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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0909

September 5, 2017

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Re- Coal Ash Dumping in the Peñuelas Valley Landfill

Dear Administrator Pruitt,

It has come to my attention, after speaking with several of my constituents, the dire risks to the environment and human health caused by the management of Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) in Puerto Rico. In particular, the dumping of coal ash in the Peñuelas Valley Landfill, as a result of the electrical energy production generated by AES' coal-burning power plant in Guayama, Puerto Rico. AES is an energy company which generates and distributes electrical power.

Coal ash is a byproduct produced when coal is burned to fuel electrical power plants, such as the one operated by AES. One of the main CCRs being deposited is called "Agremax," which is a partially solidified mixture of coal combustion fly ash and bottom ash. In 2012, the EPA released a study titled "Leaching Behavior of AGREMAX Collected from a Coal-Fired Power Plant in Puerto Rico," which found that CCR contains several toxic chemicals, such as arsenic, boron, chloride, chromium, and selenium. These toxic chemicals have been found to cause serious effects on human health such as asthma, birth defects, and cancer. Therefore, leaching from a disposal site similar to the one in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, poses a serious risk to human health and safety.

Several of my constituents either derive from Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, or have family members being impacted by the dumping of coal ash. With the serious health and environmental concerns over the dumping of coal ash, I urge the EPA to review the safety and adequacy of dumping coal ash in the Peñuelas Valley Landfill, including a thorough review of whether the practice and the site are performing in accordance with federal standards. Thus ensuring any existing or future risks to human health and the environment are addressed properly. As a Member of the House Natural Resources Indian, Insular and Alaskan Native Affairs Subcommittee, which oversees issues relating to Puerto Rico, I hereby request a written response detailing all risks posed by the Peñuelas Valley Landfill and actions being taken by the EPA to address the issue.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. My office will be in contact with you to follow up on this request. If you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to reach out to our office.

Sincerely,

Darren Soto

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

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