

# Georgia needs to say no to coal ash

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Y**ou don't have to be an environmentalist to be alarmed by the disposal of coal ash in southeast Georgia landfills and how it might threaten the coastal Georgia ecosystem.

Southeast Georgia consists of a network of rivers, streams and swampy marshlands with sandy and porous soils, which deliver water to the artesian Floridian aquifer, which is where Camden County and many other communities get their public water supply.

The Environmental Protection Agency says coal ash contains contaminants like mercury, cadmium and arsenic. Its website adds, "Without proper management, these contaminants can pollute waterways, ground water, drinking water and the air."

Monitoring wells have already discovered heavy metals leaking from two landfills that are just hours away from Camden County. One sits near the Okefenokee Swamp, which are the headwaters for the St. Marys River.

The lack of proper management led to disasters near Kingston, Tenn., and Eden, N.C., after large coal ash spills "caused widespread environmental and economic damage to nearby waterways and properties."

How much more serious would the effects be in coastal Georgia, where all of our waterways are so interconnected?

These are questions that should not be solely decided by individual county governments or private companies — and especially not by state bureaucrats who are not accountable to voters.

Coal ash disposal should not just be a concern, but a priority for our governor and state legislators because of the sensitive nature of our coast and what appears to be plans to bring more coal ash to our landfills.

The mother of a cancer victim in Waycross, where they are investigating a suspected cancer cluster, fought tears at last week's hearing as she begged the state of Georgia to consider the effects of their actions.

She was but one of many citizens who spoke clearly and emphatically at the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's public hearing to decide on stricter rules for landfills that accept coal ash.

The biggest concern of all — that the proposed rule changes don't go far enough to adequately protect southeast Georgia. Our state can do better and we must if we expect our unique coastal treasures to remain as they are today for our descendants to enjoy.

### Reilly cares about the city's future

Dear Editor,  
 I recently learned that St. Marys City Council member David Reilly has begun a re-election campaign, which has prompted me to write this letter of support.

When my family first moved to St. Marys a year ago this July, I had the opportunity to meet council member Reilly at a regular meeting of the Camden Roundtable. David greeted me warmly with a handshake and welcomed me to St. Marys. I could sense back then that he genuinely cared about his constituency and guiding our city forward.

My instincts proved to be right, as I have observed David's dedicated performance while following the city council's agenda ever since that time.

This has prompted me to review his biography published on the City of St. Marys website. It was no surprise to me to find that David's lifetime achievements of professional, educational and service to community experience make him a "great fit" to represent the citizens of St. Marys.

We need David Reilly to continue the work of our city council. I urge everyone to get behind him and show your support in his re-election campaign to St. Marys City Council.

*Jeffrey Tebo  
 St. Marys*

### A thank you to first responders

Dear Editor,  
 On July 9, I had the misfortune of falling and dislocating my left arm. The first-responder EMTs arrived shortly after we called 911.

They were very professional and immediately went into action. They were very sympathetic for me and my horrific pain.

The ambulance crew was also very professional and



drove me to the Southeast Georgia Health System's emergency room where I was also treated immediately with the same professional care as possible.

If you have never had to call 911, I think you would be pleasantly surprised to know these individuals are all very caring and well trained.

So thank you to each of them for my 911 call and how well I was treated that day.

*Marlene Rapp  
 Kingsland*

### Judge nominees will affect country for many years

Dear Editor,  
 I am responding to a letter from July 28 ("A high minimum wage can boost sales tax revenue"). I don't think that most people know that their state can raise the minimum wage in their state. It does not need to be done on the federal level.

I am a firm believer in less federal control and leaving more decisions to be decided on the state level. Each state should decide their minimum wage requirements based on what the cost of living is in each state. For example, it is more expensive to live in New York

than Georgia. So, of course, New York's minimum wage should be higher than ours.

On another topic in this election: Supreme Court judges. I am basing my vote strictly on who I feel will be the right person to put the right people in the Supreme Court. If you want liberal court justices, then your vote would be for Hillary. Don't vote for her just because she is a woman. Look at all the issues that are important to you and see where both candidates stand on those issues. Then make your decision.

