

# DOING IT RIGHT II

## JOB CREATION THROUGH COLSTRIP CLEANUP

### Thorough cleanup is a bridge to the future



**W**ith the pending retirement of Colstrip Units 1 & 2, it's critical that the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) require a cleanup strategy that creates a bridge to Colstrip's future and repairs the groundwater for present and future generations.

Good cleanup requires a "high and dry" approach. This involves digging up — or excavating — ash ponds that are in contact with the groundwater, fully dewatering them to prevent future contamination, and transporting the remaining coal ash to a dry location high above the aquifer ("high and dry").

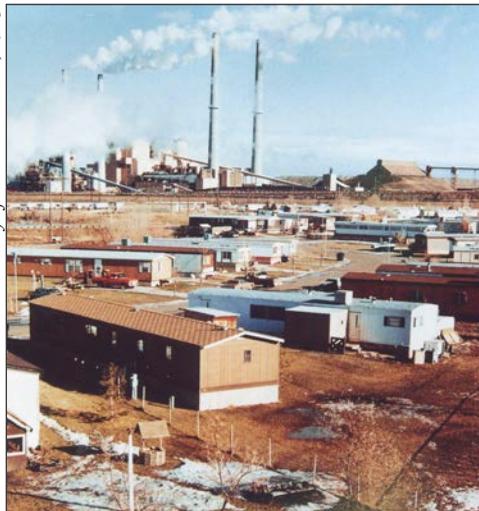
A "high and dry" cleanup plan would create hundreds of jobs and permanently halt groundwater pollution. The plant's owner-operator, Talen Energy, is proposing a cleanup plan that would employ fewer than 100 workers while allowing groundwater pollution to re-emerge down the road.

### Powering communities since 1976

**T**he Colstrip Power Plant produces power for 4.5 million homes across the Northwest and has been operating since 1976. More than 800 full-time workers are employed at the plant and neighboring Rosebud Mine. With the pending retirement of Units 1 & 2, an estimated job loss of 233-289 positions is expected by 2022.

At over 837 acres, Colstrip's ash pond complex is one of the largest in the nation. The Montana DEQ is responsible for approving a long-term plan to address the 500,000 gallons of polluted water that leak from the ponds each day. The DEQ's decision on what kind of cleanup to require will impact ranchers, Colstrip's workforce, and taxpayers around the state.

*Photo: Courtesy of David T. Hanson, 1985*



**RESPONSIBLE CLEANUP IS A COMMON-SENSE SOLUTION FOR RANCHERS, COLSTRIP'S WORKFORCE, AND TAXPAYERS AROUND THE STATE.**

# A solution that creates jobs and repairs groundwater

In 2018, a case study on coal ash cleanup projects across the United States revealed that removing (excavating) coal ash and dewatering ash ponds that are above the water table is a proven method to stop contamination quickly and permanently. This “high and dry” approach is the basis for the “Doing it Right” proposal below.

## Cleanup Alternatives

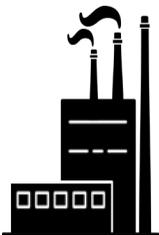
### “Doing it Right” Proposal:

- Full dewatering and excavation of coal ash (“high and dry”) at Units 1 & 2 ponds and the Plant Site
- Aggressive pond and soil dewatering and capping at Units 3 & 4 (EHP)
- Groundwater treatment

### Talen’s Proposal:

- Limited pond dewatering
- Allow some ponds to drain into the aquifer
- Cap-in-place closure for ALL ponds
- Groundwater treatment

## How many jobs?



An **estimated job loss of 233-289 positions is expected** when Colstrip Units 1 & 2 retire this year (2019). “Doing it Right” would create an average of 218 full-time jobs in the first ten years of cleanup, more than twice the number of jobs estimated in Talen’s Proposal.

CURRENT JOBS  
(Units 1 & 2)

~250

DOING IT  
RIGHT

~218

TALEN’S  
PROPOSAL

~92

NUMBER OF JOBS

Cleanup Approach	Yearly Direct Jobs* (2020-2029)	Yearly Direct Jobs* (2030-2069)
Talen’s Proposal	91.6	39.5
“Doing it Right”	218.2	66.4

\*This table refers to the average number of yearly, full-time equivalent jobs. For a more detailed breakdown of this data, download the full *Doing it Right II: Job creation through Colstrip cleanup* report by visiting [www.northernplains.org/colstrip-jobs-study-2/](http://www.northernplains.org/colstrip-jobs-study-2/).

## “Doing it Right” reduces risk to livestock

Coal ash contains heavy metals and contaminants that are dangerous to **humans, wildlife, and livestock**. Ranchers pay close attention to sulfate levels in the region’s groundwater as they cause polioencephalomalacia (or “brain softening”) in cattle when consumed in high doses (above 3,000 ppm).

In 2018, Talen Energy reported that Colstrip’s ash ponds contain average sulfate levels of 30,000 ppm — **ten times higher** than those considered **fatal to livestock**.

