

COAL ASH STORIES

DO-IT-YOURSELF
SCREENING GUIDE 

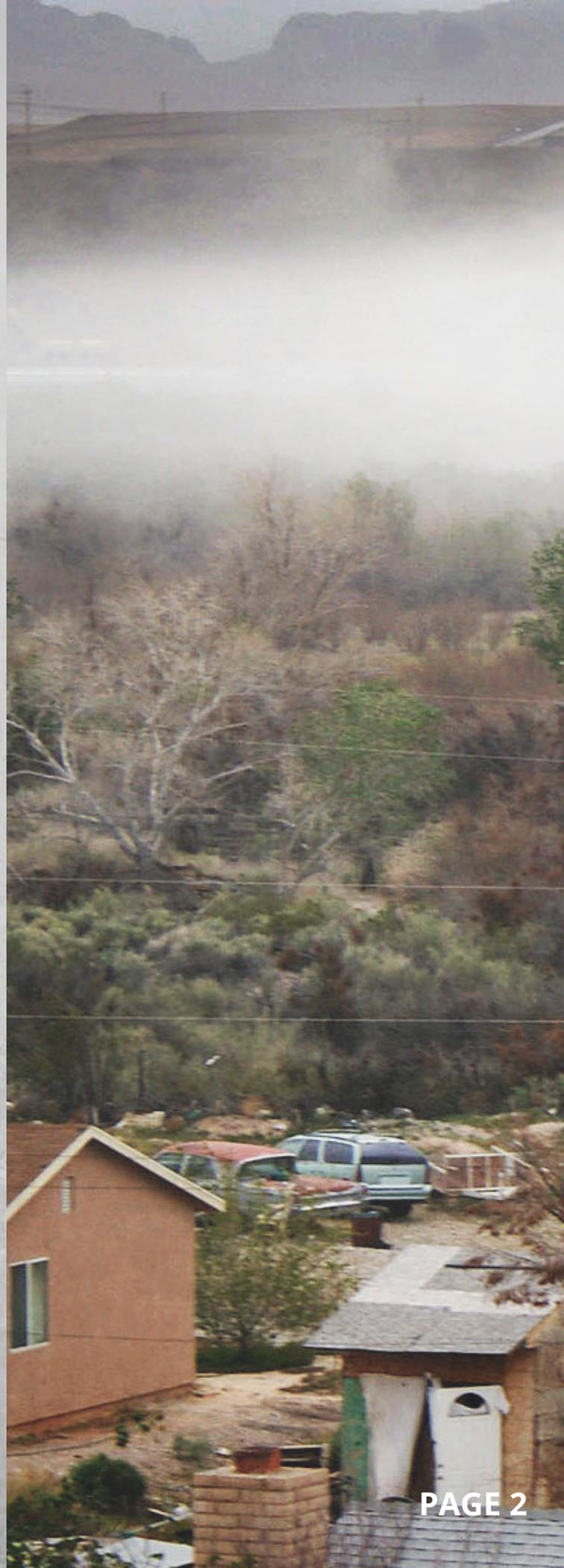
WORKING FILMS 

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT:

This guide is designed to assist you in planning screening events in neighborhoods, community groups, non-profits, schools, faith-based organizations and other venues to propel your audience to think critically and to take meaningful action on coal ash.

Contents:

About Coal Ash Stories.....	3
Planning your screening.....	4
Make your event media friendly.....	10
Discussion guide.....	11



ABOUT COAL ASH STORIES:

Coal Ash Stories is a compilation of four short films that illustrate the public health concerns, policy issues, and ways communities are responding to this toxic waste. The series is informing residents and drawing attention to the toxic impact of coal ash on communities. We're using Coal Ash Stories to engage the public and increase the demand for stricter regulation of storage facilities and cleanup of past spills.

ABOUT EACH FILM:

From The Ashes (excerpt): This film captures Americans in communities across the country as they wrestle with the legacy of the coal industry and what its future should be under the Trump Administration. The film presents compelling and often heartbreaking stories about what's at stake for our economy, health, and climate.



An Ill Wind: The Moapa River Indian Reservation, tribal home of the Moapa Band of Paiutes, sits about 30 miles north of Las Vegas and about 300 yards from the coal ash ponds and landfills of the Reid Gardner Power Station. If the conditions are just wrong, coal ash picks up and moves across the desert like a toxic sandstorm.



Little Blue: The Little Blue Run coal ash impoundment, built in 1975, is the largest unlined coal ash pond in the United States, spanning two states and bordering a third. On the West Virginia side of the impoundment, the grounds of homes are inundated with coal ash-contaminated water.



