



BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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The LEAGUE LINE

Fall 2016

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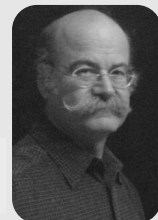
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Industries' RACKET

by Louis A. Zeller



Unwanted, unpleasant noise is a growing public health problem. Industrial sources of noise commonly disrupt communities. But the economic considerations of industrial special interest groups cannot be allowed to take precedence over the right to be secure in one's home.

Noise Impacts

A decibel level in the upper 70s is considered annoyingly loud by many people. Sources able to cause such levels include asphalt plants, compressors and motor vehicles. A diesel truck traveling 40 mph fifty feet away creates 84 decibels. Asphalt plant neighbors have complained of start-up sounds "like a 747 taking off."¹ Jet take-off typically creates 100 decibels a thousand feet from the source. The high pressure operation of compressors makes them painfully noisy up close:

The basic noise sources are caused by trapping a definite volume of fluid and carrying it around the case to the outlet with higher pressure. The pressure pulses from compressors are quite severe, and equivalent sound pressure levels can exceed 105dB.²

How distance affects the impact of a source of noise varies. Sound can travel longer or shorter distances depending on the medium through which it moves. For example, sound travels at 768 miles per hour in dry air and at 3,300 mph in water. Experts have determined that disruptive sound levels can travel far from the source and over natural and artificial barriers such as trees and walls.

The atmospheric effects become most important at distances beyond about 1000 feet from the source....The normally humid environment in the southeastern US allows sound to travel further with less reduction in level. Downwind and under many night-time conditions (cooler air near the surface), sound waves that start upward will bend downward. Thus, the noise reduction benefits of barriers can be negated by these atmospheric effects.³

Thus, although sound generally decreases with distance, under some circumstances noise pollution can have higher impacts at greater distances.

Public Health Danger

Disturbing levels of sound become a medical issue when the noise interferes with normal activities and the quality of life. Being unable to sleep or to have a normal conversation for extended periods or at recurring intervals creates stress. These conditions lead to acute, chronic and long-term problems. And the negative impacts of noise pollution on human health can be serious.

Chronic environmental noise causes a wide variety of adverse health effects, including sleep disturbance, annoyance, noise-induced hearing loss, cardiovascular disease, endocrine effects, and increased incidence of diabetes.⁴

The World Health Organization describes high levels of noise as a "serious annoyance" in residential areas when the average sound levels exceed 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels at night.

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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.

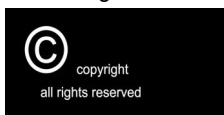
Moving into the future

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.



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Living in the Shadow of Oppression; Eminent Domain

By Carolyn Reilly (2nd from left)



After a mini-vacation with my husband, away from our family farm to celebrate our wedding anniversary, I came to realize and understand deeper the weight and importance of the battle we are fighting.

When my husband and I married over 15 years ago, we had no idea that we'd be farmers one day; Ian (my husband) trading in his office space for space in the outdoors. Very happily, I threw away my cul-de-sac comfort and neighborhood noise for my husband's dream: a goal and desire to farm and work the land in a restorative way.

Ian would call himself, in the words of Lynyrd Skynyrd, "a simple kind of man." Joining the Marine Corps after High School, training hard and travelling the world while serving during a time of peace (1994-1998), Ian was (and still is) a committed, hard-working and ready-to-face anything man. After serving in the Marines, Ian began his career working with computers. From 1998 through 2013, for 15 years, Ian used his growing talents and skills to advance in the world of Information Technology. We married in 2001, and in 2008, a shift began to occur.

I remember asking my husband about his dreams and goals in life. Ian expressed that he was okay with his job; he was content to work in windowless offices and earn a paycheck from large companies and eventually a large university. Life was good; it was comfortable. Too comfortable. And that was the problem. We began to see some ugly truths about our American culture, including factory farming. Our conscience pushed us to

supporting local food producers and growers who honor the land and all creation. And my man, my "simple kind of man," began to wake up to the stirrings within him to be a part of the change. Ian wanted to become a farmer and my heart was overjoyed to hear that he had a dream.

