# Dan River Coal Ash Spill: Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment

## *Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR)*

When hazardous substances enter the environment, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources can be impacted. Under federal law, federal and state agencies and Native American tribes are authorized to act as Trustees on behalf of the public for natural resources they own, manage or control. In this role, trustees assess and recover damages or implement projects to restore natural resources and recreational opportunities lost due to the release of hazardous substance releases (including constituents associated with coal ash) into the environment. NRDAR activities are distinct from cleanup activities.

*The goal of the NRDAR process is to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured natural resources.*

The trustees for the Dan River coal ash spill are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

The NRDAR regulations encourage the participation of responsible parties in the assessment process, and Duke Energy agreed to assess natural resource damages and to identify and implement restoration projects.

*USFWS, Coal ash and ash pond water was released through a stormwater outfall at the steam station depositing coal ash along the river bank that was ultimately removed.*

*USFWS, A pipe rupture caused the coal ash slurry impoundment to drain into the river.*

### Natural Resources and Services

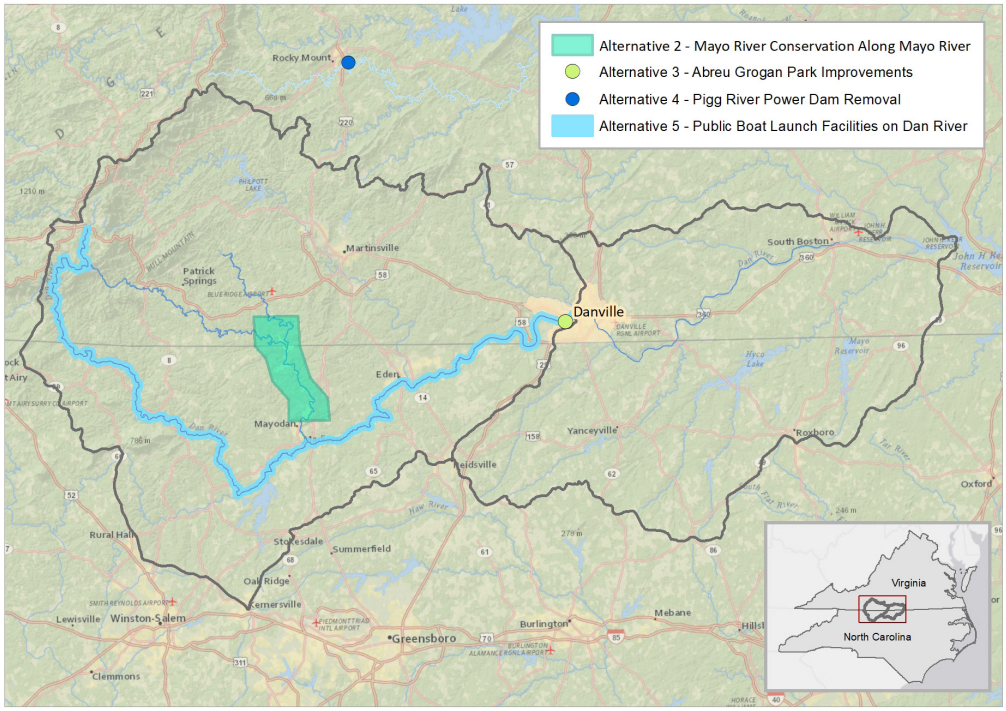
On February 2, 2014, a stormwater pipe underneath the primary coal ash basin at the Duke Energy Dan River Steam Station failed, resulting in the spill of approximately 27 million gallons of coal ash wastewater and between 30,000 and 39,000 tons of coal ash into the Dan River, resulting in documented ash or ash-like material co-mingled with native sediment in North Carolina and Virginia as far as 70 river miles downstream. Coal ash is a gray, powdery byproduct of burning coal to produce energy.

*USFWS, Biologists completed in stream surveys to evaluate coal ash deposition over native river sediment.*

The Trustees assessed spill-related impacts to natural resources such as surface water, sediment and aquatic organisms. They also quantified the loss of recreational opportunity to the public, such as fishing and park access. Fishing closures and contact advisories occurred during and following the spill. Additionally, the Abreu Grogan Park, the only public access to the 14-mile section of the Dan River designated as a Virginia Scenic River, was closed.

