

A STATEMENT/UPDATE FROM MAYOR GLASSER

Sept. 22, 2022

Here is an update on the Bridgeport Barge saga:

[Linked](#) is a story about the barge that ran aground off our coast after hitting the jetties in March 2021 and the resulting multi-ton coal ash spill in May 2021. This is part of a 12-part investigation by the Chicago Investigative Project within the graduate program at the Medill School at Northwestern University.

If you remove from the debate the looming question about why coal ash is considered non-hazardous waste by the EPA, there is still room for corrective measures IMO. With many agencies involved, all doing their jobs and abiding by lots of rules, I am currently unaware of any new rules, policies, or legislation to help deal with this kind of event in the future. I think we can do better. Channel 4 reported in May 2022 that, according to the Coast Guard, the cause of the grounding was a “lack of training/familiarity with the operation” by the tugboat crew as it maneuvered between the jetties.

Some of my concerns are these:

1. I am quoted in the article as expressing concern that we really should know more about what is passing through our Port. These shipments have been going to a private terminal where the coal ash is then trucked to a landfill in Georgia. The article sheds light on the economic benefits of continuing this practice. By resolution, Atlantic Beach asked Jacksonville to prohibit its transit through our waters.
2. I have previously addressed the Jacksonville Waterways Commission about the lack of an adequate public information strategy for spills of this kind, regardless of the EPA classification. In this case, the responsible party maintained a website, and DEP responded to calls, but this was lacking IMO. Especially in the days after the spill. I did my best to share information as I could, given that AB had no jurisdiction.
3. I have asked for any final report of the Waterways Commission. I have specifically asked about certifications of the mariners who tow these barges into the Port and any possible remedies. Finally, I am trying to stay in my lane. I won't even try to address how this material is treated after it arrives here and gets moved by land and water. Concerns about coal ash in our waterways, in landfills, and for reuse are certainly mounting in the court of public opinion and in environmental/scientific circles, and they deserve attention, but that is outside of my immediate area of responsibility with Atlantic Beachers and what happened off our coast.