The strategic juices within me flowed and churned as we researched and read books; talked with family and close friends. We visited local farms and fell in love with our dream – to find farm land and work to restore the earth on our little slice of terra-firma. We moved in 2010 to Southwest Virginia and began our first season of farming in 2011.

Fast forward to September 17, 2016 – Ian and I were able to go to our very first Farm Aid Concert, held in Bristow, VA. Here, a slew of musicians perform in order to support small family farms just like ours! These artists have the freedom to express themselves using their gifts and talents – growing in skill (and popularity) as they play and perform. As farmers, I believe we are similar to artists: we have a dream to do something honorable and uplifting for people – something that makes a difference in the world for the better! But we're relying on **land** to fulfill our dream and grow our skills.

For the past two years, we've lived under a shadow of oppression. Fossil fuel fiends are striving to have the right of eminent domain to seize our land for a right of way of a proposed fracked gas pipeline. Our dream has been under attack by a greedy, land-grabbing limited

liability corporation. This shadow of oppression not only falls on us, but many others whose dreams are potentially shattered. Those who dreamed of retiring to the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia; those who choose to stay on their land because of the heritage, traditions and attachment to place; and those who work on the land (like ourselves) and desire to bring health, healing and happiness to the local community. All to be destroyed if (and that's a BIG IF!) these proposed pipelines are unjustly "planted" in the ground.

I call out to artists and musicians whose talents can soar across our lands to help us! Join our cause and fight against the fossil fuel giants and let's stop the oppression – Help us shine the light on the industry that seeks to destroy dreams for everyday Americans and expose the greed and land-stealers for who they really are: **thieves**.

Thieves

Careless, only thinking green (as in money);

Corporate slugs: killing the living, draining life.

Set the traps! Call on friends!

The time has come to make them run!

Artists and farmers, dreamers and sowers,

Join forces to protect our land and homes.

Expose the thief, project the truth – we hold it!

Take the news and share it – We, the People!

Dilemma Demonstrations

September 24, 2016

Imagine if you will, the federal government has passed a law authorizing a dirty energy project. Also, the state has enacted enabling legislation to plan, contract and license the project. A state agency has been given the authority to carry out the plan and find a suitable site for the project. Funding has been approved. Hearings are being held. People worry: Are we too late?

This was the scenario we faced on February 21, 1990: a televised meeting of the North Carolina Radioactive Waste Management Authority, broadcast statewide on the "Stateline" program of WUNC-TV. A few years earlier, North Carolina had been selected as the host for an eight-state nuclear waste dump by the Southeast Compact Commission, implementing the federal Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act. During that time, although organizing at the local level had generated much opposition to the dump, the Authority lumbered on with bureaucratic stubbornness. The Authority had even set up an External Relations Committee to foster public participation and calm the waters. The televised meeting was their effort to raise the stakes, adding a slick media façade to the quest for a site to dump 32 million cubic feet of radioactive trash.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and other groups, working together with the statewide Radioactive Waste Roundtable, developed our own strategic plan for the televised meeting. Our tactics were bold but simple: Dressed in our Sunday best, eight people agreed to interrupt the Authority's meeting at an advantageous time and attempt to speak. We arrived early in the morning to be sure of entry; the studio selected by the state was a small one. Janet Marsh, explains: "Our strategic action set up a dumper's dilemma: Either a) They let us tell the truth to North Carolinians, or b) They blocked our filibuster and appeared oppressive and afraid."

Years later, an academic analysis of the total failure of North Carolina to site, much less construct or operate, the radioactive dump stated, "In 1990, a live, televised meeting of the Authority was disrupted by an overflow studio audience before the minutes from the previous meeting could be approved, and the studio had to be cleared of visitors (Authority minutes, 2/21/90, p.1)." The dry tone of the report nevertheless confirms the effectiveness of dilemma demonstrations.

