public meeting will be held on the EE/CA to gather comments on the alternatives. TVA will again compile and respond to the comments it receives in a Responsiveness Summary.

Once all input and approvals are received, TVA will issue an Action Memorandum announcing the selected removal action. This will signal the start of the non-time-critical work. A public comment period will be held when the Action Memorandum is issued, but work will continue during that time.

RESIDUAL ASH REMOVAL

A separate non-time-critical activity that will follow the same process is the removal of residual ash from the Emory, Clinch and Tennessee rivers after the time-critical dredging is complete. TVA continues monitoring and testing to determine the amount of ash that is expected to remain in the river when the dredging work ends, and a future EE/CA will evaluate the further removal of ash from the rivers.

TVA also will develop a Remedial Site Work Plan to address the longer-term strategic objectives and determine whether any additional assessment or remedial work is necessary.

Although at this time TVA has no firm date for the completion of all work, the agency believes the recovery project can be concluded by 2013. TVA, TDEC and EPA will continue to conduct environmental monitoring at the site for many years after that to ensure the health and safety of the community and the environment.