



BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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The LEAGUE LINE

SPECIAL 30th Anniversary Edition: Spring 2014

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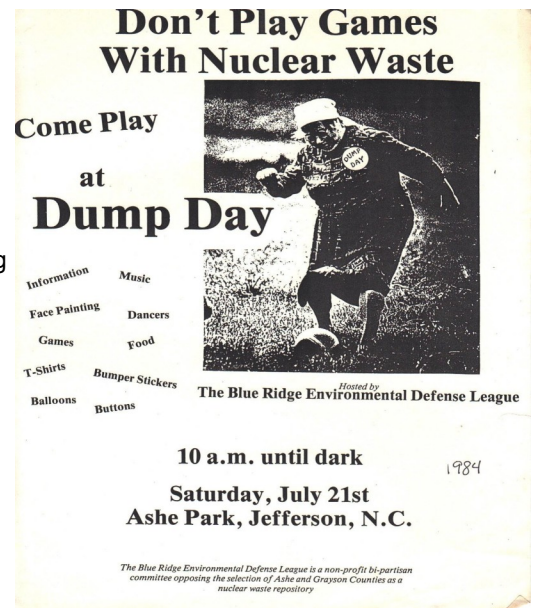
BREDL: In the Beginning

By Mark Barker, BREDL Southwest Virginia Vice President

In March of 1984, fifty citizens of Ashe and Watauga Counties, North Carolina met in the Mission House of Holy Trinity Church in Glendale Springs. Teachers and farmers, homemakers and merchants listened to the report of the Episcopal Church Women on the U.S. Department of Energy's siting search for a high-level nuclear waste dump in the rain-rich east. Recognizing that the North Carolina mountains were a region at risk, the assembled group organized as the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) to protect their own backyard and those of other threatened rural communities. Original research, public education, and community organizing were the cornerstones of our early all-volunteer organization.

At the BREDL annual retreat in Asheboro January 8 - 10, 1993, BREDL board members planned a new structure for its organization. Recognizing communications and networking as areas for improvement, the board revised its structure to encourage regional leadership and organization. This structure is still in use today.

In 1984, BREDL centered on organizing in the mountains of North Carolina, held its first public meeting on May 3rd at the Ashe County courthouse, and gained a reputation for knowledge of a national issue. By 1985 the focus had expanded to all of NC. In 1986 came our first foundation grant and hiring of staff. By 1987, the southeast conference we organized in Maryville, Tennessee put BREDL on the national map with the founding of the Southern Environmental Network. Pete Hill, the grey-bearded gent in the photo, was not only central to strategy development at the Maryville conference, his methods remain a guide for all we do today.



BREDL's 1993 annual retreat held at Asheboro's Camp Mundo Vista in January, 1993. At the time, it was BREDL's biggest board ever.

BREDL: Today

Coal Ash Disaster on the Dan

by Louis Zeller

The coal ash eruption into the Dan River on February 2, 2014 placed North Carolina at the center of a national debate. Within days elected officials and advocacy groups began calling for removal of the ash from plant sites and transport to double-lined landfills. Certainly, the situation calls for action; however, landfills were never

designed for the hazards presented by coal ash. Coal ash, because of its toxic nature, requires a specialized solution to prevent the spread of heavy metals and other compounds into the air, soil and water.

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BREDL Logos

BREDL's original nuclear waste logo first appeared in 1984 in the Skyland Post. As BREDL's scope expanded to reach other kinds of issues, this logo was eventually replaced. In the 1990's, BREDL adopted an image designed by founding co-president, Susan Sharpe, which appeared for several years in the Environmental Times. The current logo was selected from a design contest by students at ASU in 1987, and was revised in 2000, and again in 2014 for the thirtieth anniversary. The theme of clean water has been central to each BREDL logo, and the circle is representative of the earth, and unity.



BREDL Executive Committee Board Members Through the Years

Since its founding on March 15, 1984, BREDL's Board of Directors has had scores of dedicated members who donated their time and effort in service to the organization. Within the board, the Executive Committee has special responsibility. It has evolved over the years but has always reflected the diversity and unity of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, our greatest strengths. Members of the executive committee are listed below chronologically, with the dates that they joined. Some have continued to serve for many years, providing continuity, wisdom and the invaluable benefit of experience. Without them, we would not be who we are today. **Thank you.**

1984: Bernard Goss, Janet Marsh, Linda Taylor, Truiett Weaver, Patty Wheeler, Lynn Worth, Bill Mock, Bettie Pendergraft, Bill Francis, Catherine Dungan, Joan Mock, Marea Weaver, and Michael Dungan

1986: Perry Struss, Virginia McLeod

1989: Elmer Hall

1992: Tony Napoli, Susan Sharpe, Rick Maas, Mike Arnold

1993: Tom Mathis, Marion Wallin, Ann Evans, Richard Crowe

1994: James A. Johnson, Sam Tesh, Marion Wallin, Pam Jopson, Carol Bradley-West, Jean Colston, Claude Ward, Fred Dye

1995: Betty Tesh, Marge Cahill, Regina Tatum

2000: Mark Barker

2004: Elizabeth O'Nan, Daisy O'Nan

2009: Pat Hill

2010: Sandy Kurtz

2012: Rev. Willie Tomlin

Janet Marsh, Strategic Advisor

BREDL Staff Members Through the Years

In 1986, the League hired its first paid staff. Our practice has been the hiring of people already working as volunteers in their own communities. Almost all have been community organizers, learning the craft by doing. The following staff members have worked for BREDL through the decades, contributing their strengths, talents, energy, and abilities to each campaign. The list indicates the beginning of their respective employment periods and their office locations.

1986: Janet Marsh, Pat Fournier, Glendale Springs NC

1986: Sandy Adair, Boone NC; Virginia Hunt, Spruce Pine NC; Bob Gessner, Mars Hill NC; Lou Zeller, Marshall NC

1988: Ginny Lindsay, Jefferson NC

1990: Denise Lee, Wadesboro NC

1992: Therese Vick, Rich Square NC

1994: Carol Bradley-West, Cherokee NC

1997: Claude Ward, Burgaw NC

2000: Don Moniak, Columbia SC; Catherine Mitchell, Charlotte NC

2001: David Mickey, Winston-Salem NC

2002: Charles Utley, Augusta GA

2003: Bonnie Ward, Burgaw NC

2007: Sue Dayton, Saxapahaw NC

2009: Ann Rogers, Roanoke VA

2009: Beverly Kerr, Graham NC

2011: Therese Vick, Raleigh NC

2013: Kate Dunnagan, Greensboro NC

2013: Cary Rodgers, Peachland NC

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2014 BREDL Board Executive Committee

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Sam Tesh

Eastern North Carolina Vice President

Pat Hill

Western North Carolina Vice President

Elizabeth O'Nan

Virginia Vice President

Mark Barker

Tennessee/Alabama Vice President

Sandy Kurtz

Georgia Vice President

Rev. W.B. Tomlin

Youth Representative

Daisy O'Nan

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Executive Director

Louis Zeller

Associate Director / Communications Coordinator

Beverly Kerr

Environmental Justice Campaign Director

Rev. Charles Utley

Sustainable Economic Development Coordinator

Therese Vick

Development Director

Kate Dunnagan

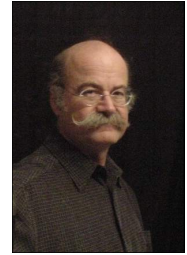
NC Environmental Justice Coordinator

Pastor Cary Rodgers

LEAGUE LINE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 2014

Louis A. Zeller, Executive Director



Go not where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

When you hear someone is “blistering the air,” you know something is wrong, and someone is telling it in no uncertain terms. To speak out about an act or a condition which cannot be ignored is to confront injustice.

Today, whole communities are blistering the air because millions of gallons of coal ash waste have erupted into the river, or a profit-seeking company plans to burn the county’s garbage to generate electricity, or farmers are forced into a natural gas pooling scheme, or the local landfill is the target for someone else’s trash, or a nuclear industry is poisoning the planet. People want to know why this is happening, and who is minding the store. Too often, the answer is: no one, no government agency, no county official, and no public policy group.

