



# BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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## The LEAGUE LINE

Fall 2015



### Who's Side Are You On, McAuliffe?

by Whitney Whiting, Community Organizer

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On September 21, I and four activists disrupted Governor McAuliffe's keynote address at his Biennial Natural Resources and Energy Law Symposium in Abingdon, VA. Armed with nothing more than poetry, art, and song, we spotlighted our Governor's hypocrisy with a poem written specifically for

him titled, "McAuliffe Knows."

We purposefully chose to target McAuliffe and the event itself - a "symposium" made up largely of representatives from the energy industry, government, and academia to address the "array of energy

opportunities in Appalachia." The Governor's speech was to occur immediately prior to a panel on "Natural Gas Pipelines," featuring representatives from energy giants Dominion and EQT, two of the corporations planning to build major (Continued on pg. 10)



### The Home We Can't Buy

by Pastor Cary Rodgers  
Environmental Justice Coordinator

Despite our diverse backgrounds, nationalities, gender, race or beliefs there is one thing that we all have in common, Earth, it's our home. None of us did anything to buy it. Matter of fact you can't buy it. Even if it was for sale, all the money in the world would not be enough to buy it. Our glorious and magnificent home, Earth, was created as a gift to us so we can all enjoy the blessings and beauty of it.

This great gift offers us an environment that promotes a healthy abundant life for all people. Because we all benefit from this gift, we all have a great responsibility to make sure we do nothing to destroy

this gift that sustains our life and gives us the joys of life. Even though we have invented many great technologies and modern conveniences over the past two centuries none of us can make nor replace clean water, fresh air, plants, trees, animals, and an ecosystem that we ALL depend on for life.

Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world in which all people recognize the need to take care of our home. They are like having a bad roommate that never cleans up their mess. We live in a world of greed and corruption. There are those who really don't care about the health of our home nor how many people they hurt as long as it grows their profit and bank accounts. They will destroy our beautiful home by exploiting its natural resources, poisoning our water

and air, and marring its beauty. Ironically their blind greed does not allow them to comprehend the fact that they are destroying their own home that we all share. They may think that dumping and polluting their mess on economically poorer communities will protect them, it will not. Today we all are feeling the negative effects of polluted air and water because of the actions of greed and ignorance "bad roommates".

Remember, we all have a right to equal access to a supply of fresh clean air, water, and a sustainable ecosystem. Now is the time to stand up individually and as a world community to stop these "bad roommates" from destroying our great gift that we all hold in common. This is not a political but a life issue that none of us can afford to ignore.

2015





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## **BREDL: Who and what we are**

In March 1984, fifty citizens of Ashe and Watauga Counties met in the Mission House of Holy Trinity Church in Glendale Springs, North Carolina. Teachers and farmers, home-makers and merchants listened to the report of the Episcopal Church Women on the US 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 the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) to protect their own backyard and those of other threatened communities.

Grassroots organizing was a cornerstone of our early all-volunteer organization. One of our first multi-county boards of directors adopted our credo, which embodies our mission statement:

## **BREDL Credo**

We believe in the practice of earth stewardship, not only by our league members, but by our government and the public as well. To foster stewardship, BREDL encourages government and citizen responsibility in conserving and protecting our natural resources. BREDL advocates grassroots involvement in order to empower whole communities in environmental issues. BREDL functions as a "watchdog" of the environment, monitoring issues and holding government officials accountable for their actions. BREDL networks with citizen groups and agencies, collecting and disseminating accurate, timely information.

BREDL sets standards for environmental quality, and awards individuals and agencies who uphold these standards in practice.

## **Moving into the future**

Since then, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has grown to be a regional community-based, nonprofit environmental organization. Our founding principles - earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice and community empowerment - still guide our work for social change. Our staff and volunteers put into practice the ideals of love of community and love of neighbor, which help us to serve the movement for environmental protection and progressive social change in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee.

## **Grassroots Campaigns**

Nothing creates hopefulness out of helplessness like a successful grassroots campaign - and our chapters have a history of winning. For over twenty-eight years Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League chapters have protected their communities by stopping dangerous facilities and promoting safe alternatives.

In the 1980's and 1990's, BREDL prevented a multi-state ThermalKEM hazardous waste incinerator, a southeastern nuclear waste dump and a national nuclear waste dump. In the 2000's, our coordinated grassroots citizens' campaigns have had further victories. We won a legislative victory with the passage of the NC Solid Waste Act, effectively blocking at least four multi-state mega-dumps. Our Person County chapter convinced their Board of Commissioners to reject expansion of the Republic Services landfill. Our Cascade, Virginia, chapter shut down a huge hazardous waste incinerator. We eliminated mercury waste from the Stericycle incinerator, shut down a tire incinerator in Martinsville, won the landmark environmental justice court decision in Greene County, NC. Further, with our chapters we have protected air quality by blocking scores of asphalt plants, four medical waste incinerators, a PVC plant and a lead smelter, and passage by local governments of eight polluting industries ordinances. Our work on nuclear power and coal plants laid the groundwork for our new Safe Energy Campaign. Victories over twenty-four mega-dumps have resulted in our affirmative Zero Waste Campaign. Guided by the principles of earth stewardship and environmental justice, we have learned that empowering whole communities with effective grassroots campaigns is the most effective strategy for lasting change. ■