The *Stateline* program proved to be a turning point in a decade-long struggle to halt the dump. Looking back, Janet Marsh distills the impact of the event: "The press and the public were suddenly on our side." The Authority's relations with the public, never good, became filled with scorn and contempt. After their public information campaign had spent \$3.5 million, one member of the Authority said, "The more you give them, the more they misunderstand." The Authority had entered a death spiral.

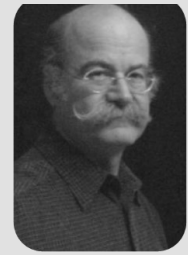
According to George Lakey, "The best kind of action is one which puts the opponent in a dilemma: whichever response he makes helps the movement. If he allows the demonstration to proceed, the movement gains that opportunity to educate the people. If he represses the demonstration, the people are awakened further to the underlying nature of the regime."

"It is confident action, no matter how small the step, that will break through feelings of futility, and begin to experience our power." —Joanna Macy ■



League Line Director's Report

Louis A. Zeller, Executive Director



Demonstrators outside WUNC-TV, 2/21/90



Lou Zeller, carried out of the Authority meeting, 2/21/90



The North Carolina Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Authority, 2/21/90

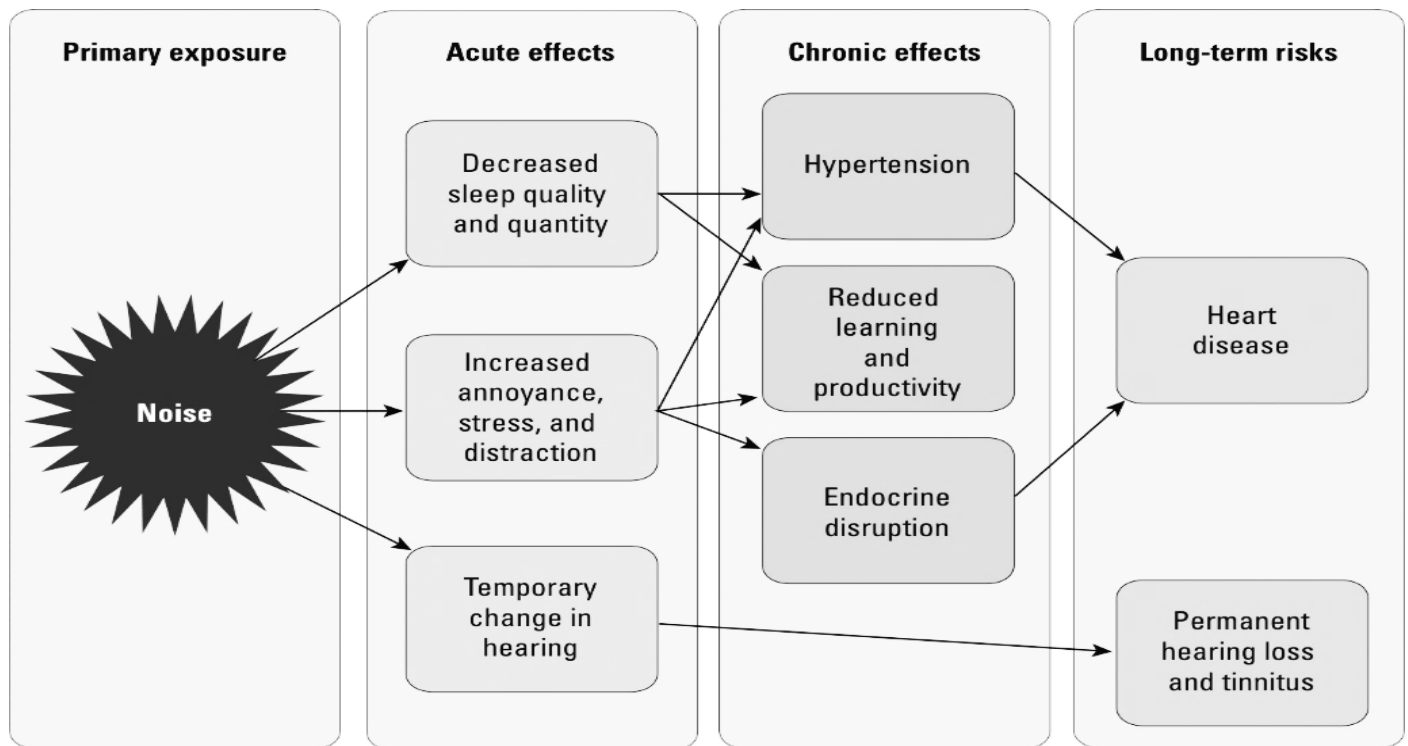


Pam Jopson of Hamlet, NC escorted out of the Authority meeting, 2/21/90

References for this report:

George Lakey, *Powerful Peacemaking: A Strategy for a Living Revolution* (1987) ISBN 0-86571-096-1

Herndl, Carl G., Brown, Stuart C., Ed. *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, Chapter 4: "The Low-level Waste Siting Controversy in North Carolina," Herndl C., Brown S., pp. 111–140, University of Wisconsin Press, Jan 1, 1996 ■

Negative Health Effects of Noise⁵

The effects of noise on humans have been studied for decades. The cascade of health problems created by excessive noise appears to be related to anxiety and tension. High blood pressure and heart disease are the result of chronic stress associated with persistent noise pollution.⁶ Plainly, excessive noise is a serious public health problem which calls for preventive measures.

Noise Regulation

The nation's major environmental protection laws include noise as a pollutant, along with nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and ozone. The federal Noise Control Act of 1972 made it the nation's policy to reduce the harm caused by excessive levels of noise to the general public.⁷ The law states:

The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare. To that end, it is the purpose of this Act to

establish a means for effective coordination of Federal research and activities in noise control, to authorize the establishment of Federal noise emission standards for products distributed in commerce, and to provide information to the public respecting the noise emission and noise reduction characteristics of such products.

Health and welfare in the above statement are defined as the "complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity"; in other words, the absence of mental anguish and annoyance.⁸

