

Protect the Mahomet Aquifer!

champaign
county
HEALTH CARE
CONSUMERS



February 4, 2016

Dear Friends,

Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) needs your help and support in our ongoing efforts to protect the Mahomet Aquifer from the threat of toxic contamination. Protecting the Mahomet Aquifer is of the greatest importance because the Aquifer is our only source of water. *When you turn on your faucet, you are getting water from the Mahomet Aquifer.*

Despite recent significant victories in the effort to protect the Mahomet Aquifer from toxic waste, drinking water for more than 750,000 residents in 14 counties in Central Illinois is still under threat of contamination from toxic chemicals because of the greed of a single corporation – PDC/AREA Disposal, which owns the Clinton Landfill that sits above the Mahomet Aquifer.

The recent victories achieved as a result of citizen involvement and local, state and federal government action have led to permanently halting Clinton Landfill's efforts to solicit certain types of toxic waste, such as Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) wastes. However, Clinton Landfill is now pivoting and seeking other waste streams that, while toxic, are allowed to go into municipal waste landfills.

Current laws and regulations in the State of Illinois are inadequate to protect the Aquifer from the Landfill's business practices – therefore, citizen action is needed to ensure that new protective legislation is enacted in order to create a permanent solution to protect the Mahomet Aquifer from the threat posed by landfill practices.

Please read on for more information and to learn what you can do to help.

About the Mahomet Aquifer – Our Sole Source of Water

The Mahomet Aquifer is an ancient underground repository of pure water that lies below the fields of Central Illinois. The aquifer was formed at the end of the last Ice Age when the retreating glacial formations began to melt, depositing large amounts of sand, gravel, and water in a large valley formation called the Mahomet Bedrock Valley. Over 120 communities in 14 counties rely on the Mahomet Aquifer's water for their drinking, cleaning, agricultural, and industrial needs. About 750,000 people use an average of 57 million gallons of aquifer water per day, just for drinking alone.