### Restoration Projects

The goal of the Dan River Coal Ash NRDAR process is to replace, restore, rehabilitate, or acquire the equivalent of the resources impacted and recreational opportunity lost by the spill—at no cost to the taxpayer. In October 2014, the Trustees invited restoration project ideas from the public to help identify the types and scale of restoration needed to restore resources and recreational opportunity. Feedback from the public showed great support for conducting land protection and conservation projects, removing dams, and increasing public access to the river.




*Location of projects identified in the draft restoration plan.*

Restoration projects in the draft plan support the Trustees' goals, including offsetting impacts to natural resources and recreational opportunity, and garnered broad community support. These restoration projects are anticipated to provide the following natural resource and recreational benefits:

- *Acquisition and conservation of Mayo River floodplain and riverbank* added up to 619 acres to the Mayo River State Parks in North Carolina and Virginia for long-term stewardship and public use.
- *Aquatic habitat restoration in the Pigg River* via removal of Power Dam returned riverine conditions to 2.2 miles of the formerly impounded reach, fish passage, and aquatic connectivity, benefiting game fish such as smallmouth bass, and other nongame fish such as the federally and state listed endangered Roanoke logperch.
- *Establishment of public boat launch facilities on the Dan River* to address the scarcity of public access locations, which limits recreational use and enjoyment of the river.
- *Improvements to the Abreu Grogan Park* in Danville, Virginia including new amenities (courtesy dock, a fishing platform, a restroom building and an information kiosk, handicapped accessible parking and sidewalks) and other improvements (culvert and riverbank stabilization and relocation of the picnic table and grill) to address impacts related to park closure during spill response activities.

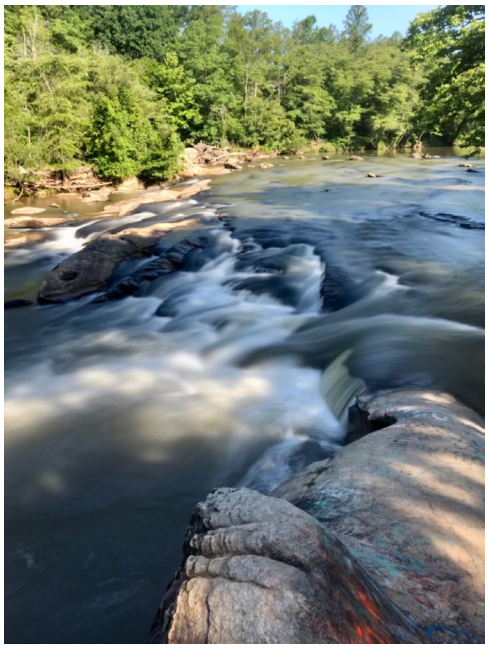
## Next Steps

Public comments on the draft restoration plan and environmental assessment will be accepted by the trustees through September 9, 2019. After the comment period closes, the Trustees will review the comments and make changes as necessary before releasing a final Restoration Plan. Requests for paper copies and written comments on the draft plan may be submitted to the Trustees either by email (Sara_Ward@fws.gov or Susan_Lingenfelser@fws.gov) or by mail (USFWS Virginia Field Office, 6669 Short Lane, Gloucester, VA 23061, Attn: Dan River Restoration Plan).

The Trustees will hold public information sessions from 6 to 8 PM on August 6, 2019 in Danville, Virginia (Danville City Council Chambers, 427 Patton Street, Fourth Floor, Danville, VA 24541) and August 7, 2019 in Eden, North Carolina (Eden Town Hall, 308 E. Stadium Drive, Eden, NC 27288) to present the draft plan and answer questions during an open house and poster session.

## More Information

https://www.cerc.usgs.gov/orda_docs/CaseDetails?ID=984
http://www.fws.gov/northeast/ecologicalservices/nrdarprocess.html



*Piedmont Land Conservancy, Purchase and transfer to North Carolina State Parks of floodplain and riparian habitat along the Mayo River allows for protection and public access to popular recreational spots such as the "boiling hole" pictured here.*


*USFWS, Removal of the Power Dam on the Pigg River in Virginia reconnected riverine habitat benefiting the endangered Roanoke logperch and species of recreational importance.*

*Duke Energy, A fishing platform was one of many recreational improvements to the Abreu Grogan Park in Danville, Virginia to make up for lost access to the river and park facilities due to coal ash removal in the vicinity of the Schoolfield Dam.*