The Noise Control Act designated roles for all three levels of government—federal, state and local. Emission controls are a federal responsibility. State and local governments are delegated control over the use of the various noise sources and the levels permitted in the environment from them, including automobiles, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, amplified sound systems and other sources.

The federal Clean Air Act Title IV includes a section on the reduction of noise as a pollutant.⁹ The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines noise pollution as follows:

Sound becomes unwanted when it either interferes with normal activities such as sleeping, conversation, or disrupts or diminishes one's quality of life. The fact that you can't see, taste or smell it may help explain why it has not received as much attention as other types of pollution, such as air pollution, or water pollution. The air around us is constantly filled with sounds, yet most of us would probably not say we are surrounded by noise. Though for some, the persistent and escalating sources of sound can often be considered an annoyance. This "annoyance" can have major consequences, primarily to one's overall health.¹⁰

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA established the Office of Noise Abatement and Control to study the impacts of noise on public health and welfare. In 1981 the Reagan Administration closed this office and transferred this responsibility from the federal agency to state and local governments where it remains today.

The medical definition of noise pollution specifically refers to internal combustion engines: "Noise pollution: environmental pollution consisting of annoying or harmful noise (as of automobiles or jet airplanes)—called also sound pollution."¹¹ Noise pollution is a recognized health hazard by the US Surgeon General, who further distinguishes noise pollution in the home from its workplace counterpart:

In relation to environmental pollution, noise is normally associated with annoying sound waves in communities, but noise is also a threat to public health. As asserted by Dr. William H. Stewart, former U.S. Surgeon General, "Calling noise a nuisance is like calling smog an inconvenience. Noise must be considered a hazard to the health of people everywhere."¹²

The US EPA's Office of Noise Abatement and Control found that "levels of 55 decibels outdoors and 45 decibels indoors are identified as preventing activity interference and annoyance. These levels of noise are considered those which will permit spoken conversation and other activities such as sleeping, working and recreation, which are part of the daily human condition."¹³

The US EPA places a large measure of responsibility on local governments to protect their residents from the negative effects of noise pollution. This is a logical method of protecting public health because municipal officials are in the best position to know their environment, their residents and the nature of the problems they face from excessive noise.