Personally, my main issue is the Supreme Court. This will not only affect myself but also my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I want conservative justices. So my vote is Trump.

Again, decide what is important to you. Do your research on the candidates and make your decision. Do not rely on the media. Most of them are biased on one candidate or another.

*Laury Simms  
 St. Marys*

### Thank you for a great tournament

Dear Editor,  
 Hats off to the St. Marys Police Department for holding the magnificently successful third annual Cops

and Bobbers Fishing Tournament.

Our sincere thanks to the SMPD for this wonderful undertaking, involving almost 200 kids and innumerable hours of preparation by both the SMPD officers and staff and many volunteers.

This was an outstanding event for our community, and I am grateful to both the St. Marys Police Department and to the many individuals who made it happen. We look forward to a repeat next year.

*Rita Bruce  
 St. Marys*

### Rassi intends to run for council

Dear Editor,  
 After considerable introspection and conversations with my fellow citizens and my family, I am honored to announce that I am running for a seat on St. Marys City Council.

I have enjoyed my leadership roles with the Camden Wildcat Quarterback Club — as president of one of the best high school football programs in the country — these past four years. Serving in our community as distinguished lieutenant governor and distinguished president of the Kiwanis Club in St.

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## A word on progress and opportunity

**S**ome citizens refer to them as the towers and others call them the unsightly stacks. By whatever name, St. Marys residents have been waiting for more than a decade for the last remnants of the former mill site to be cleared for future use.

The good news is that the four structures are in the process of being demolished and should be completely dismantled by the end of the month! It is worth a drive by to see the continuing change in that section of our city. Other work continues on the Osborne Street area cleanup and designs for a fountain and a monument sign welcoming visitors to historic St. Marys are in the engineering development stage.

To those who have asked, there is no city money being expended for this site improvement and beautification project. The trustee of the former mill site is financing these improvements in accordance with an agreement reached with the city and the prospective buyer. It is another sign that we are a city moving forward to enhance and improve our blighted areas — a critical step in attracting the kind of



**John Morrissey**  
 Guest columnist

commerce we want to locate here.

Another sign of progress has been the completion of the "interim fix" to the Exit 1 connection to Haddock Road. Since its construction, this has been a dangerous intersection with insufficient turning space for semis and congestion that caused motorists anxious moments at the stop light.

We were finally able to obtain agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for a temporary improvement knowing that our long-term goal was not immediately feasible. I have often stated that the temporary fix is not the desired final result. We will continue lobbying Atlanta and working with the De-

partment of Transportation officials to reach our ultimate objective of completely redesigning Exit 1.

Nine months into the master planning process, the steering committee is beginning to see clear trends emerging in what our residents and business owners see as priorities as we look toward a 10-year master plan. One of the significant responses by citizens regarding the city's service delivery was the very positive feeling about our police and fire service. They scored high on everyone's chart.

One of the things businesses believe we can do better relates to certain aspects of ordinances and zoning issues. As a part of the process, the committee is bringing in a nationally recognized expert in this field to assist with possible revisions. Public comment will be accepted at two sessions Aug. 23. One is slated for 1 to 3 p.m. and the second at 5:30 p.m. Please check the city website, [www.stmarysga.gov](http://www.stmarysga.gov), for times and location. I would encourage anyone with questions or concerns about ordinances and zoning to attend.

While we are still in the "high days" of summer en-

joying the heat and humidity of coastal Georgia, both traditional and social media keep reminding us that the November elections are just around the corner. This is a reminder that we will have a county and City of St. Marys election in November.

The county candidates are already in place as a result of the partisan primaries in May. The city election is nonpartisan with only one week for candidates to qualify beginning Aug. 15. Those wishing to be a candidate for one of the open city governing posts will need to complete the necessary paperwork with the city clerk that week.

The role of a public servant can be both rewarding and challenging as they must strive to address the reasonable wants and needs of the citizens while also judiciously expending hard-earned taxpayer dollars. For those who choose to seek public office, it is my sincere hope that their campaigns will be civil, respectful and focused on the people they wish to serve.

John Morrissey is the mayor of St. Marys. He can be contacted at [john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov](mailto:john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov) or (912) 510-4041.