A quarterly publication of:  
**Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)**

**P.O. Box 88, Glendale Springs, NC 28629**

**Tel: 336-982-2691 Fax: 336-982-2954**

**email: bredl@skybest.com**

**www.bredl.org**

**Editor: Leigh Rainey (678) 722-1529**

**leigh.rainey86@gmail.com**

### **Contributing writers:**

Louis Zeller, Cary Rodgers, Mara Robbins, Carolyn Reilly, Diana Tarazzo, Therese Vick, Sharon Ponton, Charles Utley, Whitney Whiting

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Whitney Whiting

## Potassium Iodide, “The Must Have Pill”

by Rev. Charles Utley, Environmental Justice Campaign Director



During a severe accident at a nuclear power plant, radioactive iodine can be released, causing damage to the thyroid of those living downwind. Potassium Iodide is a harmless salt which when taken properly can prevent the cancers and other negative health effects of radioactive iodine emitted during a nuclear accident. The Concern Citizens of Shell Bluff are very concerned that their neighbors have the protection of Potassium Iodide tablets available in case of a radioactive release.

In 2015, our target area has been defined as a five miles radius of Plant Vogtle, operated by Southern Nuclear. However, we will be expanding our training and distribution of Potassium Iodide tables in the future up to 10 miles. The primary residents are the ones who are considered to be at the highest immediate threat because of their direct exposure possibility.

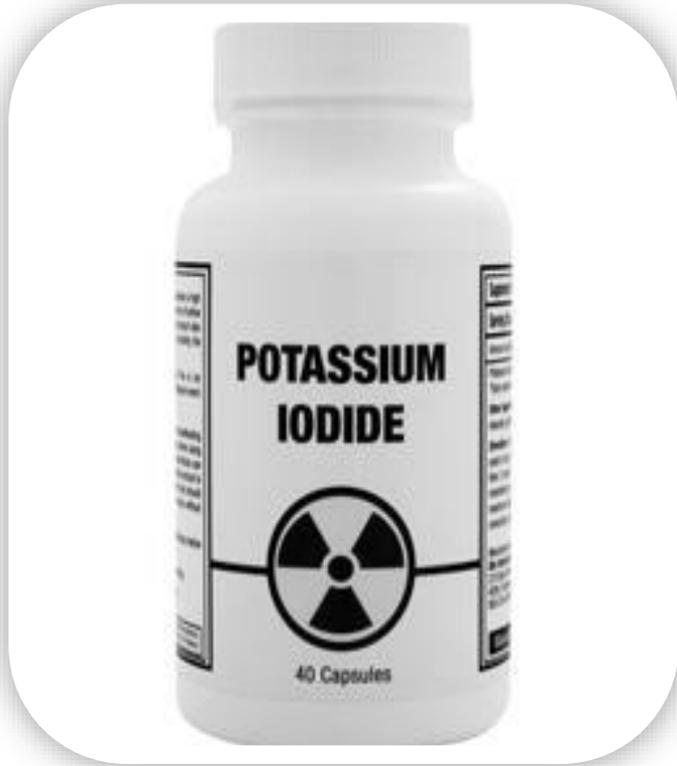
Our project is endorsed by the local churches in the community and we are getting great feedback from those who have been through the training. Those who have gone through the training have a sense of security knowing that they are now able to administer the tablets to their family in an emergency. This sense of security is something that we would like to see all the residents in the Shell Bluff Community have through this program. Therefore, we will continue with our flyers and door-to-door campaigns along with our trainings and workshops.

In order to reach more of the affected residents, we have had meetings and training at Bottsford Baptist Church, which is located in a highly populated community very near Vogtle. Pastor General Jennings has given us an open welcome mat to use their fellowship hall whenever we need it. This type of support has given us a greater

access to the community.

We have received encouragement from the Richmond County Neighborhood Alliance Association, a consortium of communities in August, Georgia. The Alliance's work is to focus on issues and concerns of communities, including Shell Bluff. Also, we were invited to speak with Mayor Maggie B. Cartwright of Keysville, Georgia. Our involvement will include working on citywide projects in conjunction with our ongoing work in Shell Bluff. Working in Keysville would expand our project to a 10 mile radius around Vogtle.

We believe Potassium Iodide is the **Must Have** pill that should be in everyone's medicine cabinet, because we believe that we can make a difference in the lives of those who live in the shadow of Plant Vogtle. The idea that someone else will do this work is ironic, (Continued on pg. 4)



(Continued from pg. 3) because no one else has done it. It is only through the efforts of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League that this intensive intervention work has continued and the Concern Citizens of Shell Bluff are committed to seeing this project come to full fruition with the assistance of this organization.

We realize that this is not a one-time fix all project but a catalyst to equip the residents with the necessary knowledge and tools needed. We have secured donations from a private foundation which will help provide enough potassium iodide tablets to protect hundreds of the families most at risk.

We will continue to work with our Potassium Iodide Project until all the residents in the affected targeted area have experienced the training and understand that they are not alone in this battle to live in a safe and healthy community.

