

Heavy Rains in Vietnam Cause an Avalanche of Coal Waste, Threatening Communities and Ha Long Bay World Heritage Site

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(<http://endcoal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/wka-edit.jpg>)

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Quang Ninh, Vietnam – July 30, 2015: Over the past two days, heavy seasonal rains in northeastern Vietnam have flooded local communities with industrial coal waste and threatened the safety of citizens, wildlife and the Ha Long Bay World Heritage Site.

Cam Pha City has already been flooded with an avalanche of coal mining waste and a second community is being evacuated (see map here (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1sHlBllswzDVFI4YWxRcEUtSEU/view?usp=sharing>)). News photos (<http://vnexpress.net/photo/thoi-su/nguoi-dan-vot-vat-tai-san-sau-lu-bun-xi-than-3254782.html>) and video (<http://video.vnexpress.net/trong-nuoc/hang-tram-nguoi-dan-bi-bom-trong-bun-xi-than-sau-mua-lon-3254953.html>) footage from Cam Pha show men, women and children wading through thick mud contaminated with coal waste as they flee their homes.

The coal industry generates massive amounts of waste that can contain a wide array of materials dangerous to human health and the environment including heavy metals like arsenic, boron, barium, cadmium, chromium, lead, manganese, selenium and thallium.

“Steps must be taken to immediately protect at-risk Vietnamese communities and the environment that are threatened by massive coal mines and coal ash ponds at coal-fired power plants surrounding Ha Long Bay,” said Ms. Donna Lisenby, Clean and Safe Energy Campaign Manager for Waterkeeper Alliance.

Waterkeeper Alliance has years of experience testing and documenting severe water pollution and other impacts from coal waste contamination in the United States and around the world.

“Coal waste facilities are ticking time bombs if they are not properly constructed to withstand large rainfall events,” said Ms. Lisenby.

“As the unfolding disaster in Quang Ninh shows all too clearly, there have not been sufficient efforts to protect surrounding communities or Ha Long Bay from a deluge of coal waste.

“Waterkeeper Alliance is very concerned about the government’s plans to significantly expand the use of coal power in Vietnam when it has the option of investing in clean renewable energy that does not generate millions of tonnes of waste annually. Disasters such as this should be a wake-up call for the Vietnamese government.

“Climate change is only going to make extreme weather events such as this more common. The government must review its plans for more mines and coal plants in the light of the dangers to human health and safety that arise as a result of coal waste problems,” observed Ms. Lisenby.

The good news is that many developing countries are choosing to move away from coal and determining that development, the environment and the climate can all thrive without it. Indeed a new report (<https://www.oxfam.org.au/2015/07/powering-up-against-poverty-why-renewable-energy-is-the-future/>) from Oxfam Australia supports the use of sustainable energy over coal.

<http://waterkeeper.org> (<http://waterkeeper.org/>)

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