This is the role for which the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was created. Because no one else we knew had the wherewithal to dig into reams of government documents and technical papers about radioactive waste, we did it on our own. And we used what we learned to organize ourselves, frame the debate, galvanize public opinion and shift the balance of power back to the community. Today, thirty years later, Blue Ridge continues to organize, strategize and optimize community power wherever we go.

In this special issue of the *League Line* are many examples of victories by small, determined community groups over large, wealthy commercial enterprises. The playing field in these examples was one the public has ready access to: city, county, state and federal government bodies. As cold, daunting, unfriendly, stubborn and patronizing as these agencies could be, they offered citizens a place to exercise the rights we

have in a republic. Waking a bureaucracy from its torpor took action, direct action, organized by the participants. A frequent refrain, as the authors recount, was, “It’s a done deal.” Time and again, it was not.

The public square—government meetings, street festivals, the media and more—provided the stage where everyday people were the actors. Examples: A zombie flash mob gathered in front of Tennessee Valley Authority headquarters. A huge billboard on a busy Georgia thoroughfare proclaimed: “We need clean air!” In North Carolina, people threatened with arrest at a chamber of commerce event provoked a First Amendment outcry. The ability to be creative, to do things which helped others perceive an injustice, helped overcome the designs of the polluters.

During the ThermalKEM campaign, we stood against those working for improved incinerator ash landfill regulations and said, “Not here, not there, not anywhere!” In the dark days fighting an eight-state radioactive dump, we stood arm-in-arm outside the Chem-Nuclear compound with residents of Hamlet and prayed and chanted and sang until we were hoarse. We spent days driving through backcountry roads in South Carolina to get half a dozen samples of toxic air pollution. Before a state hog industry panel we acted out three monkeys: hear no evil, see no evil, *smell no evil!* Driving Russian friends through Charlotte to an anti-plutonium fuel event, we stopped and threw a risqué gesture in Duke Energy’s direction, miming, “You’re never gonna get it!”

What will the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League be in 2044? To be sure, during the last thirty years technology, society, politics and the

environment have changed. Moreover, the hands-off approach of government regulators has intensified. Here is the danger I see: a 21st Century *laissez-faire* polity, protecting private property and sacrificing the commonwealth. However, as the Boomers give way to Generation X and the Millennials, timeless elements will endure: Independence, creativity, self-reliance, compassion, democracy, sisterhood, brotherhood, tolerance, and reverence for life; the verities which brought us to this place. Emerson wrote: “Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not.” Thirty years ago, when Janet Marsh said, “One person speaking alone may not be heard, but many people speaking with one voice cannot be ignored,” she charted our course.

There is wisdom in the past and wisdom in the future:

“Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage.” [Emerson, Essay II, 1841]

“Passion, openness and naïveté are superior to hypocrisy, cunning and a contrived decency that conceals crimes.” [Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, of the Russian band Pussy Riot at her trial in Moscow, 2012]



~ BREDL at 30 ~

32 active chapters are currently working with BREDL. Two of our current chapters who submitted profiles are spotlighted in this issue. For a description of BREDL chapters and campaigns, visit our website www.bredl.org



Challenging the Nuclear Industry in Tennessee and Alabama:

A Brief History of BREDL's BEST/MATR Chapter

By Sandy Kurtz, BREDL Tennessee/Alabama Vice President

An exploratory meeting was held in Chattanooga, TN in February 2008 after a number of citizens became concerned over Tennessee Valley Authority's announcement that the two old cannibalized Bellefonte nuclear reactors in Alabama were going to be reactivated and that eventually there would be two more. As we deliberated on actions, someone at the meeting suggested we become a BREDL chapter and so it came to be. We called ourselves BEST—Bellefonte Efficiency & Sustainability Team. Later we added MATRR to our name for Mothers Against TN River Radiation named after our new website.

While filing legal contentions and speaking at NRC scoping meetings, BEST made a lot of noise in the media about Bellefonte 1 and 2 labeling them 'zombie reactors'. We objected both to the shady way in

which the NRC was allowing the zombie reactors to come back to life and the reasons why reviving Bellefonte was unwise from design, age, and environmental perspectives. When the TVA Board announced they would vote to approve construction at their next board meeting, a press conference including zombies was held and an opposition letter was delivered to TVA. Zombies were barred from attending the board meeting though one slipped in. Currently, Bellefonte is being held on a back burner. As costs and safety concerns rise, we expect it will never be built though continued vigilance is advised.

BEST/MATR hosted a Know Nukes Y'all seminar for nuclear activists in the Southeast June 2012, and established March Fukushima Fallout events in several cities. We continue to speak out at every TVA Board meeting and have made appearances at city and county governmental meetings. BEST/

MATR is working to stop the relicensing of TVA's Sequoyah Nuclear Plant and the completion of Watts Bar 2.

Brown's Ferry Nuclear Unit 1 has received many safety violations including the latest red finding, the only one in the nation. BEST/MATR began a Citizens Radiation Monitoring project testing for radiation levels both upwind and downwind of the plant. Data collected indicate high radiation counts downwind that require further investigation to determine sources. A report was published in 2013 along with a training manual on line at www.matrr.org. In February 2014, a Radiation and Statistics for Action Training Workshop was held to further the gathering of radiation data. BEST/MATR is also launching a "Make Radiation Visible" Campaign asking that radiation release information be revealed in real time and that emissions be colored so people are informed. ■



Dissolution of the eight-state low-level radioactive waste compact

In 1986 a new nuclear threat emerged in the Southeast, based on a multi-state compact and act of Congress- the designation of an eight-state low-level nuclear waste dump in North Carolina. The sites were narrowed down to Richmond, Rowan, Union and Wake counties, with the final decision coming down to the towns of Hamlet and Apex. BREDL organized across the state for years to prevent this eight-state LLNW dump from becoming a reality. In December 1993 the Apex site was selected but the dump was stopped when on July 20, 1999 North Carolina officially withdrew from the Southeast Compact.



People for Clean Mountains, Clean Jobs, and Clean Economy

By Hope Janowitz, People for Clean Mountains (PCM)

People for Clean Mountains was formed in April 2013 and became a chapter of BREDL at that time. Our immediate goal upon forming was to prevent the development of a biomass facility proposed for Little River Valley in Transylvania County, NC. Working with BREDL, PCM was able to achieve this goal with Transylvania County's Board of Commissioners passing a 12 month moratorium on biomass facilities in July 2013. PCM's strategy in defeating the biomass facility included educating the community, raising awareness, providing opportunities for community members to speak out and fostering a relationship with our local government in order to establish an open line of communication between elected officials and their constituents. BREDL's guidance and support through this process helped make the difference in our success. Our county is now in the process of passing a Polluting Industries Ordinance to further protect our

community from industries like biomass. In December 2013, PCM was honored with the Environmental Award from The Pisgah Chapter of the North Carolina Sierra Club for our efforts in stopping the proposed biomass plant. We have also been featured in an article of The Biomass Monitor, a publication by The Energy Justice Network.

PCM's motto, "Clean Mountains. Clean Jobs. Clean Economy." has been a part of our vision since our first meetings in 2013. We continue to work to bring this motto to reality through efforts to create better recycling programs for our community and by offering education opportunities for our community and surrounding areas.

In August 2013, PCM held presentations for both our county officials and community at-large with Institute for Local Self-Reliance, highlighting business and job opportunities through potential businesses in the recycling

industry. PCM continues to encourage our county and the city of Brevard to work with ILSR to bring jobs to our community through composting and recycling. Also in 2013, PCM hosted public workshops highlighting recycling and solar energy in an effort to create public awareness of both the economic and environmental aspects of better recycling and clean energy. Clean Jobs. Clean Economy." For 2014, we have identified four main objectives, they include: recycling, composting, solar energy and energy efficiency (through weatherization). Through public education opportunities and working with our local government, we hope to implement programs in these areas that will bring "Clean Mountains. Clean Jobs. Clean Economy." to fruition. As we look toward the future, PCM will continue to work in our community to make these opportunities available and make fulfill our commitment to "Clean Mountains.