## Let's Get REAL, Folks.

*by Carolyn Reilly, Community Organizer*



Being a landowner that is in the line of fire by the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), I've had to dig in and get my hands dirty to learn about the numerous issues surrounding fracked gas pipelines. The process of educating myself and my family has consumed much of my time as well as my very being. Many stories I've read touch me deeply – especially those involving children and families. My husband and I are raising our four children on our small-sustainable farm and we continue to pour ourselves into the efforts to STOP the proposed MVP. This corporate entity hopes to destroy our land, including two creeks that our family loves, by bringing their 42" fracked gas pipeline through our farm.

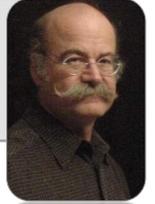
In preparing for a testimony I gave to the DEQ Listening Session in Roanoke, VA, I began researching more about health complications around compressor stations as well as other

“natural” gas facilities. A recent article points towards the connection between health issues and rural gas compressor stations. Air contaminants from the Millennium pipeline compressor station, located in Minisink, New York has reached levels that **exceed that of a big city**. Many residents have complained of health ailments, and a research team from the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project, a nonprofit group of public health experts, facilitated a study from October to December, 2014.

The study found that, “spikes in air toxins around the compressor coincided with residents' adverse health symptoms.... Asthma, nosebleeds, headaches, and rashes were common among the 35 participants in eight families living within one mile of the compressor... Six of the 12 children studied had nosebleeds, which health (Continued on pg. 9)

## Director's Report: Hope Is The Thing With Feathers

by Louis A. Zeller, Executive Director



Today the elected leaders of Ashe County North Carolina voted unanimously to suspend all approvals for polluting industries for a period of at least six months. The immediate cause was the possible locating of a toxic-spewing asphalt manufacturing plant near the banks of the New River in the village of Glendale Springs. Without a doubt, the County Commission responded to the hue and cry raised by residents, organized into a working committee: Protect Our Fresh Air. Lest you get the wrong idea, the members of the commission are a very conservative lot. The other business of the day included the placement of “In God We Trust” on county buildings. This ain’t Durham or Asheville.

At the public hearing before the vote, some of the most moving testimony centered on the fate of nearby Camp New Hope, a nonprofit, free facility for families who have children with life-threatening medical conditions or serious diseases for which there is no known effective treatment or cure, such as spinocerebellar ataxia, hydrocephaly, seizure disorders, microcephaly, Rett Syndrome, cerebral palsy and others. The asphalt company representatives at the public hearing did not come close to addressing the health issue; instead, they complained of the costs of excessive regulation.

No child should be exposed to even a few parts per million of arsenic, benzene, cadmium or formaldehyde. Certainly a mountain vacation should not subject them to poisoned air. Yet the recommendation of the North Carolina Division of Air Quality would grant an air permit allowing 300 thousand tons of asphalt to be manufactured annually at a plant about a half-mile away. This. Is. Plumb. Crazy.

Elsewhere in the world, the climate crisis faced by the global village suffers from a similar insanity. For decades we have known that the burning of fossil fuels would cause global warming and associated disruptions such as extreme weather, floods and storms. In 1965, President Johnson gave a speech to Congress in which he said, “This generation has altered the composition of the atmosphere on a global scale through...a steady increase in carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels.” However, for over half a century policymakers have been swamped in a sea of doubt manufactured by the industry which profits from the continued use of fossil fuels.

Carbon dioxide from human activity is altering the planet. Climate Justice is the term which properly views global warming as an ethical issue, as much or more than an environmental argument. What about melting ice caps? How do we handle mass migrations? Who benefits? Who pays? Indeed, these are questions of justice, environmental and social. Climate Justice also requires us to focus on issues of equality, human rights and historical responsibility. In Pope Francis’ encyclical, he stressed the urgency brought about by the failure of past and present generations’ to grapple with the (Continued on pg. 6)

- A. President Johnson, *Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty*, February 8, 1965
- B. Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, May 24, 2015
- C. James Gustave Speth, *The Nation*, February 16, 2015, former advisor to Presidents Clinton and Carter
- D. Si Kahn, *Creative Community Organizing*, 2010

(Continued from Pg. 5) consequences of fossil fuel energy: “It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Half-way measures simply delay the inevitable disaster.”

The jeopardy faced by coming generations is real. If ending and reversing global warming mean leaving huge reserves of natural gas, coal and oil in the ground, then that is what we must work for. That means halting natural gas fracking and pipelines. It means the cessation of coal mining, coal ash dumping and oil well drilling. On the subject of climate crisis, a former presidential advisor, abandoning his conservative southern upbringing, called for systemic change—a great transition from the economy we have to the economy we need, saying, “And if the solutions seem radical today, they won’t tomorrow.” So, the organizing of communities here in the South, where conservative principles hold sway and where great movements took root and prevailed, must again be done.

Si Kahn, musician and community organizer for labor and civil rights, was in Glendale Springs recently. His interest in the asphalt plant fight was helpful in our earliest meetings. His latest book, *Creative Community Organizing*, distills his four decades of experience and ends with the following: “As creative community organizers, we should never encourage unrealistic hope, expectations that aren’t rooted in deep possibility. But any organizer who no longer honestly believes that people working together can make positive change happen should probably start looking for another job.”