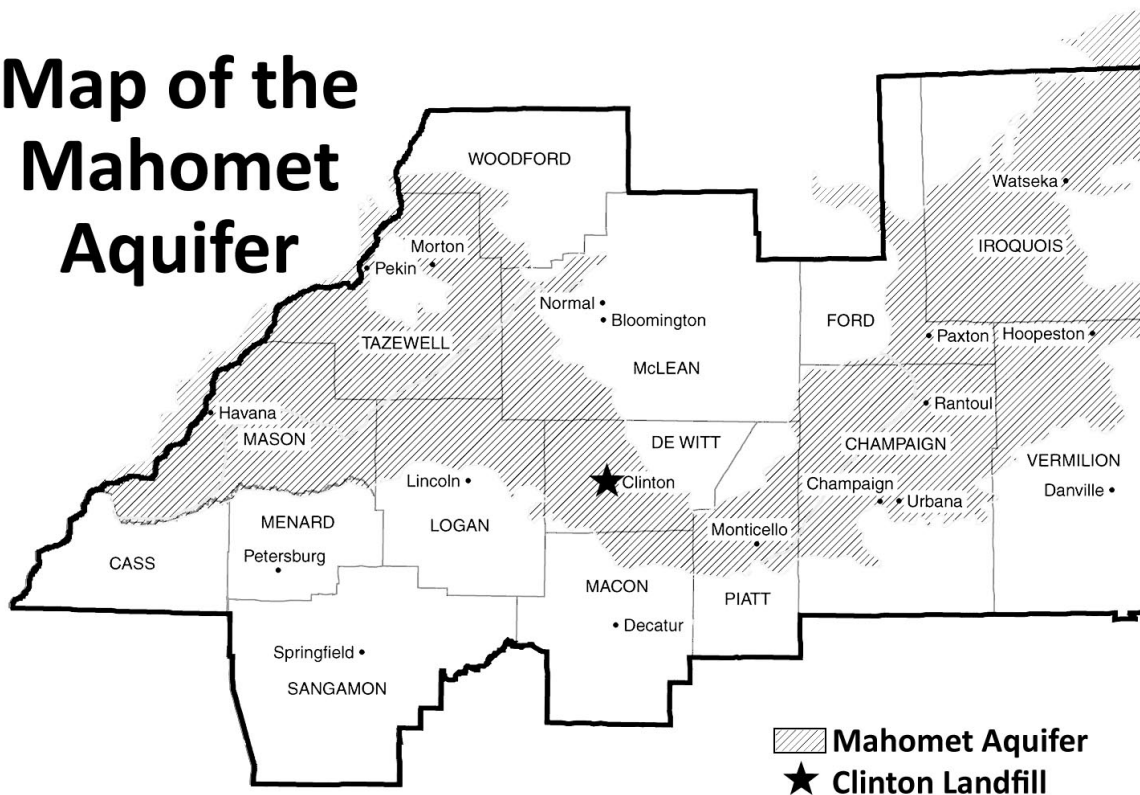


In recognition of its importance as our only viable source of water, the U.S. EPA granted federal Sole Source designation to the Mahomet Aquifer in the spring of 2015. The Mahomet Aquifer is the only aquifer in the state of Illinois to have this designation. Sole Source designation was a tremendous victory in the efforts to protect the Aquifer, and provides an important platform for enacting protective state laws.

PDC/AREA Disposal Company's Clinton Landfill and toxic waste

Peoria Disposal Company (PDC/AREA) owns the Clinton Landfill, located just outside of Clinton, IL in DeWitt County. *The Landfill sits immediately above the Mahomet Aquifer.* The landfill has historically stored

Map of the Mahomet Aquifer



municipal and household waste collected by local waste haulers (including PDC/AREA Disposal Company).

Clinton Landfill's business model for making enormous profits involved developing a "Chemical Waste" unit in order to receive toxic MGP and PCB wastes. The "Chemical Waste" unit is just a section of Clinton Landfill that has some liners in it. There is no official designation of "chemical waste unit," and in fact, the entire Clinton Landfill is classified as a municipal waste landfill.

Nonetheless, Clinton Landfill succeeded in getting permits for toxic MGP and PCB waste from the IL EPA. Between 2011 and August 2014, Clinton Landfill received over 30,000 tons of MGP waste, but had been awaiting final approval from the US EPA to receive PCB waste.

Thankfully, as a result of citizen and government action, no PCB waste was ultimately permitted, and no further MGP waste is permitted at Clinton Landfill.

Important victories in the struggle to end dumping of toxic waste at Clinton Landfill

A chain-reaction of important victories in the effort to prevent toxic waste from being dumped at the Clinton Landfill took place over the last couple of years, as a result of actions by citizens, local governments, and elected officials.

Here is a summary of the victories:

- Public hearings for SSA designation have record turnouts – Spring 2014;
- Gov. Quinn and IL EPA rescind the permit for PCBs at Clinton Landfill – July 2014;
- Gov. Quinn and IL EPA rescind the permit for MGPs at Clinton Landfill and call for immediate halt in dumping anymore MGP waste – August 2014;
- US EPA declines to move forward with Clinton Landfill's application for PCBs - Aug. 2014;
- Voter referenda in DeWitt and Piatt counties expressing opposition to toxic waste in Clinton Landfill pass overwhelmingly with 90% and 94% majorities, respectively – November 2014;
- Rep. Carol Ammons's HB 1326 / Sen. Scott Bennett's SB 1698 banning toxic MGP waste in municipal

- waste landfills pass in the state legislature in spring 2015 and are signed into law – August 2015;
- Mahomet Aquifer receives federal Sole Source Aquifer designation by US EPA – March 2015;
- Community Meeting held in Champaign where local and state elected officials declare their commitment to create and pass legislation to protect Aquifer from landfill contamination – September 2014;
- As part of a Consent Decree settlement between local government coalition and Clinton Landfill, the Landfill agrees to never seek toxic MGP and PCB waste streams. However, settlement allows Clinton Landfill to leave over 30,000 tons of MGP waste in place – October 2014.

These victories are important, foundational victories for permanently protecting the Mahomet Aquifer from toxic contamination from landfill waste. Federal Sole Source designation for the Mahomet Aquifer makes possible new state legislation that can bring further protections to the Aquifer, given its special status.

Why more action is needed

Despite these important victories, the fact remains that there is a significant lack of regulations, oversight, and laws dealing with landfills. Landfills have very minimal monitoring for environmental hazard, and there is very little transparency about what kind of waste is going into landfills.