BREDL Executive Director Lou Zeller has used his many talents to highlight environmental causes throughout BREDL's history. Lou has musically performed as the environmental hit



parade. His many characters include "Monopoly Man" who brought attention to rate increases with the Progress/Duke Energy merger. In the 1990's our Earth Stage Productions served over 1100 students a



month. "Captain Slow" was The Big Throw-away with students demanding that he take the earth out of the trash can. Lou has also been the "Compost Chef". His "Dr. Smello" operated the radioactive money machine.



The Many Talents of Lou Zeller

By Mark Barker and Kate Dunnagan



Lou performing in the EarthStage production, "The Big Throw Away"

Lou Zeller has brought creativity, leadership and expert critical analysis skills to the League since he first joined with BREDL to stop the high-level nuclear waste dump from being built near his home in western North Carolina. Lou is originally from New York and came south to attend Emory University. He was living in Madison County, North Carolina in 1985 when the federal government focused on his adopted home as a site for a national nuclear waste dump. He organized his community and joined the League staff in 1986. Since then, he has worked on every major League project with community groups in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia.

As Science Director with a background in math and medicine, Lou provides technical assistance to chapters and other staff. He has expertise in technical research and computer

modeling. In recent years he has represented the League in lawsuits ranging from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to Clean Air Act petitions. Lou travels 30,000 miles a year as a community organizer and has also done international work for the League. He was elevated to the position of Executive Director by the Board of Directors in 2012.

Lou has used his many talents to highlight environmental causes throughout BREDL's history. His gifts in art, music and drama add creativity to all aspects of the League's programs.

He often showcases original music at environmental events, known as the environmental hit parade. These songs include "Don't Hog Our Air," "Talkin' Trash Dump Blues," "Ballad of the Watts Farm," and "Talkin' Tarheel Asphalt Blues." Lou also performed two songs in the hit parade that were written and contributed by BREDL members- "Don't Wanna Get Nuclear Wasted" by Wells Edelman from Durham, NC and "No Place For Nuclear Waste" by Mike Jenkins in Union County.

Lou has used his acting talent and theatrical zeal to bring attention to many environmental issues and campaigns throughout BREDL's history. In the 1990's, our Earth Stage Productions was a popular attraction in schools, church groups, festivals, and street fairs in North Carolina, Virginia,

and Georgia, serving over 1100 students a month. The programs featured live performances by Lou including his character, "Captain Slow" in *The Big Throwaway-A Comedy of Global Impact* and in *The Compost Chef-A Blend of Science and Magic*. During the Earth Stage performances, students would demand that Lou take the earth out of the trash can without prompting. His "Dr. Smello" character operated a radioactive money machine highlighting the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Most recently, in 2013, Lou performed street theatre in Raleigh, NC, in front of the Utilities Commission hearing as "Monopoly Man," bringing attention to rate increases with the Progress/Duke Energy mergers. Lou can also play a mean harmonica. ■



Raleigh, 1988 Lou Zeller performs street theatre with BREDL member Ginny Lindsay

Coal Ash Disaster on the Dan

By Louis Zeller

(continued from pg 1)

Recognizing this, and in consultation with our chapter members living downstream from the spill and near solid waste dumps, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League set out to find a better solution to the problem of coal ash at Duke Energy's Dan River power plant and thirteen other coal-fired power plants in North Carolina.

First, founded on the principles of equity and environmental justice, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League Board of Directors Executive Committee on March 14, 2014 adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED: That no coal ash waste should be transferred from power plant sites to solid waste landfills.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That storage of coal ash by electric power plant operators should be done at plant sites but in a manner which would isolate it from surface water, groundwater and airborne dispersion.

Then, On March 24th at a press conference in Raleigh the League released a detailed technical report on coal ash, the purpose of which was educating elected officials and other decision makers, the news media and other opinion leaders, and advocacy groups and the general public. (See *Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League Technical Report No. 14-083* posted on our website.¹) The toxics problem includes arsenic, chromium, lead, mercury, strontium, uranium and a score more pollutants highly concentrated in the ash, some by a factor of 20 times. Based on the

principles outlined in our resolution and on decades of investigations into waste disposal of all types, we proposed a solution which removes ash from riverbanks but keeps it at the plant sites: saltstone, developed by the US Department of Energy (see photo). This would protect public health and the environment, keep Duke Energy liable for the waste it produced and prevent a repeat of the environmental injustice wrought by the disposal of ash from the 2008 Kingston, Tennessee disaster in an Alabama landfill.

The publicity reframed the issue, calling into question the idea of landfilling. But some advocacy groups maintain that landfilling the ash, or its re-use in commercial products, offer solutions. Clearly, this is wrong.

Re-use Recontaminates

Methods of using ash by incorporating it into road building and cement block construction have been tried and the results are unsatisfactory. That the ash becomes immobilized is a common but false claim. Research indicates that contaminants in the ash, heavy metals in particular, are leached from roadways and cement blocks made with ash, endangering the environment and public health. For example, in Newcastle, UK, where ash from a local incinerator had been applied on local allotments and paths, hazardous levels of dioxins and heavy metals were found.²

Landfills Leak

During the early 1990's, implementation of the new Subtitle D regulations prompted widespread closure of traditional unlined landfills and a flurry of

new double-lined landfills relying on a layer of clay and a layer of plastic. The double liners were thought to provide protection from contamination of groundwater. However, the fatal flaw of solid waste landfills is that they are subject to natural forces which make leakage and contamination inevitable.

Assurances by solid waste landfill regulators and commercial companies that waste is safely contained and managed by a double-lined landfill are false. Impartial experts agree that liner failure is inevitable, regardless of the liner type. That all liners will eventually fail is not in dispute. The only question is: How long will it take?

The test used to determine whether coal ash is a solid or a hazardous waste is another flaw in the landfilling method. Regarding coal ash, toxicologist Stephen Lester said, "The Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedure may have its place in evaluating whether a waste material should be considered a hazardous waste, but it is extremely limited and is not appropriate for evaluating public health risks posed by the toxic contaminants in incinerator ash."

Environmental Injustice

The inherent injustice of transporting toxic waste from the Kingston, Tennessee power plant site to a waste dump is currently the subject of a Civil Rights lawsuit. The solution to the coal ash problem cannot be the transfer of liability from the generator of the waste to the public. Nor can it be the infringement of community well-being.

Getting coal ash out of the impoundments near rivers and lakes must be done as rapidly as possible but to a more secure site within the power plant operators' responsibility. We must work to prevent the quick and dirty solution of coal ash landfilling and press for corporate accountability. Our goal: safe coal ash storage at power plant sites. ■



¹ The 23-page report is posted at http://www.bredl.org/pdf4/Coal_ash_report_14-083_w_Appx_A_B.pdf

² Ryder, R.E., "Incinerator Ash is Inert." ToxCat, 2000. 3(1). Citation 49 accessed 3/23/14 at <http://www.zerowaste.co.nz/assets/Reports/Wastedopportunities.pdf>

The League's First Victory:

High-level Nuclear Waste Dump...

STOPPED!

By Mark Barker



In the final days of the 97th Congress, they passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982. The President signed it into law on January 7, 1983. This legislation was designed to provide permanent storage of high-level nuclear waste in stable geologic repositories. Two repositories were to be sited. In 1984, DOE selected potential repositories in twenty-three states. In North Carolina, there were originally twenty rock bodies that met the DOE requirements. listed as the Forge Creek Suite.

By December 1984, 29 sites in North Carolina were listed as potential sites for a high-level nuclear waste repository.