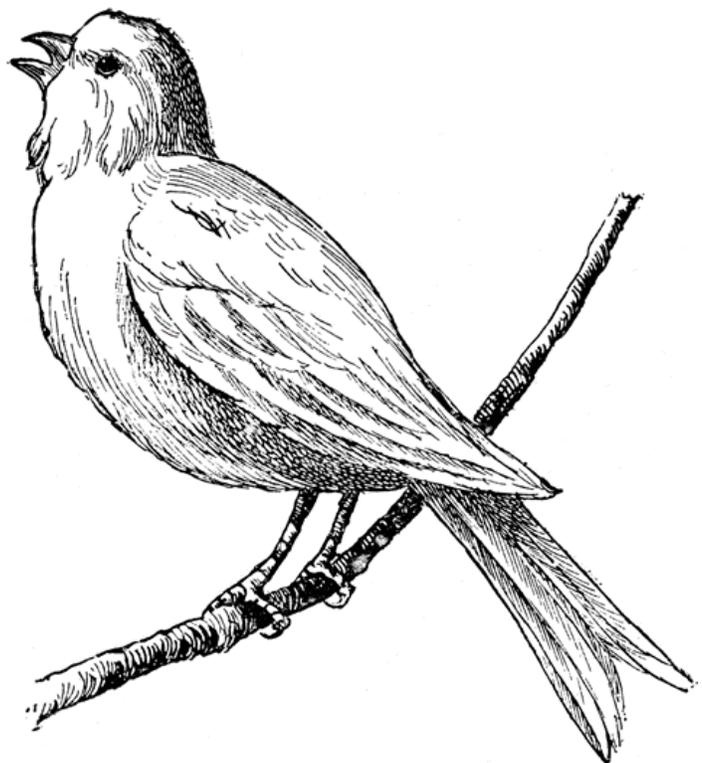
Today the rock-ribbed revanchists of Ashe County were moved to vote against polluting industry by a dedicated group of people using the means at hand. That fight may not be over. But the children of Camp New Hope got a breath of fresh air.

'Hope' is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.

~Emily Dickinson



Dear Mr. Stanback,



My name is Diana Tarrazo, and I am a rising junior at Duke University majoring in Environmental Science and Policy and minoring in English and Economics. This summer I was fortunate enough to work as a Stanback intern for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. I wanted to thank you for the wonderful summer experience I've had working with BREDL! I truly could not imagine a better internship opportunity!

Because of your generous support through the Stanback program, I was able to gain invaluable firsthand experience with grassroots environmental activism and environmental nonprofits. My work with BREDL has not only given me critical skills that I will carry throughout my professional career, but so too has it renewed my desire to continue working to address pressing environmental issues!

As a liquefied natural gas (LNG) intern at BREDL, I spent the majority of my summer working on issues related to pipelines carrying hydraulically fractured gas. I began my summer researching environmental justice issues regarding the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline, which will run through Virginia and West Virginia. Specifically, I looked at literacy rates, income, and education levels in counties that will likely have the pipeline running through them. I compared this data to statewide Virginia and West Virginia averages. I found some startling evidence—counties that have pipelines through them have markedly, and statistically significant, lower incomes, number of residents who have graduated high school, and literacy rates.

My BREDL mentor encouraged me to compile all of my environmental justice data statistical analysis, and submit my work as a comment to the Federal Environmental Regulatory Commission in an effort to prevent additional pipelines from being built in marginalized communities. Before this summer, I knew that I was interested in the fields of energy and resource development, but I did not have as much exposure to environmental justice issues. However, after that project, I am impassioned to continue to work on issues related to environmental justice!

I cannot thank you enough for this opportunity—it truly was everything I could have asked for in a summer internship and more! My colleagues were professional, incredibly intelligent, and dedicated to environmental activism and community education. It was so inspiring to get to work alongside so many passionate people! I also got to meet dozens of community members who are striving to educate themselves on environmental issues and fight to safeguard their communities. One of my favorite experiences this summer was attending a coal ash forum in Sanford. I got to listen to citizens from North Carolina and Alabama speak about the negative affects of coal ash, and strategize to stop a coal ash waste facility from being built in Sanford. It was so heartening to see so many people come together for a cause they care so deeply about.

Thank you again for your generous support through the Stanback program—I really cannot express what an incredible experience I had working with BREDL this summer! I would love to keep in touch with you in the future to let you know how my Stanback experience ends up shaping my professional and personal trajectory, as it undoubtedly will! I hope you have had a wonderful summer as well!

Sincerely,

Diana Tarrazo

## Hands Across Our Land Coordinated National Action Hugely Successful

Sharon Ponton, Community Organizer



On August 18, 2015 grassroots groups across ten states all the way from North Carolina to Oregon to Texas to New York to Virginia held coordinated actions in their communities. They held hands spanning bridges, in our national forests, in front of churches, on private property, atop our mountains

and across rivers and streams to show their solidarity with each other in their ongoing battles to fight the fossil fuel industry from its expansion of fracking, pipelines and compressor stations.

The idea for the action began in Virginia with a group known as Free Nelson and a conversation between activists Matt Dwyer and Sharon Ponton who had been fighting the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) for months. The overall goal was simple: Unite the pipeline fighters of the proposed ACP in Central Virginia and those fighting the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) in Southwest Virginia. Previous efforts by grassroots groups had failed to gain the attention and support of elected officials who are beholden to the energy industry because of the millions of dollars given to politicians by the industry. The hope was that this demonstration, *Hands Across Our Land*, would unify the disparate groups fighting for their communities, pressure the politicians to pay attention, and garner the attention of the public to the plight rural Virginia is facing at the hands of a corrupt industry which puts shareholder profit ahead of the health, safety, and welfare of the people.