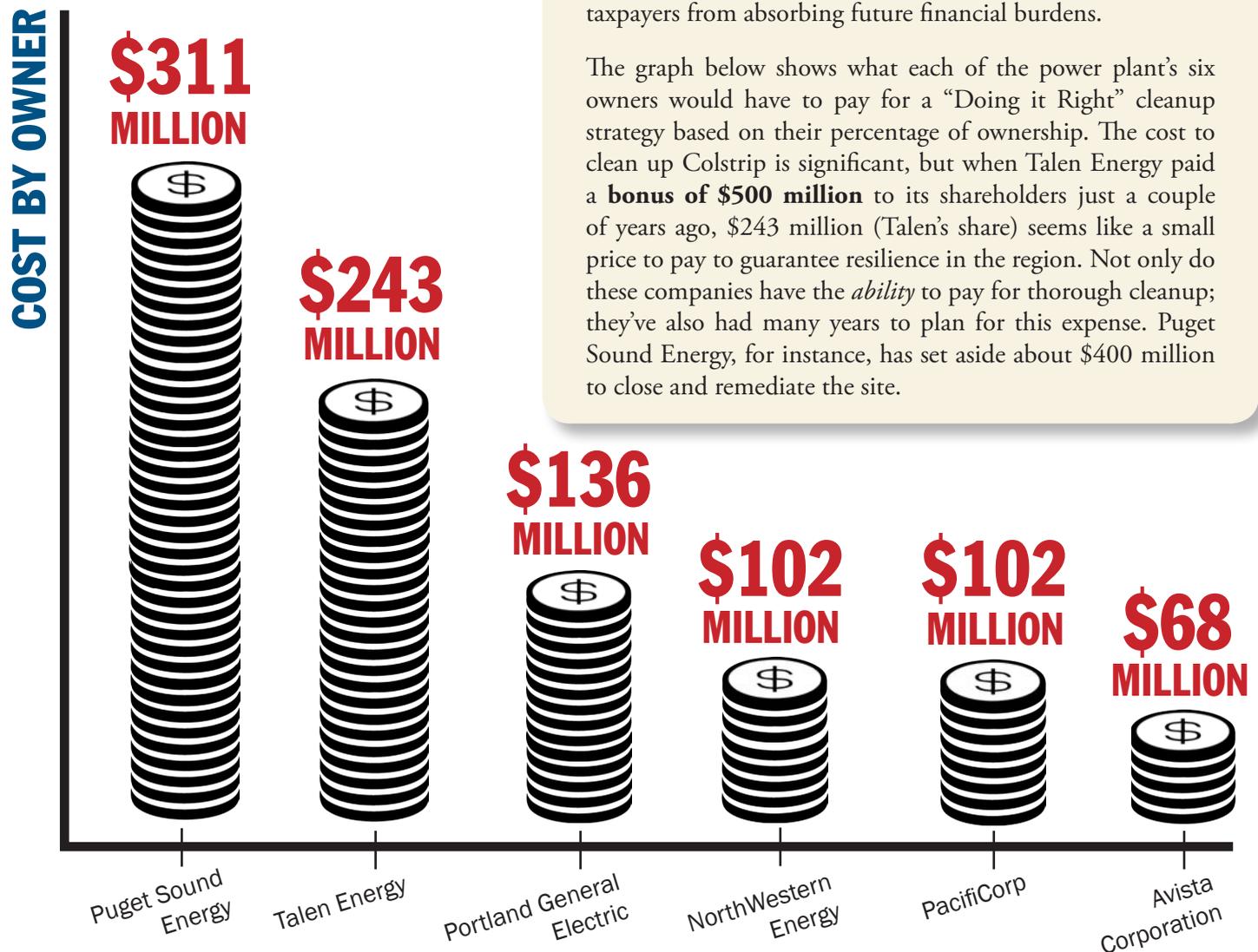
Talen’s “cap-in-place” proposal would leave these contaminants in contact with the groundwater, exposing livestock and humans to dangerous levels of these toxins.



## How much will cleanup cost... and who will pay for it?

With an estimated cost of \$925 million, “Doing it Right” is the best strategy for permanently halting groundwater contamination and protecting taxpayers from absorbing future financial burdens.

The graph below shows what each of the power plant’s six owners would have to pay for a “Doing it Right” cleanup strategy based on their percentage of ownership. The cost to clean up Colstrip is significant, but when Talen Energy paid a **bonus of \$500 million** to its shareholders just a couple of years ago, \$243 million (Talen’s share) seems like a small price to pay to guarantee resilience in the region. Not only do these companies have the *ability* to pay for thorough cleanup; they’ve also had many years to plan for this expense. Puget Sound Energy, for instance, has set aside about \$400 million to close and remediate the site.





220 S. 27th Street, Suite A  
Billings, MT 59101  
Tel: (406) 248-1154

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## ROSEBUD COUNTY ROOTS RUN DEEP...



**F**or 40 years, Northern Plains members have raised the issue of ash pond leakage in Rosebud County and the surrounding areas. These members come from all walks of life — agriculture producers who rely on the region's aquifer, skilled workers who want to create opportunity for their communities, everyday Montanans concerned about what lies ahead for their children and grandchildren.

After years of standing up for the health and vitality of this region, Rosebud County residents deserve a cleanup done right.

