

BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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GROUP OPPOSES EXPANDED PERMIT FOR DUKE ENERGY PROGRESS Study Reveals Excessive Levels of Air Toxics

Today the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League released the results of its toxic air pollution study of the Duke Energy Progress electric generating plant in Hamlet, NC. The group also released its letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency asking the agency to reject the expanded air permit requested by the company and now under consideration by North Carolina's Division of Air Quality.

The draft permit, if approved, would allow a 36% expansion of the plant and higher levels of air pollution including more particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfuric acid, ammonia, benzene and formaldehyde. These air toxins are known to cause serious and incapacitating illness.

Louis Zeller, author of the study, said, "This fossil-fuel plant already contaminates the community and expansion would make the problems worse." Zeller's study indicates the level of formaldehyde would be above NC air pollution limits up to two miles from the plant when burning natural gas. He added, "Why does Duke Energy Progress want to add two polluting dinosaurs to its Jurassic Park-style energy facility?"

The negative impacts of the plant could also affect a wider area. Kate Dunnagan, community organizer for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said, "The permit would substantially increase the amount of natural gas being piped into the

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facility. This gas could be produced by hydraulic fracturing, a dangerous process which will make huge profits and pass along expenses to ratepayers and landowners.

Utilizing an EPA-developed computer program, Zeller determined that if the permit is approved, excessive levels of cancer-causing benzene would extend six miles from the plant. Also, Duke Energy Progress will not seek cost recovery under NC Clean Smokestacks Act and has requested that state emission limits for the two new combustion turbines be removed from the permit. The spreadsheet employed in this study was based on the ISCST3 computer model and developed by the US Environmental Protection Agency. It calculates the worst case calculations from point, area and volume sources.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League submitted this information to the EPA and the North Carolina Division of Air Quality, and other information during the state's public comment period. These letters and the new study are available on the group's website located at www.BREDL.org. The statewide group worked to halt a nuclear waste dump in Richmond County in the 1990s and remains in contact with residents in the area.

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