Clearly, the control of industrial sources of noise is the responsibility of local governments. Land use regulations and polluting industries ordinances are the means we have of protecting public health and welfare. Political noise from an aroused citizenry is the antidote for noise pollution. ■

¹This sound was described by Joyce Starr in Franklin, North Carolina, while living about a quarter mile from a medium-sized asphalt plant.

²*Occupational exposure to noise: evaluation, prevention and control*, Edited by Berenice Goeltzer, Colin H. Hansen and Gustav A. Sehnrdt, Published on behalf of the World Health Organization by the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Dortmund, Germany, © WHO, 2001, ISBN 3-89701-721-0, page 110

³*Evaluation of Environmental Sound in the Community*, Stewart ND, Ph.D. FASA FASTM (July 23, 2011), page 3, downloaded 1/16/15 from <http://www.sacnc.com>

⁴"Environmental Noise Pollution in the United States: Developing an Effective Public Health Response," Monica S. Hammer, Tracy K. Swinburn, and Richard L. Neitzel, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 122, No. 2, February 2014, pp. 115-119

⁵"Environmental Noise Pollution in the United States: Developing an Effective Public Health Response," Monica S. Hammer, Tracy K. Swinburn, and Richard L. Neitzel, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 122, No. 2, February 2014, pp. 115-119

⁶Journal of Public Health | Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 160– 169 | doi:10.1093/pubmed/fdr032

⁷Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. 4901, Public Law 92-574, Oct. 27, 1972; 86 Stat. 1234; 42 USC 4901 et seq.; Amended by PL 94-301, May 31, 1976; PL 95-609, Nov. 8, 1978; PL 100-418, Aug. 23, 1988

⁸"Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare With an Adequate Margin of Safety," US Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Noise Abatement and Control (March 1974), page 7, EPA-550/9-74-004, accessed 1/18/16 at <http://www.nonoise.org/library/levels74/levels74.htm>

⁹The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 added subchapter IV-A to Title IV dedicated to the control of acid deposition caused by the burning of fossil fuel and emissions of sulfur dioxide. United States Code, Title 42 – Chapter 85, The Public Health and Welfare, Air Pollution Prevention and Control, Acid Deposition

¹⁰"Title IV - Noise Pollution," US EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/title-iv-noise-pollution>

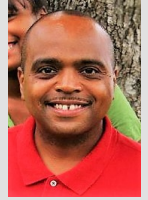
¹¹Medline plus Health information, World Health Organization

¹²Mauricio Leandro, "Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste: The Social Science of Garbage," Edited by Carl A. Zimring & William L. Rathje, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452218526.n233>

¹³"Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare With an Adequate Margin of Safety," US Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Noise Abatement and Control (March 1974), page 7, EPA-550/9-74-004, accessed 1/18/16 at <http://www.nonoise.org/library/levels74/levels74> ■

Why Self Air Monitoring...

By Cary Rodgers



There are hundreds of workers from state regulatory agencies and the EPA who are suppose to protect our the air we breath but we must remember that their immediate bosses are elected officials at the state and federal levels. If the majority of the elected officials feel that air and lives are more important than money, they pass laws that protect its citizens and make sure that the environmental regulating agencies enforce those laws. If the majority of the elected officials feel that profits and jobs are more important, they pass laws that mainly benefit corporate profits and promote environmental deregulation. They feel that regulation is a job killer and that business is unable to thrive in a regulated environment. They appoint department heads of regulatory agencies to make sure their agenda is successful. This is the challenge that the citizens of many states face right now.