Concerned about the possibility of their community becoming a site for the high-level nuclear waste dump, on March 15, 1984 fifty citizens of Ashe and Watauga Counties, North Carolina met in the Mission House of Holy Trinity Church in Glendale Springs and formed the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League: A Committee Opposing Nuclear Waste Storage In Ashe County.

In a press release announcing an upcoming May 3, 1984 public meeting, BREDL listed these goals: (1) to eliminate Ashe County from consideration as a potential nuclear waste repository; (2) to

monitor the Department of Energy's Nuclear waste Management Program; (3) to inform the residents of the Blue Ridge of any DOE decisions or actions which affect them; and (4) to work with and through our elected representatives to achieve League objectives.

Co-Chairpersons Janet Hoyle (now Janet Marsh Zeller) and Linda Taylor both from Glendale Springs focused efforts on research, education and community organizing. They spent time giving presentations to public leaders, community groups and business organizations and attending local festivals and music events.

"Dump Day", one of BREDL's first events, was held at Ashe County Park on July 21, 1984. The day's events included an up-date from DOE, a Bar-Be-Que dinner, live music, dancing, and games for everyone, as well as information. BREDL wanted this to be both an informative and family style day.

A petition drive was started eventually yielding 36,000 names and addresses of residents opposed to the high-level repository. The petition stated our opposition to having a Nuclear Waste Repository in Ashe County.

Some of the BREDL 1984 accomplishments included: Adoption of Nuclear Waste Management as an Episcopal Church Women study/action project, Holding of public organizational meetings leading to formation of the League, Achievement of nonprofit status, Hosting of a county meeting with speakers from DOE, NRCD (Natural Resources and Community Development), and the League, and the presentation of the Ashe County resolution.

In the Spring of 1985, U.S. 5th District Congressman Steve Neal (North Carolina) had this to say, "Janet Hoyle and Linda Taylor, co-founders and co-directors of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) deserve our thanks for their leadership and initiative on this issue."

Fighting the Site Must Be a Statewide Effort

One year after forming, BREDL had grown from a small group of Ashe County citizens concerned about the possibility of a nuclear waste dump being located in their county to a highly effective organization of 150 people ably led by Janet Hoyle and Linda Taylor.

However, the League didn't limit its focus to keeping a repository out of Ashe County. The organization also believed that its mission was to keep such a facility from being located anywhere in North Carolina. To accomplish this, new chapters formed in Watauga, Yancey, Mitchell and Avery counties. The League also helped organize unaffiliated groups in Stokes and Jackson counties.

But the year-old League didn't want to stop there, either. The League encouraged all 53 counties with potential sites to join forces in protecting North Carolina against nuclear waste. A coalition of the 53 counties affected by the project is necessary, the League said, if statewide efforts are to be effective. The BREDL newsletter reported, "It is hopeful that organizations, whether they be chapters of the League or not, will be established in each of these counties to work together toward a common goal."

By May 1986, the DOE was scheduled to narrow the second repository list of 236 sites down to 15-20 for further study.

The repository surface area would have covered 400 acres and contained buildings and waste handling facilities. Including a buffer zone, the repository would have covered 11,000 to 20,000 acres. It would have operated for 30 to 40 years and stored up to 70,000 tons of irradiated nuclear fuel.

In the BREDL Fall 1985/Winter 1986 newsletter, we reported that on January 16, 1986 two North Carolina sites made it on the DOE list of 12 potential sites for a high-level nuclear waste dump. One North Carolina site was the Elk River Massif northeast of Asheville in parts of Haywood, Madison, and Buncombe counties. The other state site was the Rolesville Pluton, western edge within 10 miles of Raleigh, extending through parts of Wake, Johnston and Franklin counties.

The timetable from the government's January 1986 Draft Area Recommendation Report listed March 1998 as the target for the

President recommendation for the second repository site to Congress.

After the North Carolina sites were announced, opposition continued to grow especially in western North Carolina. On January 7, 1987 NC Congressman Steve Neal introduced H.R. 509 in the U.S. House of Representatives as the Nuclear Waste Policy Act Amendments of 1987. This amendment removed the requirement of a second repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste and irradiated nuclear fuel.

During May 22 – 24, 1987, BREDL organized the Citizen's Conference on High-Level Nuclear Waste Transportation in The South held at Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee. The conference brochure mentioned that "Citizens from the 16 southern states will meet to learn about DOE's nuclear waste management program, about waste transportation on our highways and railways, and about opportunities for states and citizens to participate in decision-making."

On Dec. 22, 1987 Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act Amendments Act of 1987. The amendment repealed the 1982 measures for a second repository in the eastern United States. It also amended the Act to designate Yucca Mountain, Nevada as the only site to be considered as a permanent repository for all of the nation's nuclear waste. The Yucca Mountain

May 23, 1987 BREDL founding director, Janet Marsh, with members at the Citizen's Conference on High-Level Nuclear Waste Transportation in The South in Maryville, Tennessee.

(continued next page)



BREDL Victory: 13 Year Radioactive Waste Dump Fight

By Mark Barker and Kate Dunnagan



In 1980, The United States Congress passed the Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act, holding that all states would be responsible for LLRW generated within their borders. It further said that states could enter compacts with neighboring states.

The 8-state Southeast Interstate Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Compact voted on September 11, 1986 to designate North Carolina as the host state for all the region's low-level radioactive waste. According to the Compact, this new site would replace the low-level nuclear dump in Barnwell, SC, operated by Chem-Nuclear since 1971.

The NC General Assembly established the Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Authority and chose Chem-Nuclear Systems, Inc. as the contractor to locate, build and operate a dump for 32 million cubic feet of radioactive waste. Before the final vote, BREDL published a report on the environmental violations and contract crimes of Chem-Nuclear, and released it at the same time an amendment prohibiting the state from doing business with any company recently convicted of felonies, the Bad Boy bill. During the debate, Rep. Judy Hunt said, "I hope we're not in a sad enough state that a law that says criminals can't get contracts would eliminate everybody."

In November 1989, the Authority narrowed the potential sites to four counties: Richmond, Rowan, Union and Wake. BREDL worked hard to organize across the state. Then, on February 21, 1990 in a televised meeting on the North Carolina Public Television Network, the sites were narrowed down to two: Richmond and Wake. During the live broadcast, one-by-one according to plan, eight activists, beginning with BREDL's Lou Zeller, stood up to speak, disrupting the Authority's business meeting (see photo). Protesters were carried or escorted out of the studio by state security. The news reports described this as a "filibuster."

The site near Hamlet, in Richmond

County, had been the inside choice for years, promoted by local officials as economic development. With the designation by the Authority, the people of Richmond County organized. The majority-minority community banded together to form FORRCE, For Richmond County's Environment, to convince county officials and natural leaders of the communities that the dump was too dangerous. BREDL staff virtually relocated to Richmond County, working with FORRCE, attending dozens of BBQs, fundraisers, church suppers and planning meetings. To prevent a divide-and-conquer strategy, BREDL staff also organized in Wake County, and NC Ground Zero became our chapter.