Once announced, it quickly became clear that oth-

ers, not just those in Virginia, were enthusiastic about participating in *Hands Across Our Land*. The action itself was planned to be easy to organize and hold. It also offered options to community groups for their level of involvement. Each group planned their own event in their local community. It could be simply a unifying event promoting the solidarity of groups across the region, or it could be both unifying and an action of civil disobedience, where activists could hold hands blocking access to a fracking well, industry office, or compressor station. It was also planned to be held in local communities so those participating would have the opportunity for maximum involvement, rather than an action held in a place which might limit participation because of the requirement to travel to a central location.

BREDL became an integral part of *Hands Across Our Land* with promotion of the event to its chapters and a coordinated media plan which included not just print and television media, but the use of the social media venues of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The media plan resulted in grabbing the attention of elected officials and the public. It afforded excellent traditional media coverage across the country of the 37 actions held. The Governor of Virginia, Terry McAuliffe, an avid supporter of the fossil fuel industry, was quite unhappy about this event being staged across his state, which reinforced, for us, the success of this project. A full report on Hands Across Our Land is posted on the BREDL website at: <http://bredl.org/press/2015/HandsAcrossOurLand.htm>



(Continued from pg. 4) consultant, David Brown, attributed to elevated blood pressure or irritation of mucous membranes by formaldehyde, a carcinogen found in excess around compressors in a recent SUNY Albany study.”

Environmental health expert, Wilma Subra, has observed the same health issues and concerns around the country, near gas compressor stations, but also gas power plants and gas drilling sites. She sites: “[I] typically find symptoms such as asthma, allergies, coughs, nosebleeds, dizziness, weakness, and rashes among 90 percent of residents and workers in a two- to three-mile radius of gas infrastructure... Resulting chronic ailments she cites include lung, cardiovascular, reproductive, liver, kidney, and neurological damage; birth defects; and leukemia.”

It is obvious that we must protect the health and well-being of our children. Even the EPA has established guidelines in its Final Rule regarding Executive Order 13045: *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks* and concluded that “the agency has evaluated the environmental health and welfare effects of climate change on children. CO2 is a potent GHG that contributes to climate change and is emitted in significant quantities by fossil fuel-fired power plants. The EPA believes that the CO2 emission reductions resulting from implementation of these final guidelines, as well as substantial ozone and PM2.5 emission reductions as a co-benefit, will further improve children’s health.”

In order to take into account all of the substantial risks to the health and safety of our children, we must include the evidence that natural gas and the risks associated with the gathering, processing and transportation of natural gas have a significantly harmful affect

on health and well-being and construct our plan for the future of energy production accordingly. Reducing CO2 emissions from coal only to replace them with other dangerous emissions and a multitude of health and safety risks from natural gas does not address or solve the problem; it merely creates a new one.

Our family believes in the **POWER** and **SAFETY** of renewable energy – after all, you don’t hear about solar panels causing nosebleeds! So, let’s get **REAL**:

**Renewable  
Energy  
Ameliorates  
Lives**

Simply put: ***Energy from renewable sources makes our lives better.*** NOW is the time for change. My children, and yours, are counting on us to speak out, raise our voices and take **REAL** action for their lives and ours.



“Gas Compressors and Nose Bleeds” <http://www.utne.com/environment/gas-compressors-and-nose-bleeds-zm0z15fzsau.aspx?PageId=2#ArticleContent>  
Pg. 1435: <http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-08/documents/cpp-final-rule.pdf>

(Continued from cover) gas pipelines across Virginia.

The event was significant because of who was in the room, but also because of who was not - those most directly affected by extreme energy extraction. According to the event's host, the gathering was designed to "model an atmosphere of rational debate" to reach common ground on laws affecting regional energy production. However, with ticket prices as high as \$200, I doubt that very many community members could have afforded to participate.

When it came time for McAuliffe's speech, we delivered our own keynote with striking bravado that made attendees gasp. We took our time, letting each verse ring out loud and clear. I heard one man behind me complain, "How long is this going to go on?" This only reminded us to read slower.

Ironically, his remark was fitting. That's exactly what we came to ask. Exactly how long will our Governor and the industry attempt to stall on real climate action? How many more inches of sea level rise will it take? How many more floods? How many more pipeline leaks or explosions?

Our action may have only lasted a few minutes, but I know we made an impact. I know this because after we were escorted out, McAuliffe's personal security saw fit to try his best, scariest intimidation on us.

However, intimidation won't stop people who are fighting for their futures. The movements to end fracking, stop pipelines, and push for large-scale renewable energy will continue. McAuliffe chose to put himself in the middle of this pipeline fight, and he can very easily step aside by retracting his support for the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines. Otherwise, we will continue to press him. When he insists that natural gas is part of the "New Virginia Economy" we will ask, "What's 'new' about an economy based on extraction that poisons community water, destroys land, and disrupts people's homes?" When he tries to soothe us by explaining that "the fracking isn't happening here," we'll tell him that we take no comfort from the destruction of our neighbors' communities. And when he says that the pipelines must be built in a way that "protects the environment" we will tell him, "Governor, you have backed yourself into a corner. It's time to wake up."