Additionally, there are many forms of toxic waste that are not declared as “hazardous” and are currently permitted to go into municipal waste landfills, such as Clinton Landfill. And, in fact, Clinton Landfill, in order to make up for the lost revenue from MGP and PCB waste, has pivoted its business model and is actively seeking to become a major repository of coal combustion waste, which is toxic and may pose a threat to the Mahomet Aquifer.

Clinton Landfill owner does not believe Mahomet Aquifer is more important than other aquifers

In a stunning display of ignorance and arrogance, Clinton Landfill’s vice president and chief operating officer, Chris Coulter, is unwilling to recognize the importance of the Mahomet Aquifer as the only viable source of water for 14 counties, despite the US EPA Sole Source designation.

In an interview with WILL-AM 580 radio, Coulter said, *“One aquifer isn’t more important than another aquifer; they’re all equally important.”* Coulter’s family owns the Coulter Companies, which owns the Clinton Landfill and other landfills in central Illinois, and the Peoria Disposal and Area Disposal companies (PDC/ AREA Disposal).

Chris Coulter is wrong. And that makes Clinton Landfill’s business practices and plans dangerous. While we should strive to protect our natural resources, the Mahomet Aquifer is precious and essential. If it becomes contaminated, no amount of bottled water or other sources of water can replace it.

We CAN win this fight to protect our Aquifer, and you can help – take action now!

In order to protect our Sole Source Mahomet Aquifer from the threats posed by landfills – and especially Clinton Landfill – we need to work on multiple strategies and fronts. In order for us to succeed in any effort, we need as much citizen involvement as possible. We need to build an informed and active base of citizens who are committed to educating and informing others, and taking action to help protect the Mahomet Aquifer, including supporting legislative initiatives.

Our long-term efforts to protect the Mahomet Aquifer will come in the form of organizing to support new legislation that would require:

- Better monitoring of landfills located above a Sole Source Aquifer;
- The State to maintain a directory of all landfills – whether active or inactive;
- Greater transparency and oversight of waste going into municipal waste landfills;
- Increased monitoring at landfills for environmental contamination;
- A ban on any new or expanded landfills above a Sole Source Aquifer; and,
- Ban coal combustion waste from municipal waste landfills.

You can help by filling out the enclosed blue pledge form and taking these actions:

1. Help spread the word. Share our information and use e-mail and social media to help inform your contacts. "Like" us on Facebook. "Follow" us on Twitter.
2. Agree to support legislation to protect the Mahomet Aquifer. We will let you know when it is time to take action. Taking action may come in the form of sending an e-mail, making a phone call, signing a petition, or submitting a witness slip to a state House or Senate committee in support of a bill to protect the Mahomet Aquifer. We will provide timely information and instructions.
3. Join or support the boycott of AREA Disposal, the company that owns Clinton Landfill. CCHCC and the members of the multi-county coalition that are working together to protect the Mahomet Aquifer, are calling for a boycott of AREA Disposal. The purpose of the boycott is to let AREA Disposal know that our communities do not approve of Clinton Landfill's business practices and the threats these pose to the Mahomet Aquifer, and we will not help enrich a company that is so willing to threaten our environmental and public health in order to benefit its bottom line. If AREA Disposal (PDC/AREA) or Klean Way (owned by AREA) is your garbage hauler, please consider changing hauling companies. CCHCC can provide you with information about alternative haulers.
4. Make a contribution to support CCHCC's work to protect the Mahomet Aquifer. This work requires massive outreach efforts, including the costs of materials and staff time. It also requires a long-term commitment by our organization.

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Protect the Mahomet Aquifer!

Thank you for your support and your involvement!

There is no greater environmental or public health threat facing Central Illinois than the possible toxic contamination of the Mahomet Aquifer. To take action to protect the Mahomet Aquifer, please fill out the enclosed blue Pledge Sheet and return it to CCHCC in the enclosed self-addressed postage-paid envelope. *Thank you for your support and ongoing involvement as we work to create a way to permanently protect the Mahomet Aquifer!*

Sincerely,

Claudia Lennhoff

Claudia Lennhoff, *Executive Director*

*P.S. Your contribution is tax-deductible
Thank you for your support!*

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