Uniontown (excerpt): "Uniontown" weaves together the untold narratives of residents in Uniontown, Alabama, a long-silenced southern city continuously polluted by industrial waste and acts of environmental racism. The film is an intimate look at the lives of modern day freedom fighters determined to clean up their town and preserve what's left of their natural resources.



PLANNING YOUR SCREENING

Here are some helpful hints for organizing a screening, from securing the location, to publicizing the event, planning a discussion afterwards and involving your audience in meaningful action.

1) Assess Your Community and the Issues

What are the major messages in Coal Ash Stories that connect to your community? Who's involved in the issue at hand, and who has a stake? What is already happening to address the problem? Considering these questions will help you determine:

- The aspects of the film and related issues to focus on when promoting and creating the program for your event;
- Whom to invite to the screening. Consider the following to identify your target audiences: Who has an interest in the topics at hand? Who has the power to make a decision or implement change to resolve the issue? Who can influence the decision makers? Who has been left out of the conversation but needs to be heard? Environmental issues like coal ash pollution often disproportionately impact low income communities and communities of color, make sure your event centers impacted communities.





2) Set Goals

What do you want to accomplish with this screening? What are your goals for the event? Do you want to take action, build membership, build alliances, pressure decision makers or raise funds? How can you help people do something meaningful or point them toward the most relevant resources? Answering these questions at the beginning will help make every step of the way easier and more effective.

3) Partner Up!

Consider partnering with other individuals or organizations to make your event more dynamic, split the workload and increase the number of attendees and diversity of the audience. Your partners can also extend the reach of your get-the-word-out efforts. Be sure to reach out to people directly affected by the issues.

4) Sign Up — Register Your Event & Request the DVD

Be sure to request Coal Ash Stories by filling out the screening request form [here](#). After submitting your information, we will send you a confirmation email and mail you either a DVD or an online screener (depending on the format you need).



5) Choose A Location

Secure a venue for your screening that will be comfortable, have the right atmosphere and provide the basics. This could be your living room, a community center, a place of worship or even a park – you decide.

DON'T FORGET... If you need to reserve a space, try to contact the venue at least two months in advance and confirm your reservation within two weeks of the screening. Here's what you'll need:

- A television or projector with a screen large enough for everyone to see
- Speakers that provide plenty of volume
- An accessible entrance and amenities for all people, including those with disabilities
- Comfortable seating
- An information table for petitions, handouts and sign-up sheet for follow-up with attendees
- If you plan to provide snacks and drinks, make sure there is a place to set them up and that the venue permits refreshments

6) Get the Word Out

Below are a number of avenues you can use to leverage your networks and reach beyond your immediate circle:

- **Tell Your Friends.** Utilize listservs, flyers and social-networking sites to let folks know about the screening. Check out the Coal Ash Stories flyer template [here](#) & email your event info to amyers@workingfilms.org to get one. Also, consider making a Facebook event (template [here](#)).
- **Tell Your Allies.** Engage organizations or constituencies that you know will be interested, and ask them to cosponsor the screening event if you haven't already. Then, reach out to the larger public by placing notices in newspapers or community calendars (check out our community calendar template [here](#)) and forwarding notices to various email lists.
- **Tell Community Stakeholders.** Invite them face to face or over the phone. They could be potential speakers. Reach out to community leaders such as clergy or elected officials, a policy expert or an expert on the issues covered in Coal Ash Stories. Tell them why their participation is important, and ask them to preview the films so they can tailor their talk.
- **Tell the Press.** Contact a reporter who covers environmental issues in your community. Be in touch early on, let them know that your event is part of a national screening campaign, and give them the local angle: How do the issues raised in Coal Ash Stories resonate in the community? Why should your audience be passionate? What impact do you aim to have? (check out our press release template [here](#), and see more in the Make Your Screening Media-Friendly section, below.)

7) Come up with Agenda & Divide Roles

It's important to create an agenda and divide roles with your partners before the day of the screening. Keep your goals in mind when creating the agenda to ensure that it maximizes impact. Below is a sample agenda along with a list of common roles to assign before your screening.

SAMPLE AGENDA (total time: 1 1/2 hours)

- Arrive Early (at least 30 minutes before start time) Make sure your local team arrives early to set up and ensure everything is running smoothly.
- Start on time (no later than 10 mins. from posted time)
- Brief introduction to the film (5-10 mins.) Introduce the film and make a brief introduction of any speakers or guests that you want to recognize. Make sure the audience knows that the film will be followed by discussion and action, and encourage them to stick around. If the group is small enough, ask the audience to make very brief individual introductions. Tell them an ending time.
- Viewing of the film (33 mins).
- Discussion (30-45 mins.) This is a key part of the agenda. Coal Ash Stories is intentionally short to allow for enough time to dig into discussion and take action. Folks will likely have strong emotions about what they've seen and will want to reflect and find out what they can do to make a difference.
- Make sure that everyone who wants to speak has a chance, but keep the conversation flowing. If you'd like discussion tips & ideas please see "Discussion Guide" below.
- Take Action & Thanks (about 5-20 mins.) Sometimes the Take Action comes up organically in the discussion (ex: What can we do about coal ash?). If it doesn't come up naturally, be sure to take time to invite your audience to get involved in the issues and in your organization (if you represent one). At the end, be sure to thank everyone for their participation.

