



The Tennessee Valley Authority was responsible for a coal ash spill outside Knoxville that federal officials say is one of the worst environmental disasters of its kind, according to a U.S. District Court order issued Thursday.

Had the federal agency acted appropriately, the underlying failure of the north dike "would have been investigated, addressed, and potentially remedied before the catastrophic failure," said U.S. District Judge Thomas Varlan of the Eastern District of Tennessee.

The authority repeatedly sought to have the case dismissed.

A five-week trial happened September on whether the nation's largest public utility should be responsible for the spill that dumped more than 1 billion gallons of coal ash slurry from the Kingston Fossil Plant in East Tennessee into the Emory and Clinch rivers. The authority maintained its innocence. Thursday's decision lays the blame on TVA.

In a statement released after the ruling, TVA said it "remains committed to the full restoration of the community directly impacted by the spill, while being mindful of our responsibility to manage ratepayer dollars."

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