## **McAuliffe Knows**

*by Whitney Whiting*

McAuliffe knows  
that climate change is real.  
And when it comes to pipelines  
he knows just how we feel.

He knows that fracking sucks  
but he must have neglected  
to tell us that he only said that  
just to get elected.

He promised to be a "brick wall"  
for women of the state  
but does he think the health of our bodies  
ends with how we choose to procreate?

Does he know that families are slowly dying  
from methane-poisoned air and waters?  
That fossil fuels like natural gas  
steal futures from our sons and daughters?

Doesn't he know that there's nothing "new"  
about an economy based on extraction?  
that in Appalachia of all places  
the promise of jobs has zero traction?

Because we all know, even if he doesn't  
that exploitation is not the answer  
when bodies are sacrificed for profit,  
the only growth is rates of cancer.

McAuliffe, we are not deceived.  
from you we expect nothing.  
Your pipedream is our nightmare.  
Your lack of morality disgusting.

You see nothing wrong with profiting  
off of the misery of our neighbors,  
in time you'll see, this pipeline  
won't do you any favors.

Because the world is on the brink  
of a crisis you can't ignore  
and we find we have to say again  
as we have a hundred times before ...

Which side are you on, friends?

Which side are you on?

No new pipelines anywhere,

Which side are you on?

**BREDL's Tireless Therese Vick Honored  
With National Community Sentinel Award**  
*Therese Vick, Sustainable Economic Development Coordinator*



The Halt the Harm Network and FracTracker Alliance recognized BREDL's community organizer Therese Vick for her work on fracking in North Carolina. The awards ceremony was held September 12, 2015 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Therese received a beautiful handmade wooden bowl as a symbol of her effective and abundant support and dedication.

From the website [www.fracktracker.org](http://www.fracktracker.org):

"The FracTracker Alliance created an award – in partnership with the Halt the Harm Network – to honor three ‘sentinels’ amongst the thousands of volunteers across the United States working in their communities and cherished places to observe, measure, document and report impacts caused by activities of the oil and gas industry. In the complex universe around these issues, volunteers fill regulatory gaps in oversight and do extraordinary things. Everyday insights from citizens lead to the discovery of problems unnoticed or ignored, to enforcement and remediation, and to new perspectives and initiatives for environmental protection. Whether mapping or monitoring, capturing photos or video, a sentinel is someone watching tirelessly, caring boldly – an indispensable ally in informing science, understanding, and action."

*“Watching tirelessly,  
caring boldly  
to address the  
harms of fracking.”*

The awards ceremony was held September 12, 2015 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Therese works with BREDL Chapters on the frontlines of fracking in North Carolina: Pee Dee WALL, Chatham Citizens Against Coal Ash Dump, EnvironmentalLEE and No Fracking in Stokes. She was honored and humbled by the nominations, which came from BREDL members, and feels the award belongs to the communities which are threatened by the oil and gas industry.

For more information see:

[3 Community Sentinels Honored \(http://www.fracktracker.org/2015/09/community-sentinels-honored/\)](http://www.fracktracker.org/2015/09/community-sentinels-honored/)

## Just Say NO to Pipeline Easements

by Sharon Ponton, Community Organizer



As I traveled through Virginia and North Carolina speaking to groups opposed to the proposed Atlantic Coast (ACP) and Mountain Valley Pipelines (MVP), I quickly learned the partners in these ventures are aggressively pursuing landowners to attain easements from them for these proposed projects

I am not an attorney, and believe stakeholders should seek legal counsel before negotiating an easement. But the position I advocate at this point in the process is that landowners should just say NO. Why would I and BREDL choose this position? The answers are easy and very clear:

Neither the proposed ACP nor MVP have been approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The MVP is still in the pre-filing stage. The ACP filed its formal application with FERC on September 18, 2015. Both projects are many, many months from receiving a decision. Until they are certificated by the FERC, they do not have the right of eminent domain.

Signing—or even negotiating—an easement at this juncture is premature. If a landowner were to sign an agreement submitted by one of the land men representing these corporations, that would make it easier for them to get FERC approval. The energy companies currently tout their version of the “survey completion rate” to imply tacit approval by landowners as approval of these projects even though we know many landowners are hamstrung by state laws which restrict a landowner’s ability to keep these companies off their properties for survey.

Signing an easement before FERC approval of the projects puts landowners and their land in further jeopardy. Let’s say, for example, the natural gas market tanks and the companies withdraw their projects because they are no longer economically feasible. In this case, landowners have now signed a right-of-way across their land for a project that won’t be built, yet the company still owns the right-of-way across their land. The easement agreement most likely would give the company the right to sell

that easement to another company because pipeline companies sell and transfer their assets all the time. Another possibility would be for them to hold on to the easement until market conditions change. Their property would increase in value during that time, but the energy companies would have the right to build their pipeline with no additional remuneration for the increase in land value. A third example is the paths of these proposed pipelines are just that: **proposed**. They could change at any time! Sell an easement today, have the path change tomorrow, and they are stuck with devalued property for an easement that may or may not ever be used.

“Just Say NO” is the best available position that any landowner along the proposed routes can take at this point in the process.