All people have a right to clean air. Because of the many regulatory inadequacies and failures of many states and the EPA, local communities MUST be proactive and implement “self” air monitoring tools as an environmental justice strategy to assist in protecting their air from polluting industries. These air monitoring tools can be used to collect “tangible” evidence of how much pollution is in the air due a polluting industry. The data and trends collected from these tools can be a part of an overall strategy campaign to get local officials, the state and EPA to act and enforce air pollution laws they may have be violated according to the Clean Air Act. ■



Creating a Toolbox for Community Air Monitoring

By Therese Vick



This summer I had the pleasure to work with Duke intern Saraswathi Gautham and Chatham Citizens Against Coal Ash Dump member John Wagner on our project “Creating a Toolbox for Community Air Monitoring.” This was a challenging and very fluid project; we learned as much about what not to do as we did what to do. We also quickly realized that the “toolbox” required more than the equipment- it required a first aid kit, water, something to sit on, sunscreen, bug repellant, safety vests and hats. (See Sara’s sidebar about the equipment we used.) BREDL purchased formaldehyde monitors, as well as the PDR-1000 particulate monitor. EnvironmentalEE shared their donated Air Beam particulate monitors with us.

It is important to understand that any grassroots monitoring project requires at least as much preparation prior to a monitoring event as actual time spent monitoring. Location for monitoring, weather conditions, limitations of the equipment, and researching what is possibly being emitted are all part of preparing for monitoring in your community. Documentation is essential, pictures, video, and written logs augment the data that is being recorded by the equipment.

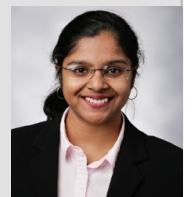
Some dos and don’ts:

- Do understand the limitations of your equipment
- Do be flexible
- Do your research
- DO have fun
- Do protect yourself- from the emissions, from traffic, from harassment and from critters
- Don’t lose patience
- Don’t shortcut your preparation
- Don’t forget to have all the batteries you could possibly need

Our BREDL air monitoring project is continually evolving and improving. We hope to provide training and additional testing capabilities soon. ■

Saraswathi Gautham, Master of Engineering Management (Candidate)