February 21, 1990: Lou Zeller being carried out of the WUNC-TV studio during the *Stateline* broadcast. (photo by Laura Drey)

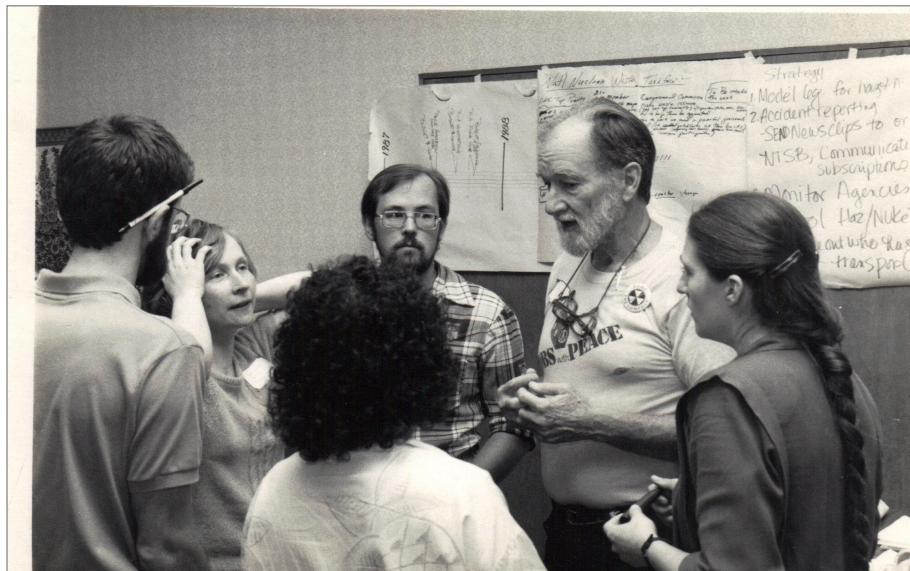


Neighbors for Environmental Safety Today (NEST) members gathered on October 23, 2004 for a Pig Pickin' Celebration in Oak Ridge, NC.

NEST's fight against Waste Management Inc. lasted for over a decade in Forsyth and Guilford counties. In October 2004, the Piedmont Landfill was capped and closed, ending WMI attempts to expand the landfill on 300 acres on the Forsyth-Guilford county line. NEST defeated WMI expansion seven times on the old tract.

On December 8, 1993, the Authority designated Wake County as the location for the waste dump, eliminating Richmond. The day before the decision, BREDL held a press conference outside the Brownstone Hotel in Raleigh where the Authority was meeting. To mock the proceeding, we organized the Miss Nuclear North Carolina Pageant, with Therese Vick as "Miss Sandy Hill" and Matt McConnell as "Miss Diabase Dike" as the two unlucky finalists. (The geology of the sites consisted of sand hills in Richmond and diabase intrusions or dikes in Wake.) The *loser* of the competition was to go on to the nationals. On the day the decision was made, residents filling the hall from both counties greeted each Authority member's vote by waving dollar bills, creating a hissing sound reported in the press.

At another press conference in Raleigh on March 11, 1994, held by



Mentor Pete Hill (grey bearded gent) and BREDL staffers Janet Hoyle and Bob Gessner (younger bearded gent) and others at the 1987 Citizen's Conference on High-Level Nuclear Waste Transportation in The South in Maryville, Tennessee

BREDL, NC Conservation Council, Sierra Club, NC Ground Zero, Coastal Alliance for A Safe Environment and Love Your Mother, Gov. Jim Hunt and lawmakers were charged with ignoring the crime of building a nuclear waste dump in Apex. At the time that state regulators

were reviewing the permit application for the project, these groups also aired radio ads.

After spending years and \$60 million to find a location, on July 20, 1999 North Carolina officially withdrew from the Compact. The bill (SB 247) passed by the NC General Assembly also required the NC Division of Radiation Protection to review radioactive management practices and federal law. Thirteen years of organizing by BREDL and its allies had created a statewide groundswell against the project, making the legislature's vote an anti-climax, but legal proceedings continued. In 2002, the Southeast Compact sued North Carolina for \$90 million, citing a breach of contract. But in 2010 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that North Carolina was not liable. This was the final nail in the coffin for the eight-state dump.



September, 1993: A public rally held outside the Chem-Nuclear compound in Hamlet, NC, opposing the eight-state nuclear waste dump. (photo by Lou Zeller)

FIGHTING

ASPHALT PLANTS

By Michael Noll

From day one BREDL and its chapters have fought against industries that put profits over people, and against elected representatives that are more interested in lining their pockets than representing their constituents. A common thread in all these fights are issues like environmental justice, air and water pollution, and a plethora of health risks. And no battle was ever won without the concerted effort of a community, because at the end of the day industrial polluters and greedy politicians have to realize that there is no foe as powerful as an aroused citizenry.

Like biomass plants and waste incinerators, asphalt plants pose a serious threat to those who find themselves living in their proximity. Mixing gravel and sand with oil derivatives, asphalt plants produce the material we use to pave roads and parking lots. However, while making asphalt these industries release millions of pounds of highly toxic chemicals into the air. These fumes include carcinogenic substances like arsenic, benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde, and volatile organic compounds and are responsible for a number of health risks: higher cancer rates, increased respiratory problems, damage to the central nervous system, and severe skin irritation.

For BREDL the issue of asphalt plants first surfaced in 1994 when "Concerned Citizens of Pineola" in Avery County, NC, became concerned about their air quality. In the following years many more communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and elsewhere joined our fight to either close existing asphalt plants near residential areas, to push through stricter air quality controls in their communities and states, or to stop new asphalt industries from coming into their counties. In total 19 BREDL chapters focused on this issue over the years. (see list on page 13)

While not all our fights were successful, some stand out as a beacon of hope for those who are still struggling to protect their citizens, both young and old, from polluting asphalt plants:

- In 1997 BREDL organized local opposition to an asphalt plant proposal in an unzoned community in Watauga County, NC. The permit was denied on the basis of public health protection, a first in North Carolina, and resulted in an eight month statewide moratorium on all new asphalt plant permits.
- An asphalt plant proposed for Flat Creek in an unzoned area of Buncombe County, NC, was also defeated in 1997. North Buncombe Association of Concerned Citizens and BREDL joined forces to uncover and publicize the track record of the asphalt company. The campaign raised serious doubts about the company's ability to operate a plant within state regulations and the proposal was dropped.
- In 1998 our accomplishments included getting North Carolina to develop a better analysis of fugitive toxic air emissions and to expand the Toxic Air Pollutant program to all operating and proposed asphalt plants. In September BREDL staffer Lou Zeller presented new information about asphalt plant emissions to North Carolina's Environmental Management Commission. In 1999 the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League received the Governor's Conservation Achievement Award for Air Conservationist of the Year!
- In 1999 we mounted three simultaneous asphalt plant permit challenges, all in the mountain region. Also, working with a national network of activists to oversee asphalt plant testing by the EPA, we monitored asphalt plant emissions tests in California and Massachusetts. These tests form the basis for EPA guidance for estimation of fugitive, or ground-level, emissions of volatile organic compounds and other asphalt plant toxins. (see sidebar on page 13)
- In 2000 a third asphalt plant proposal was defeated in Watauga County, NC.
- In 2001, the BREDL chapter "Ashe Citizens Against Pollution" in Ashe County, NC, stopped an asphalt plant when the county commission upheld the Polluting Industries Ordinance they had fought for in 1998-99 after a challenge by Tri-County Paving Inc.
- In 2006, BREDL chapter "Be Safe Not Sorry" (BSNS) stopped an asphalt plant from opening right in the middle of a neighborhood of residences, farmers raising horses and cattle, churches, day care centers, and campgrounds. BSNS also helped to create the polluting industries ordinance that has protected us ever since. As one of its members fondly recalls: "I still remember the meeting room jammed full of citizens, standing on their feet and cheering and applauding our commissioners when we won our campaign!"

These are our success stories, the result of many hard fought battles, all of which are testimony to the power of grassroots organizations. Other communities and BREDL chapters are still fighting the good fight and eventually they, too, we will be successful. From Pineola, Boone and Jefferson to Bethel, Columbus and elsewhere: never give up!

BREDL chapters with a focus on asphalt plants:

- * Citizens for Responsible Growth (Orange County, NC);
- * Neighbors Against the Cullasaja Asphalt Plant (Macon County, NC);
- * Ashe Citizens Against Pollution (Ashe County, NC);
- * Foothills Action Committee for the Environment (Polk County, NC, and Spartanburg County, SC);
Pineola Concerned Citizens (Avery County, NC);
- * Citizens Against Pollution (Watauga County, NC);
- * Citizens Against the Asphalt Plant (Henderson County, NC);
- * Rowan Citizens Against Pollution (Rowan County, NC);
- * Wythe Environmental Action Group (Wythe County, VA);
- * Neighbors for a Cleaner Colfax Tomorrow (Guilford County, NC);
- * Alleghany Citizens for Environmental Safety (Alleghany County, NC);
- * Rutherford County Citizens Against Pollution (Rutherford County, NC);
- * Be Safe Not Sorry (Alamance County, NC);
- * Mitchell County Citizens for Clean Air (Mitchell County, NC);
- * Watchdogs in the Southeast (Guilford County, NC);
- * Iredell Citizens Against Asphalt Plants (Iredell County, NC);
- * Citizens for Positive Growth (Salem, VA);
- * Horry Environmental Action Team (Horry County, SC);
- * Burnsville Air Report Card (Yancey County, NC).