## Atlantic Coast Pipeline: Local Economic Benefits Overstated & Not Auditable

by Pastor Cary Rodgers, Environmental Justice Coordinator



The partners of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, Dominion Transmission, Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas and AGL Resources propose to build a 550 mile high pressurized natural gas pipeline from West Virginia to North Carolina that will scar approximately 12,972 acres during construction and 4,370 permanently. They hired ICF International and Chmura Economic & Analytics to produce data of the economic impacts of the ACP. The Southern Environmental Law Center commissioned Synapse Energy Economics (Synapse) to objectively review the two reports. From their findings it appears that the ACP hired the two firms to give a favorable economic impact report. The ACP has promoted these favorable results to local officials, businesses, land owners, and groups up and down the proposed route to gather support for the ACP. The reality is the ACP's economic benefits are overstated and not auditable according to Synapse's independent review.

### **Here are eight main discrepancies that they found concerning ACP's economic impact report:**

- Reports use economic data that is not publicly available, thus is it not auditable and can not be trusted. In other words, where are they getting their numbers from?
- They suggest significant natural gas saving to power plants, but their data is inadequately explained and not support by the facts.
- Assume that local businesses will save significant money on their energy bill because of the ACP and as a result they will hire more staff. There are no guarantees that Duke or Dominion will lower energy bills as a result of the ACP. Plus the assumption that local businesses will hire new staff is not supported by evidence.
- Data of job creation and increase of tax revenue is not auditable and not supported by evidence
- Avoids the fact that the cost to build ACP could be passed down to customers thus canceling any "assumed" savings for local businesses or residents.

- Reports ignore the real cost of public safety, human health, and welfare.
- They dismiss the real cost of replacing natural resources, habitat, wildlife, aged forest, and trees that will be lost.
- Even if the ACP economic impacts were true they would not produce noticeable profitable benefits until 2027.

Synapse's complete eleven page review is available at

<http://www.synapse-energy.com/sites/default/files/Atlantic-Coast-Pipeline-Benefits-Review-14-150.pdf>

### **Other ACP Economic Impacts to consider:**

- The ACP says that it will bring in a lot of tax revenue for the local economy. This is strictly based on their assumption of job growth and income taxes paid by these jobs. Also they assume because of the energy saving that local businesses will produce more profit thus paying more business tax.
- There will only be a small spike in tax revenue for local economies because the temporary pipeline construction workers that may buy from local restaurants and businesses.
- The local government will NOT get an extra property tax payment from ACP's easements for property that is already receiving property tax from owners.
- The cost for a local manufacturer or industrial business to tap into the highly pressurized ACP for energy savings will be cost prohibitive for many because it can cost each one between \$1 million to \$5 million.
- Property values will greatly decrease along the ACP route
- Property owners assume greater liability in case of ACP accident on their property

## Freedom of Information Isn't Free in Franklin

by Mara Robbins, Campaign Coordinator



On August 26, 2015, BREDL filed a Freedom Of Information (FOIA) request with the Franklin County Board of Supervisors for all documents pertaining to the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Their backhanded, disingenuous methods of deception have made it necessary to invoke the Virginia FOIA. For example, less than a week after the FOIA request was submitted, the Franklin Board held a series of meetings with representatives from the Mountain Valley Pipeline where they chose to meet two by two. A group meeting of more than two supervisors would have required that it be a public meeting.

President Bush stated on December 14, 2005, in Executive Order 13392, Improving Agency Disclosure of Information:

"The effective functioning of our constitutional democracy depends upon the participation in public life of a citizenry that is well informed. For nearly four decades, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided an important means through which the public can obtain information regarding the activities of Federal agencies."

Though some states do not abide by the Federal FOIA in regards to local and state government, the Commonwealth of Virginia enacted the Virginia Freedom of Information Act on July 1, 1968. The statute ensures citizen access, with

certain exceptions, to records and meetings of state and local government. According to The Virginia Coalition for Open Government, a nonprofit alliance formed to promote expanded access to government records, meetings and other proceedings at the state and local level: "Government business is the people's business. The Freedom of Information Act ensures that citizens have the right to inspect and copy public records and attend public meetings."

Following our FOIA request, Sharon Ponton, a BREDL organizer, attended a Franklin Board of Supervisors meeting. She planned to address questions surrounding our request, but was denied the opportunity to speak. Instead, the Chairperson of the Franklin County Board, Cline Brubaker, suggested a "hallway conversation" (outside of the boardroom) between Ponton and County Administrator Brent Robertson.

