NEW REPORT URGES RECYCLING, NOT BURYING OF COAL ASH
Protects Virginia Rivers and Drinking Water from Contamination and Provides Cost-effective product for Highway and Bridge Construction

Washington, DC – November 30 – An independent report issued today by Potomac Riverkeeper Network and Southern Environmental Law Center finds that recycling coal ash left at Possum Point and three other Dominion Energy coal power plant sites is commercially viable and would eliminate the risk of future environmental contamination posed by leaving the ash in capped, unlined ash ponds onsite. Recycled coal ash is commonly used in concrete mix used to build highways, bridges and other critical infrastructure in Virginia. Recycling ash into concrete could also save taxpayers billions of dollars in highway construction costs. The report, “Beneficial Reuse of Coal Ash from Dominion Energy Coal Ash Sites: A Feasibility Assessment,” was prepared by Dr. Kevin H. Gardner, P.E., Professor, University of New Hampshire, and Scott Greenwood, Research Engineer, University of New Hampshire.

“This report is truly groundbreaking – it demonstrates that the coal ash produced from Dominion’s coal-fired power plants can in fact be recycled to be beneficially used as a vital ingredient in concrete to improve highways and bridges throughout Virginia and the nation,” said Jeff Kelble, President of Potomac Riverkeeper Network. “Best of all, recycling this toxic ash would ensure that leaking ash ponds will no longer threaten nearby private citizen’s well-water or leach into the Potomac River, as they have at Possum Point and other sites across the Commonwealth for decades.”

The report was prepared for Potomac Riverkeeper Network and Southern Environmental Law Center as a counterpoint to the report due to be issued by Dominion Energy on Friday, December 1st. Dominion’s assessment of coal ash disposal options was mandated by a new state law passed in 2017 to address Dominion’s approach to the millions of tons of historically produced coal ash at its Virginia facilities. Prior to passage of the law, Dominion had proposed capping the coal ash pond at Possum Point with an impermeable cover and leaving it onsite permanently, despite a well-documented history of groundwater contamination and seepage of coal ash metals at Possum Point that leached into Quantico Creek and poisoned nearby private drinking water wells.

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Virginia is at a crossroads when it comes to safely disposing of toxic coal ash, putting the onus on Governor Elect Northam to act in the best interests of Virginians and our precious environment," said Phillip Musegaas, Vice-President of Programs and Litigation for PRKN. “If he puts into action the recommendations of this report, he would demonstrate his commitment to protecting the health and well-being of the state’s residents by requiring recycling of our own coal ash rather than importing it from China or Poland, as is currently the case. The alternative is to allow Dominion, a state utility, to continue to operate in a way that threatens Virginians' health with dangerous poisonous and toxic coal ash metals left in leaking ponds to pollute our waterways and groundwater.”

Kelble concluded, “We truly hope that these important findings regarding the widespread and economical use of coal ash will be a lodestar to the new administration of Governor-elect Northam, when it considers its environmental priorities and the selection of staff to implement them.”

About Potomac Riverkeeper Network

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches: Potomac Riverkeeper, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper and Shenandoah Riverkeeper. Our mission is to protect the public's right to clean water in our rivers and streams. We stop pollution to promote safe drinking water, protect healthy habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.

For more information, visit http://www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org.

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