

“Sallie’s Ashes” Documentary Shines Light on Alabama Toxic Coal Ash Threat at the Fairhope Film Festival on November 13, 2025

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MONTROSE, AL — Sallie’s Ashes, a documentary about the late Sallie Smith’s passion about Mobile Bay and the safe removal of a toxic coal ash pond, will debut in Alabama at the Fairhope Film Festival on November 13, 2025. At the Telluride Film Festival, this documentary was world premiered and is a nominee for the Critics Choice Documentary Awards 2025.

The Coal Ash Action Group (CAAG), founded in 2022 by the late Sallie Smith, continues to carry forward her vision: the safe removal of this massive toxic coal ash pond threatening the Mobile River, Mobile Bay, and the treasured Tensaw Delta—known as “America’s Amazon.”

At age 80, while facing terminal cancer, Sallie Smith rallied fellow Alabama grandmothers to take on one of the state’s most urgent environmental battles. Together, they formed CAAG to demand accountability from Alabama Power’s Plant Barry, where 21 million tons of coal ash—laden with carcinogens, neurotoxins, and other hazardous pollutants—sit in an unlined pond just 20 miles upstream from Mobile Bay.

Over the past two years, CAAG has:

- Delivered presentations to civic and environmental groups across Alabama
- Hosted community information tents at festivals and public events
- Participated in Environmental Protection Agency hearings
- Built a grassroots base of more than 1,500 petition signers and subscribers to their Move the Ash updates

Their work has drawn national attention. An interview with Alabama Public Radio’s Cori Yonge was picked up by National Public Radio, catching the ear of an Oscar- and Emmy-winning producer. That connection led to the creation of “Sallie’s Ashes,” a moving 40-minute documentary about Sallie Smith’s final months, in which she transformed personal struggle into a campaign for environmental justice. Although Sallie passed away on October 27, 2023, her spirit continues to inspire.

Additional film premieres and screenings include the Hawai’i International Film Festival, the Hamptons International Film Festival, the New Orleans Film Festival along with upcoming free community showings in partnership with The League of Women Voters Baldwin County and other organizations beginning in December.