Pratt School of Engineering, Duke University

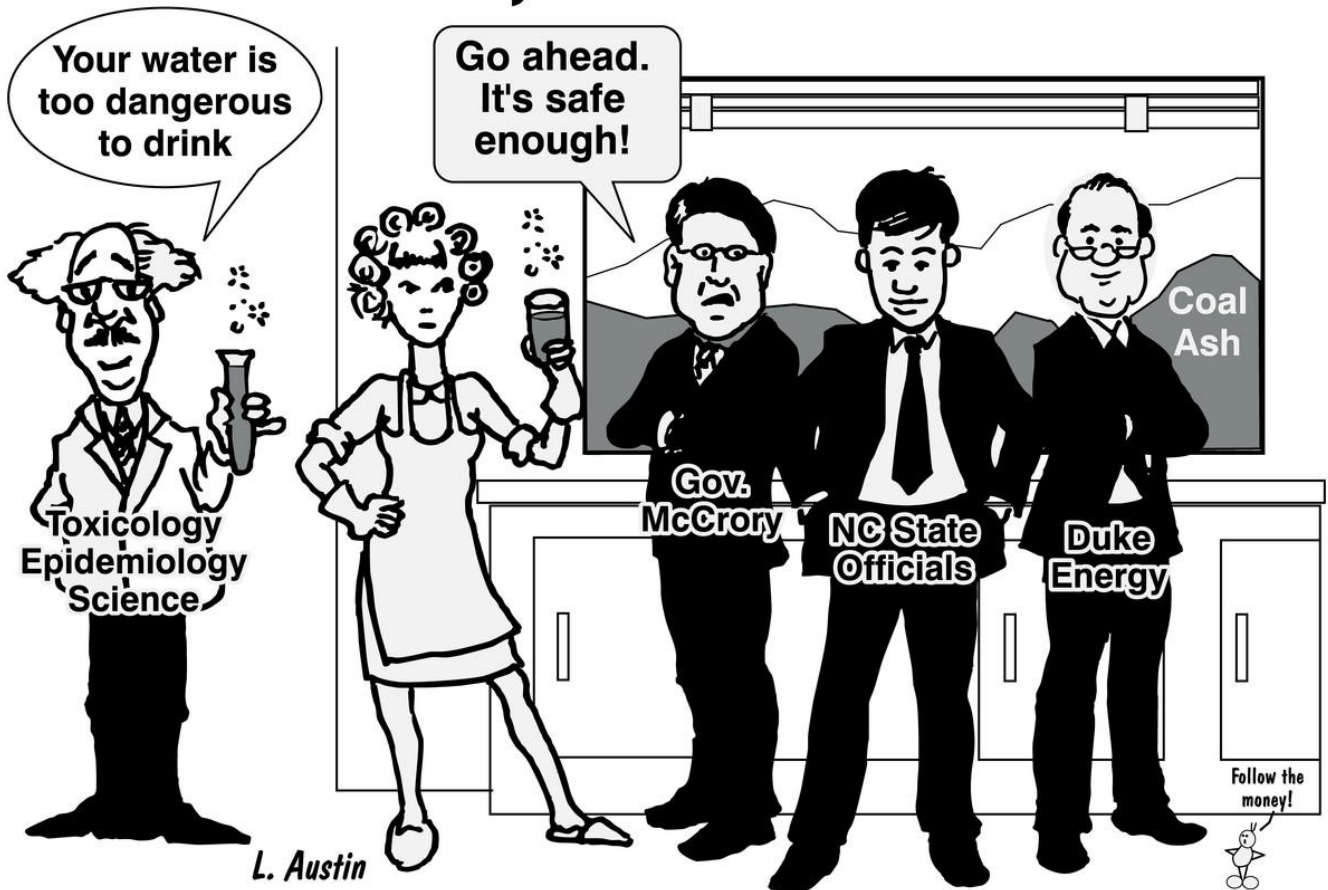


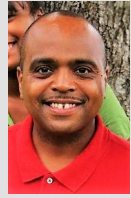
Over the past summer I had the opportunity to intern with BREDL through the Stanback Internship Program offered by the Nicholas School of Environment at Duke University. I had the opportunity to design a project to carry out community air monitoring in North Carolina. I mainly worked on designing a protocol for the process. We focused specifically on monitoring formaldehyde and coal ash around certain locations with high risk of exposure using specific equipment.

The equipment used for formaldehyde monitoring was Formaldehyde Meter 800052 Formaldehyde Data Logging Meter 800053, manufactured by Sper Scientific. Two monitors were used for monitoring particulates. They were the AirBeam Particle monitor that has its own platform to carry out data logging (aircasting.org) and personal DataRAM™ pDR-1000AN Monitor manufactured by ThermoScientific. I also worked on putting together a data logging sheet to keep track of other parameters such as vehicle

passage to make a more holistic data collection process. The project gave me great insights on federal and state regulations and ensuring the collection of quality, reproducible data. I had a great time meeting several wonderful people who have been volunteering their time to a worthy cause. The experience has been very educational, inspiring and humbling for me. I wish BREDL the best in all its future endeavors. ■

TO Drink, or Not to Drink?





BREDL sponsors www.NoPipeline.net for local BREDL chapters, made up of landowners and concerned citizens in our service area who are actively opposing the proposed natural gas pipelines, such as the Sabal Trail, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the Mt. Valley Pipeline. NoPipeline.net is designed to be a capacity building tool to connect other concerned citizens with local chapters that are fighting pipelines. It is

also an educational and training tool with several fact-sheets, documents, and templates that can be used to assist chapters in implementing local strategies to grow people “power” and stop the proposed pipelines.

Go to www.NoPipeline.net TODAY.

