



Dan River Coal Ash Spill Trustees Seek Public Input on Scoping Document for Restoration Planning

The natural resource trustees for the February 2, 2014, Dan River coal ash spill (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality) are seeking public review and comment on potential restoration opportunities in the Dan River watershed area.

The Dan River Scoping Document for Restoration Planning was released October 2, 2014, to enable the public to review it and provide ideas to restore the river. The scoping document also includes information on the spill, the potential natural resource injuries resulting from the spill, restoration project concepts for the resources affected by the spill, and an explanation of the restoration planning process. Review of the projects described in the scoping document is intended to promote public and stakeholder engagement early in restoration planning.

Background

In June, the natural resource trustees entered into a cooperative Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) process with Duke Energy, the party responsible for the Dan River coal ash spill. As part of the cooperative NRDAR, the trustees assess the impacts of the coal ash pond release on natural resources, focusing on injuries to habitat, surface water and sediment, aquatic species, migratory birds, and human uses of those resources.

The primary goal of NRDAR is to restore natural resources and the services they provide. To meet this goal, the trustees recover funds to implement and/or oversee restoration projects. Restoration activities, such as restoring, protecting, or enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitat and improving public use and access to natural resources, address the injuries resulting from the release of hazardous substances. NRDAR does not address and the trustees do not recover funds to offset economic injuries resulting from the release, such as damage to personal property or commercial interests.

Written comments are encouraged. Comments on this scoping document and the proposed restoration project concepts described in this document and/or any additional restoration proposals are requested to be submitted to the agency contacts below by November 14, 2014: Please contact Sara Ward, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Raleigh Ecological Services Field Office, 919-856 4520, Ext. 30, Sara_Ward@fws.gov, or Susan Lingenfelter, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Virginia Ecological Services Field Office, 804-824-2415, Susan_Lingenfelter@fws.gov.

What are the next steps for the Dan River NRDAR?

The trustees will develop a damage assessment plan for public review that summarizes the approach to determine injuries resulting from the coal ash spill to the Dan River's natural resources and the public's use of those resources. At the same time, the trustees will review public feedback on the restoration scoping document and work with Duke Energy to restore or replace natural resources and/or seek compensation from Duke Energy to carry out restoration activities.

What type of information is helpful for the public to provide the trustees to advance restoration planning?

For any restoration projects or proposals submitted to the trustees, please include details about how the project addresses natural resource or service injuries, estimated project costs, anticipated benefits to natural resources or resource services, implementation timing and readiness, and the potential to benefit more than one natural resource/service.