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This paper investigates the largest flood of coal ash in United States history as an event at once monumental and insignificant. It traces affective forces generative of both the ash, and its invisibility. In the moment of rupture, the ash flowed out of a large holding pond in a spill of layered sediments – each layer of particulate a temporary resting place for a forceful trajectory of matter spurned into motion elsewhere in space and time. This paper takes up the atemporal matter of this coal ash flood to ask: out of what movements and connections was the ash formed? How did this particular landscape change to accommodate its accumulation? What trajectories flowed into the pond, and what hidden memories sat buried in its mass? Drawing on ethnographic and archival research, this paper weaves together juxtaposed scenes that form (some of) the backstory of this event, and invites a reconsideration of the practices of knowledge that helped condition it. (Text from author’s abstract)

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