BREDL published an **asphalt plant minority report** in 2001, along with environmental groups from Massachusetts, Missouri and Minnesota, that studied the impact of hot asphalt plants on public health that were overlooked by the EPA's own test report, noting the failure of the EPA to protect communities from such fugitive emissions. The report can be found on BREDL's website at <http://www.bredl.org/pdf/MinorityReport-asphalt29jan01.pdf>

Anatomy of a Win, or How We Beat Fibrowatt II

By Betty Tesh, Citizens' Alliance for a Clean, Healthy Economy (CACHE)

In June, 2008, Fibrowatt, LLC, announced that Surry County had edged out Wilkes as one of three NC counties to host a biomass-fueled energy plant. The announcement came as a surprise to the citizens of Elkin, since the proposed site was less than a mile from the city limits and hardly a stone's throw from the Yadkin River. However, many Elkin-ites breathed a sigh of relief: having recently lost a major industry, they were concerned about unemployment and a shrinking tax base. A power plant seemed, on the surface, to be an excellent neighbor.

Little did we know that the power plant would turn out to be a poultry litter incinerator! We also later learned that the element of surprise is a trademark of Fibrowatt, whose methodology includes making early contact with county officials, selling them on promises of jobs and other economic benefits, while keeping under wraps the negative impacts of poultry incineration. In addition, the company convinces the elected officials that secrecy is necessary because other counties are vying for the deal.

Later that summer, Claudia Thiel, a resident of Elkin, asked a member of the Town Board if the plant was actually a good deal. He assured her that he and others had toured Fibrominn in Benson, MN, and he was convinced Fibrowatt would be a valuable addition to the county's dwindling industry base. She had nothing to worry about, he told her. All over town, other citizens were being similarly comforted by elected officials. The message from both town and county was: this is a great opportunity.

In August, 2008, CRED (Coalition for Responsible Economic Development) was formed. Letters to the editor of the local paper and word of mouth soon increased membership. The first thing CRED did was to work on an in-depth study of all available information on biomass burning, the use of poultry litter for fuel, and the background of Fibrowatt. Only when that material was

fully researched and documented, did CRED issue a call for a community meeting in March, 2009, and over 100 curious Elkin and Surry County residents attended. Presented with a thorough power point presentation and the opportunity to ask a much-respected physician about the health concerns connected with the pollution coming from a biomass plant, many in the audience were convinced for the first time that Fibrowatt was not a good deal.

As concerns about the environmental impact of Fibrowatt increased, a new group began to take shape, and with the assistance of the BREDL staff, Citizens' Alliance for a Clean, Healthy Economy (CACHE) was formed in June, 2009, for the purpose of defeating the proposed Fibrowatt facility. It became clear that agreements between the county and the company had been made without clear notification to the public. When citizens tried to approach the commissioners with information, the commissioners turned a deaf ear, saying, in effect, that the plant was a "done deal." Indeed, the commissioners had already purchased the proposed site as part of their incentives plan for the company.

In the following months, CACHE members regularly attended county meetings, speaking against the incinerator. One of the best-attended meetings was for the rezoning of the proposed site, when speakers were told they could not use the word - Fibrowatt. No matter how compelling or well-researched our information, the commissioners either ignored our speakers or treated them rudely.

One of our most successful strategies was a letter-writing campaign. Hardly an issue of the local paper came out without a letter from some CACHE member. When non-CACHE began writing letters in support of our position, we knew our campaign was being successful. We discovered that more and more people were aware of what



Sam Tesh, Co-President of the BREDL Board of Directors and Betty Tesh, a long time dedicated volunteer.

Fibrowatt was and were questioning the judgment of the county in inviting this industry to the area.

In October, 2009, three of our members were threatened with arrest simply because they were wearing badges identifying them as members of CACHE at a downtown festival sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce. They obediently removed the badges, but reported the incident to the local paper, which carried a front-page story on the event. Many people who had been indifferent to our message reacted strongly to this attack on our First Amendment rights and began listening to what we had to say. We received an apology from the town and the police department, but not from the Chamber of Commerce.

After many requests for it, we were finally granted a public meeting at Surry Central High School. This event was a farce, however, as we were told not to disseminate printed material, and as our speakers were limited to 3 minutes, while the Fibrowatt representative was given almost unlimited time, and while our commissioners were rude and inattentive to our concerns.

To refute claims that our organization was "anti-business" and "negative" we entered a float in the 2009 Elkin Christmas Parade which carried a positive message. The theme was "CACHE'S Christmas Dreams for Elkin" and we had children sitting around a Christmas Tree, holding up "dream clouds" with things like *Increased Tourism, More Vineyards, and Downtown Re-vitalization* written on them. We even won a judges' prize!

Betty Tesh was a founder of *Northampton Citizens Against Pollution* which went on to defeat the nation's second largest hazardous waste incinerator. Almost twenty years ago, Betty joined the Board of BREDL and became the Board Secretary and a member of the Executive Committee.

When her home county of Surry was threatened by a poultry manure incinerator, she helped create CACHE. Betty, her husband Sam and other community leaders went on to win the first fight against such a facility in North Carolina.

Betty is a published author of novels and short story collections. One outstanding novel is *Raising Sand*, the story of a community battle against a solid waste megadump. Although fiction, the novel provides a guide for a victorious strategic action campaign.

Recently Betty has collected archives for BREDL's thirty year anniversary. Betty is an exemplary leader and our organization is grateful for her work and dedication.

Not much later, a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, became concerned that the local chamber had gone on record in support of Fibrowatt. He decided to poll the membership. After the poll was completed, Dr. Steward discovered that 94% of the members were opposed to the incinerator. His poll forced the CEO and the local Board to withdraw their support.

Increasing our pressure, we soon submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act for all commissioners' correspondence regarding Fibrowatt. This request would prove to have a major impact as one of the commissioners was up for re-election in 2010 and he made the motion that the

county withdraw the incentive package previously offered to Fibrowatt, which was unanimously approved, but the plant was not dead yet.

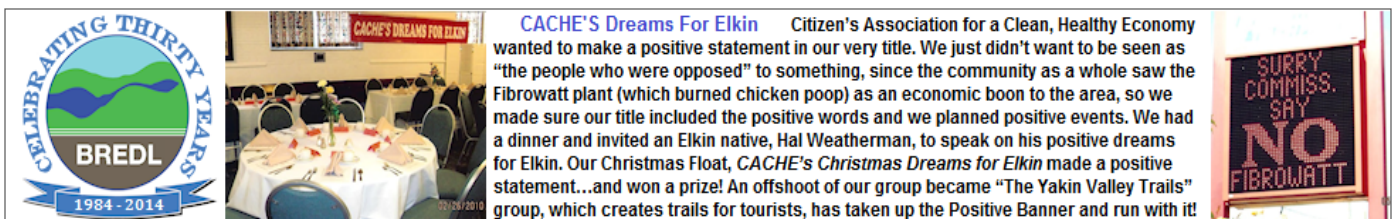
In the coming months we circulated petitions for the residents of Elkin to indicate whether they supported the town's decision to provide water to the site, or opposed it, and how they felt about the proposed incinerator. At the same time, we continued our educational efforts in regard to health risks associated with biomass incineration and also brought attention to the issue of Environmental Justice. As individuals like Dr. Bill Blackley and entities like the North Carolina Academy of Family Practice Leadership and the Council on Public Health joined our fight by going on record for

opposing biomass incineration, the tide was definitely turning.

