

# **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League**

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## **Franklin County Citizens Hold People's Hearing on Mountain Valley Pipeline**

*Boones Mill, VA* – On Thursday evening, members of Preserve Franklin, Preserve Floyd and Preserve Roanoke, grassroots chapters of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, held a People's Hearing on the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Having been denied a hearing by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Franklin County residents and their neighbors in Bent Mountain, Floyd and Roanoke organized their own hearing in which to comment on the 401 Water Certification currently being reviewed by the State Water Control Board.

Bonnie Law, chair of Preserve Franklin, shared her disapproval in the DEQ's decision to omit Franklin county from the list of hearings, "VA DEQ Director Paylor should resign immediately for publicly refusing an "official public hearing" in each affected county in Virginia along the proposed Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipeline routes."

Mara Robbins, a community organizer with Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and founding member of Preserve Floyd, stated: "Considering that Franklin County has the most water bodies crossed by this disaster masked as a "proposed pipeline" on the MVP route, it is an obvious manipulation by industry-influenced bureaucracy that the citizens of Franklin were denied a public hearing on the draft 401 water permitting. Floyd County has stood by our neighbors from the beginning of this fight and we'll stand by them till we win. I'm proud to be a part of this crucial event designed to give legitimate voice to Franklin's valid, undeniable concerns and objections to this catastrophic project. It would destroy their clean water. They deserve to say their piece. It's a slap in the face of environmental justice. The powers that be better listen up, because they do NOT want to mess with Franklin County."

A court stenographer was present to record all statements which will be submitted to the DEQ before the August 22 deadline for commenting on the draft 401 water permit. Many people present mentioned how glad they were have the chance to speak and how much more welcoming and community-oriented this hearing was compared to the official public hearings conducted by the DEQ, which ended on Monday. Mike Carter, a founding member of Preserve Franklin and candidate for Board of Supervisors in Franklin County, said: "The DEQ really dropped the ball by not holding a public hearing in the county with most affected landowners on the proposed MVP route. I am extremely concerned about preventing damage to our water sources in Franklin that are responsible for providing our schools, our only hospital, businesses and citizens of Franklin County with clean water. So we decided that if they thought they could get away with not allowing the people to have their say, we would give them a voice!"

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a community-based, non-profit environmental organization with chapters in seven states. The founding principles are earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice, and community empowerment.