During the conversation, Robertson estimated that in order to retrieve the data it would cost at least \$4,800 to search the county computer system of its 350 employee's records. He claimed that it would require four technicians eight hours per day for five days at \$30 an hour to complete the request. Robertson gave as an example a test search of backup servers only being 40% complete after three hours. He revealed during the discussion that the techni-

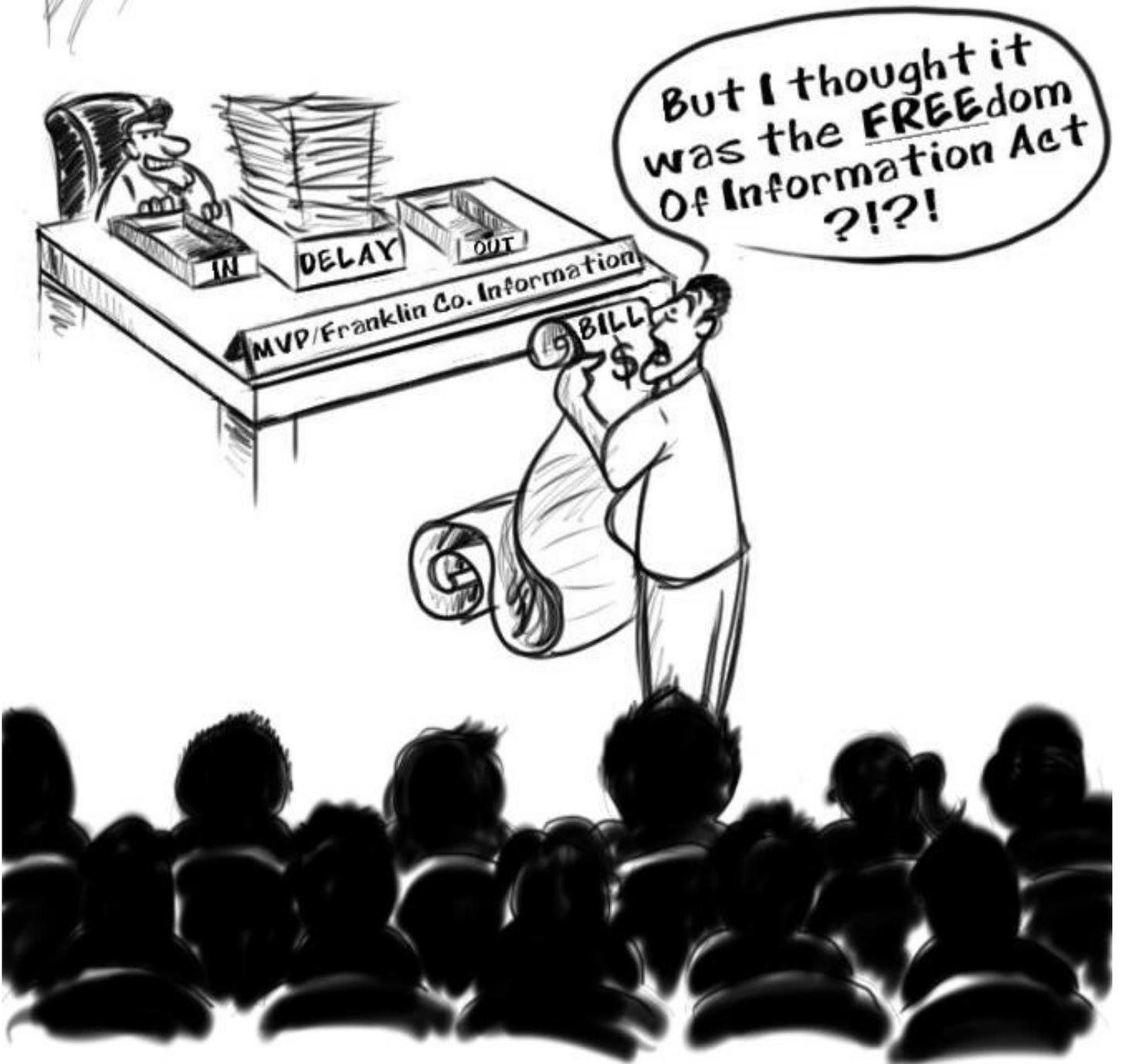
cian began the search and returned 3 hours later to check on its progress. Ponton replied, "You would charge \$90 for a search your IT staff started, walked away from, and checked on 3 hours later?"

Kathleen Taylor, a resident of Rocky Mount, upon hearing of the \$4,800 deposit required of BREDL, retorted: "I can ask the IRS for any number of copies of forms and publications and they will be mailed to me without cost. I can ask for copies of my medical records, including MRIs and CT scans. If the Franklin County government cannot do the same with records that are public, there is seriously something wrong with the administration of this County. This, in addition to the secrecy that is running rampant in meetings with MVP should be raising red flags all over the place. The public records should be made available to the public. Don't forget—we've already paid for them when we pay our taxes."

BREDL continues to seek all public records regarding the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline to ensure that compliance with open meeting requirements are met and to hold the Franklin County Board of Supervisors accountable to their oath to protect the health, safety and welfare of their residents.

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/foia\\_default#9](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/foia_default#9)  
<http://www.opengovva.org/foia-overview-a-faqs>

FRANKLIN COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



BREDL  
PO BOX 88  
Glendale Springs  
NC 28629

**Contact BREDL to help organize your community and  
plan events to educate others about your issue and  
expand your membership so you can win!**

**BREDL** is a regional, community-based non-profit environmental organization founded in 1984. BREDL encourages government agencies and citizens to take responsibility for conserving and protecting our natural resources. BREDL advocates grassroots involvement in environmental issues. Protecting children's health from environmental poisons, empowering whole communities to engage in crucial decision making, and changing the balance of power to prevent injustice are key components of our work.

Visit [www.bredl.org](http://www.bredl.org) to view our interactive timeline that spans 30 years of environmental work across the southeast.  
Your donation will help us to carry on for years to come!

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