Finally, at the May, 2010, meeting of the Surry County Commissioners, the commissioner from the Elkin area moved that the county cease any further discussion with Fibrowatt. He said he was doing so because the company had not answered his questions, nor the concerns voiced by CACHE. The motion passed unanimously, bringing an end to a two-year battle.

This was our success story. Some counties won quickly; some are still fighting. If your county faces danger from a proposed or existing industry, we have come up with a list of what worked for us:

1. Get BREDL staff to help you organize and strategize.
2. Start a letter-writing campaign to local papers.
3. Develop a presentation that is factual and well-documented. Don't exaggerate the danger. The truth is frightening enough.
4. Plan a community meeting to present your message.
5. Attend county and/or town meetings. Speak when given the opportunity. Have a succinct, well-researched message.
6. Blanket the community with yard signs.
7. Keep the media informed. Have a sound bite ready for interviews.
8. Use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain correspondence from elected officials.
9. Celebrate the little victories. In a long, drawn-out battle, you need stress relief!
10. Never give up. Never accept "It's a done deal".



BREDL Moment:

Victory Against ThermalKem Hazardous Waste Incinerator

by Therese Vick



Northampton County, in the rural northeastern region of North Carolina, was the site of a major environmental grassroots victory for the League. In December 1989, residents of Northampton County got an invitation to a public meeting to announce a huge economic development possibility, a hazardous waste incinerator. However, the meeting was little more than a dog-and-pony show. Because North Carolina had tried unsuccessfully to site the incinerator in other communities, a private siting company stated they would not come where they weren't wanted. However, it was clear that groundwork had been laid for some time. In early January 1990, we organized a new BREDL chapter: the Northampton Citizens Against Pollution (NCAP).

The Northampton County Board of Commissioners voted in 1990 to bring in ThermalKEM, a controversial move. Later that year, the town of Woodland in the southeastern part of the county invited ThermalKEM to locate there. The siting attempt in Woodland created much division and dirty political dealings. The town board was unanimously in support of the project. A proponents group sprung up named "People for Responsible Opportunity" (PRO). PRO membership heavily supported the pro-incinerator county commissioners and Woodland town board. Three of its members were later found to have signed options with ThermalKEM for 1.33 million dollars. I discovered these options on my first trip to review records at the Governor's Waste Management Board in Raleigh. Moving the plan forward, the

Woodland Town Board annexed the optioned property, jokingly called "Three Mile Island" because it was three miles from the town limits.

In 1991, the pressure intensified when the company applied for their environmental permits, beginning the public hearing process. It was also a municipal election year. Running against the pro-incinerator town board were the "clean slate" candidates. At the first of two required state hearings, citizens forcefully vocalized their opposition by repeatedly chanting NO! for the duration of the hearing. Seventeen local residents were arrested; leaders were singled out. The protesters became known as the "Woodland 17." District Attorney David Beard did not prosecute the group, but we were not out of danger; the second public hearing was scheduled for the day before the Woodland Town Board election. We suspected that the timing of the hearing was a ploy to disrupt the electoral process, to have people arrested so they could not vote. With the help of BREDL, NCAP decided that the best strategy was not attending the hearing and to have an old fashioned election celebration, also on the day before the election. Attorney John Runkle videotaped all our testimony beforehand and presented it at the public hearing on NCAP's behalf, stating our concerns on the record that we were being set up. There were dozens of law enforcement officers at hearing room, but an empty house. The next day, the "Clean Slate" ticket won the day.

At the next Woodland Town Board meeting in January, 1992, ThermalKEM was promptly disinvited. The company, going back on its promise of not going where they weren't wanted, began legal action against the town. This was an act of desperation. Changes had occurred at the state level. Jim Hunt was elected governor, and was not the advocate for the company that his predecessor Jim Martin had been. 1992 was fraught with election challenges and lawsuits, while the state permitting process droned on.

Things came to a head in 1993. In May, dozens of activists were arrested in front of the White House protesting hazardous waste incineration. They included four from North Carolina: Janet Marsh, founder and then Executive Director of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Denise Lee and Therese Vick, on staff with BREDL, and Billie Elmore, founder of NC WARN. Governor Hunt and the legislature disbanded the controversial Governor's Waste Management Board, long regarded as a shield for the hazardous waste industry. Hunt transferred their budget to a state pollution prevention program. In June, US EPA announced intentions to overhaul its hazardous waste regulations. And on September 16, 1993, ThermalKEM announced that it would no longer seek to build a hazardous waste incinerator in Northampton County. Our victory was complete.



BREDL Staffers arrested in 1993 WTI Protest outside White House
On May 17, 1993 Greenpeace, Ohio residents and citizens from all over the U.S. held a protest outside the White House to demonstrate against the WTI hazardous waste incinerator located in East Liverpool, Ohio. The Clinton-Gore team, while campaigning, promised not to issue a test burn permit until safety concerns were addressed. Demonstrators were protesting the Administration's inaction. During the protest, 58 people were arrested. The arrestees included BREDL Executive Director Janet Marsh and BREDL staffers Denise Lee and Therese Vick. The next day, the EPA halted further permitting.



Reflections by NCAP member, Brenda Bevan Remmes

Three days before Christmas in 1989 our rural community that was disproportionately low-income and black was approved by then-Governor Jim Martin as the location for a hazardous waste incinerator. The newspapers announced the land deal had been sealed and the county commissioners had already voted their approval.

As a community we were completely taken off guard. Overwhelmed by the timing of the announcement and our own lack of information concerning the

decision, we found ourselves completely dependent on the fervor of a few who took it upon themselves to quickly mobilize opposition. When more than 500 people showed up at a rally two days after Christmas, we realized we had the beginning of something powerful.

Ours was not the first attempt to site a hazardous waste facility within North Carolina and we learned quickly as members of other communities rallied to help us. Everyone directed us to BREDL

and when we called, they came. They came across the state, more than 350 miles, and stayed for as long as we needed help, at no cost to us. Elected officials would call them outsiders.

That was our first lesson in media spin. The outsiders consisted of two people. We learned quickly because we had the experience of other communities to rely on. The lessons which we learned and I have used again and again with community groups during the past twenty years are:

- There is no silver bullet. It all depends on who gives up first.
- Law suits alone won't win the battle.
- Keep the media involved. Push your side of the story every day.
- Your story has to continue to be unique, of broad interest and entertaining.
- People are more apt to support you on moral issues rather than environmental issues.
- If the public views you as a victim, instead of the aggressor, they'll side with you.
- Elected officials can be swayed by a majority of the voters.
- There are a lot of angles to consider: media, legal, education, fund raising, local and state government policy and motivational.
- You have to support the people working beside you. People will join in at different levels. Some will never come to a meeting, but they'll write checks. A few will emerge as your researchers, others as your public speakers. Some will relish the rallies. Others will sit at home and write letters on call-in to local talk-shows.
- Don't push or try to guilt anyone into doing more than they're comfortable doing.
- You're in it for the long haul. Pace yourselves and persist in your belief that you will be the last one standing.

We stopped the siting of the hazardous waste incinerator. It took three years, but in the end our most important lesson was that people do have power. We came together, young and old, black and white, professional and blue collar, the wealthy and the poor for a common cause. We became friends. For three years we became a community in the truest sense of the word.

- Brenda Bevan Remmes



It Takes a Village to Stop a Biomass Plant

We first became aware of plans for the construction of a biomass incinerator in Valdosta, GA in the summer of 2009, and by early 2010 we had started a broad education campaign, built alliances within our community, founded Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy (WACE), and joined BREDL. Following months of meetings, protests, and discussions, the public and government officials had been educated about this dangerous boondoggle. By late 2010 support for the biomass plant was wavering. The "biomess" issue was finally put to rest in June 2011. What are we doing now? Fighting fracking, which in South Georgia comes in the form of the Sabal Trail Transmission Pipeline, proposed to run right through our county. And what is our plan? To stop this pipeline.



