

Moratorium Stops North Carolina Mega-Dumps

In the face of all-out pressure from waste industry lobbyists, the North Carolina General Assembly listened instead to community activists and passed a one-year moratorium on new landfills in the state. Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League members and their allies maintained constant pressure on their elected representatives with phone calls, e-mails, and personal visits to Raleigh to demand a trash time-out. Overwhelming bi-partisan support for the moratorium demonstrated the effectiveness of this citizen campaign.

The legislation imposed a moratorium until August 1, 2007 on the consideration of permit applications or issuance of new permits for municipal solid waste, construction and demolition, or industrial solid waste landfills. Exceptions allow existing landfills to modify their permits or expand within their permitted boundaries.

During the 12-month period of the moratorium two study commissions will examine the many issues raised by the prospect of new mega-dumps in North Carolina. One study will be done by the Environmental Review Commission. Issues to be addressed by this commission include:

- Financial responsibility by applicants
- Local government franchise approval and public participation
- Landfills in environmentally sensitive locations or areas subject to flooding
- Pollution and emissions generated by landfills in flood-prone areas
- Traffic issues associated with waste transportation
- Regulatory oversight requirements for the transportation and disposal of waste
- Compliance and enforcement measures for the safe disposal of hazardous waste
- Steps to encourage waste reduction and promote recycling in North Carolina.

The second study commission is the Joint Select Committee on Environmental Justice. This commission will be composed of eight members from the General Assembly plus representatives from the NC Division of Waste Management, the NAACP, the Association of County Commissioners, and the League of Municipalities. Their issues complement and expand the scope of landfill issues in North Carolina:

- The location of current landfills relative to demographics of race and poverty
- Impacts to health, environment and economic development
- The factors that led to existing landfill locations
- Enforcement practices
- The role of statutes, rules and policies by state and local government in landfills
- Notification of communities when there is a risk to the environment or health
- Ensuring environmental justice is always a part of agency considerations.

Reports and recommendations from these commissions will be due in January 2007 for consideration in the next session of the legislature.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League chapters in Camden, Brunswick, Columbus, Scotland, Richmond, Person, Duplin, Green and Forsyth worked together to make the moratorium happen. BREDL chapters with local campaigns to stop landfills in their community can now expand those efforts. The campaign to replace a state policy that encourages mega-dumps with a policy based on Zero Waste continues.