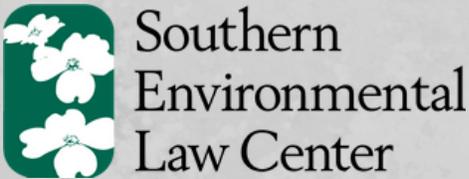
Common Roles

1. Someone to hand out materials, and welcome people as they enter the venue.
2. Someone to run a sign-in sheet to capture names, emails, and other info of attendees.
3. Someone to do a welcome before the film plays and say who will be speaking after.
4. Someone to take pictures throughout the event.
5. Someone to handle tech, or work with venue to make sure tech is good to go (basically just someone who can be a point person with the venue day-of).
6. Someone(s) to speak to audiences during Q&A, tell them how to get involved locally.



8) Host Screening & Take Action

Arrive early with your agenda and roles prepared. Try and stick to your agenda as much as possible and be sure to ask your audience to take action! If you or your organization is not actively involved in a local campaign please visit the following organizations for regional and national action ideas that you can share with your audience:



9) Report Back

During the event, take pictures, and video your audience's reaction to the film. Ask attendees how they liked the event and what they'd like to see next. Did the film change their understanding, raise their awareness or motivate them to take action on coal ash?

Pay attention to press representatives who attended and outlets that printed or aired stories. Save these! Share photos, video and press with your members and networks as well as on our [Screening Feedback Form](#) to show how the collective efforts around the film are making an impact. Your story may inspire others to replicate your efforts in their community.

THANKS!

We hope that this guide helps you to have a meaningful screening that makes an impact. Contact us if you have questions along the way: amyers@workingfilms.org.

MAKE YOUR SCREENING MEDIA-FRIENDLY

Use the tips below to catch the media's attention for your event and cause.

Things Reporters Can't Resist

Reporters need a story. There are certain activities, language and hooks that can grab their attention successfully. Make your pitch pop out of the stack of releases they receive each day. Here are some suggestions based on the book "Stop Global Warming Now" by author and activist Bill McKibben:

Court a Reporter. Ask to meet with the editor of a paper for 10 minutes in person. If they say yes, it is a worthwhile investment. If not, think about other ways that you can engage a reporter who covers a beat that includes the issues raised in the film you're planning to show.

Give your event a local angle. Think from a local perspective and reference the significance of the film's content to your community in your press release and other communication you have with media outlets.

Send pictures. Share images or videos to accompany your story. Is your event going to be photogenic? Can reporters view a clip of the film online in advance? Do you have any good quotes from important people about your event or the movie? Send these in (or as a supplement to) your press release.

What is new about the event? What are you planning to do about the issues the film raises that is the first, the best, the most recent or the most creative? Highlight these aspects of your screening event.

Is this a case of strange bedfellows, or the happy odd couple? Are people who normally aren't found together coming together around your screening? Is your event inspiring people to reach out and build coalitions across lines that usually divide them? Use this angle to gain press attention.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

1) Decide a format:

There are two main formats we recommend for Coal Ash Stories: A non-formal Q&A with 1-3 speakers and a sit down panel with 3-5 speakers. The Q&A model often results in more audience questions and interaction, whereas the panel model allows for more of a deep dive into the issue and discussions between panelists.

In deciding which format to pursue, consider the voices you'd like to feature (including those that are often left out of the conversation), the tone you'd like to set with your audience, and whether significant audience participation will help you reach your goals.

2) Moderators:

No matter which model you choose, be sure to find people who can lead the discussion, ask questions to the audience, and generally keep the conversation flowing. Perhaps this is one of the experts you're featuring and they can double task? Perhaps it's someone from your local organization?

3) Discussion Tips & Question ideas for the Moderator:

1. What are your initial thoughts/reactions after watching this film?
2. What/who are the key polluters of coal ash in your area?
3. In Coal Ash Stories, a variety of solutions are featured, including renewable energy, community organizing, and even having community champions run for office. Which of these tactics are being used in this community? Which of these tactics do we want to see in this community?
4. What are some personal experiences people have experienced here with coal ash pollution?
5. What are some actions audience members can take right now to confront coal ash in this community? How can they stay in the loop on long term efforts?