It takes a Village to Stop a Biomass Plant

By Michael G. Noll, President
Wiregrass Activist for Clean Energy
Valdosta, Georgia
www.wiregrass-ace.org

We first became aware of plans for the construction of a biomass incinerator in our community in the early summer of 2009, and in all honesty we were rather late. As we learned quickly, being informed in regard to the works of your Industrial Authority, County Commission and City Council is important. As it was, though, we were half asleep when our county commissioners approved the zoning request for the proposed power plant, and although we shared some initial concerns, we were told "you are too late." By the time the air permit hearings came around we were finally ready to ask more pointed questions, but the Environmental Protection Department granted the permit regardless of our concerns and spokespeople for Wiregrass Biomass LLC told us "it's a done deal". But was it? The proponents of the biomass incinerator certainly thought so, and in months to come we would hear the slogan "it's a done deal" time and again, but in the end we proved them wrong.

While 2009 was an awakening for us, 2010 was the year we got organized. We started a broad education campaign, built alliances with various facets in our community, founded Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy (WACE), and decided to join BREDL. As we educated every possible

segment of our community (doctors, teachers, parents, retirees, athletes, county commissioners, school board members, the chamber of commerce, etc.) we started to gain traction like a snow ball rolling down a wintery mountain side. Retirees stood before the city council to say that this plant would make our town an undesirable retirement destination; church leaders stood to speak against this proposed plant as members of their congregation were concerned about health risks; parents protested at Board of Education meetings because the plant's emissions particularly threatened the most vulnerable among us, our children; we created a mock-up bumper sticker for our Chamber ("Welcome to Title Town ... Try Not To Breathe"); put up a billboard in a prominent location in town; etc.

As WACE's education campaign became more effective, the situation grew tense, and our Industrial Authority ramped up their public relations campaign to push for the proposed biomass plant. We responded with continued pressure through newsworthy protests, letter-to-the-editor writing campaigns, information booths at community events, regular updates on Facebook and our website, and organized a number of panel discussions with BREDL's very own Lou Zeller, Bill Sammons (a well-known pediatrician from Massachusetts), Joy Ezell (a wonderful activist from Florida) and others. Going into 2011 it was clear that the tide was changing and that our hard work was starting to pay off. Our local newspaper, the Valdosta Daily Times, named "biomess" one of the top ten stories of 2010, an honor we again enjoyed in 2011.

As it turned out the house of cards for the proposed "biomess" plant was shakier than we realized and quickly fell to pieces in the Spring of 2011. Following months of meetings, protests, and discussions, the public had indeed been educated in regard to the realities of this tax boondoggle, so that support for the biomass plant was wavering on all fronts. Eventually the Executive Director of the Industrial Authority was seeking employment elsewhere, and since Wiregrass Biomass LLC was not able to secure the necessary financing it needed to move forward, the "biomess" issue was finally put to rest in June 2011. Just to make sure, though, we pushed for one more thing before we called it good: a "no biomass clause" for any future lease or sale agreements for the piece of land that was once supposed to house a biomass incinerator. The formerly "done deal" was not only dead now, but we also put a couple extra nails into its coffin.

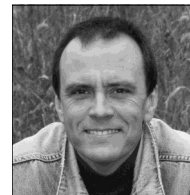
What are we doing now? Fighting fracking where we live, which in South Georgia comes in the form of the proposed Sabal Trail Transmission Pipeline under the leadership of Spectra Energy. Their plan is to build a 36 inch natural gas pipeline from Alabama all the way to Florida, running right through our county, one of the many tentacles of an insane fracking industry that is besieging neighborhoods and environments throughout the country. And what is our plan? To stop them, with the help of a broad alliance in our region called the "SpectraBusters". ■



Billboard placed on a busy street in Valdosta alerted an entire community.

Icarus and the Arrival of the Third Solar Age

Michael G. Noll, President, Wiregrass Activist for Clean Energy, Valdosta, Georgia, www.wiregrass-ace.org



For millennia humans gazed into the sky and marveled at the beauty of winged creatures effortlessly sailing through the air, which is an incredible feat for all earthbound creatures, and long seemed out of reach for mankind. Likewise the dream of infinite, clean energy might have seemed unattainable for decades if not centuries, but the progress we have seen in recent years is astonishing.

As long as we can remember, we have used wood for, among other things, a source of energy. Since all combustible biomass is ultimately a product of photosynthesis and thereby the sun's solar radiation, the era of wood for energy might be considered our first solar age.

Although the Romans were already familiar with coal, it took until the 18th century before the use of fossil fuels became noteworthy, when an Industrial Revolution and the launch of a worldwide population explosion began to leave its marks on our planet. This was our second solar age, heavily relying on ancient pockets of sunlight (coal, oil, natural gas) which formed about 300 million years ago.

Now we are entering our third solar age, and this time we are directly harvesting the sun's energy as it strikes the earth's surface. Just imagine! The amount of solar radiation we receive on our planet in just one hour could cover global energy needs for a full year. Therefore solar potentials are enormous and well ahead of other renewable sources like wind, geothermal and hydro.

In many ways, attempts by humans to become independent of fossil fuels bear similarities to ancient struggles to conquer the sky. Unlike Icarus, though, who wanted to escape from Crete and failed because he came too close to the sun, we need to get closer to it, but only metaphorically speaking. After all, the

distance of 93 million miles from this nuclear fusion reactor has created the perfect conditions for our Goldilocks planet. It is also important to note that global differences in incoming solar radiation are responsible for other sources of energy like wind and ocean waves, even as the harnessing of the latter is still in its infant stage.

Typically naysayers connected with the fossil fuel industry will tell you that we can simply not rely on renewable sources of energy like solar, and that they are just too expensive. The truth, however, is that these are stalling tactics by an industry incapable or unwilling to admit to the true costs of its own activities, including its externalities. Thus they argue *ad absurdum* that "solar is not ready yet" and entities like Fox News and Rush Limbaugh are more than willing to pick this up. What they do not yet realize is that a third solar age has already begun, and interestingly enough the story of human flight ties directly into what will be the story of the 21st century, our independence from fossil fuels:

They said it could not be done, but on October 19, 1783, a hot air balloon took flight in Paris, France, with three people on board.

They said it could not be done, but on December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers Orville and Wilbur, inventors and aviation pioneers, made their first flight in North Carolina.

They said it could not be done, but the first manned mission to the moon (Apollo 11) came to a climax on July 20, 1969, when Neil Armstrong climbed down a ladder and uttered the words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

They said it could not be done, but on May 3, 2013, the first solar-powered

plane (Solar Impulse) began its flight across the US, from California to New York. Similar long-distance flights had already been made in Europe in 2012, and the first circumnavigation of our planet is scheduled for 2015.

Just as we were able to learn how to fly, I am convinced that the development of renewable sources of energy like solar will be the lunar landing of our generation. Now it might take some of us a little longer to understand what Thomas Edison already said in 1931 ("I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that.") but eventually there will be no denying that solar (and wind, and hydro, and geothermal, and ocean waves, and fuel cells, and increased efficiency/conservation, etc.) does work, and that our independence from fossil fuels is just around the corner.

Here are some of the latest developments: the next generation of solar plants produces energy 24/7 with the help of salt batteries; advances in solar nanotechnology continue to break efficiency records; new batteries and supercapacitors are entering our markets, vastly improving our ability to store energy; the latest wind turbines combine higher efficiency with energy storage; solar electricity hit grid parity with nuclear in 2010 and with coal in 2013, and wind electricity is not far behind; 2013 has been a stellar year for both solar and wind as worldwide installations skyrocketed, increasing renewable energy production, offering hundreds of thousands of jobs, and keeping environments safe for all members of the biosphere.

In the spirit of the Wright brothers, Thomas Edison and Neil Armstrong: let's embrace the Third Solar Age. ■