Remember, the “net” like a fisher's net. It is NOT .com or .org, but .net. ■

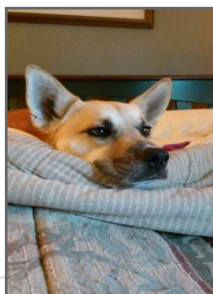
NO PIPELINE
NO DISASTER
PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY
NoPipeline.net

Staff Profile

BREDL Welcomes Michael James-Deramo



Michael grew up in Southwest Virginia for which he attributes his love for nature and life. A recent graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, Michael was one of a group of students who founded the Virginia Student Environmental Coalition. This coordinated collective of student activist groups across Virginia Universities developed Michael's appreciation for grassroots bottom up organizing. He understands the need for community based solutions that build the power of many, rather than relying on the candidate or powerful figure to create needed change. When not organizing Michael enjoys camping in the Blue Ridge Mountains, meeting new people, and rolling around with his dog, Laika.



I have lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains all my life. The beauty of this region is a part of who I am and has developed me into who I am today. It occurred to me not so far into my life that the pristine landscape that raised me was in danger. I discovered that while many like myself saw the earth as a means to empowerment and life, others saw it as a commodity to dominate; a moneymaker to be sucked dry rather than sustained.

The turning point in my life occurred while participating in a spring break trip. Our group was taken on a tour through the heart of West Virginia in Appalachia. The area looked and felt like my home in Southwest Virginia with mountainous beauty that emanated life. But there were glaring differences. Scars ran up and down the mountainside where fracked gas pipelines bore into the land. Heavy construction vehicles rumbled up and down the roads carrying coal blasted from the earth. Fracking pads invaded property of landowners based on decade old

permits. Families described living from bottled water which they had to buy from across the mountain, and a plummet in their property values that left them unable to leave. Corporate employees whose homes were states away employed intimidation tactics: they blocked our path, called police on our legal tours, and filmed our faces and license plates. It all hit me at once standing atop Kayford Mountain overlooking moonscape. Lands that had given life now looked like nothing but death. The immensity of the task at hand and the power of the opposition staggered me and broke me down. But it was then I found something new.

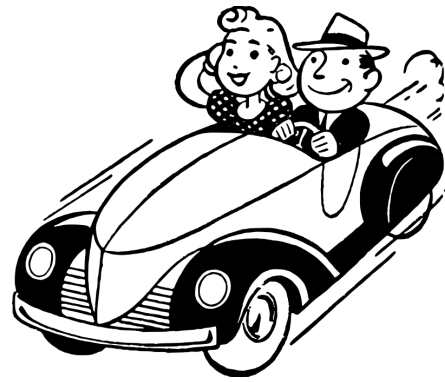
The people who were facing these obstacles, who had every reason to despair, had found commonality in their collective situation. A unity that empowered. They organized together as a community. Helplessness was pushed aside and instead there was driven clarity of the need at hand. There was nothing to do but fight back.

This is a feeling we should all claim as the fossil fuel industry continues to threaten our lives, whether directly on our individual properties or through our collective future as climate change escalates to dire levels. But even with that understanding, once I returned to my home in the Blue Ridge Mountains I realized: organizing is hard.

How do we create real change? Depending on who you ask the answer might be to rally around a candidate who, if elected, will save us. Or perhaps we fight the company head on--challenging them, their money, influence and paid team of misinformers to change their bottom line. Or maybe we instead simplify our lifestyles so that our actions have the least ties to destructive practice. The road to change is difficult, and of course it was made that way. But the fact is, we have power.

Margaret Mead said *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."* We, in our own communities, know what we love about our homes. We also know about ourselves--what drives us and makes us feel powerful. We, as individuals, have strengths and insight. Together, we become something much more powerful. Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League recognizes that our power comes from our relationships with one another, with ourselves, and with the community to which we are connected. For thirty years BREDL has organized successful campaigns by looking to power in a pluralist fashion that begins with the grassroots. Communities know their needs and which goals can be developed. The community organizer recommends and guides with strategy that moves towards that goal.

The threat of extraction, climate change, and the contamination to our air and water is a colossal challenge and it is not easy. We shouldn't have to regulate our regulators or demand representation from our representatives. It should already be done. We shouldn't have to fight off billionaire companies from destroying that which gives us life. But since we must, let us build something while we do it. Let us build a world in which our communities control our communities because we can take care of what we love. ■



Interested in supporting Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and our community partners? But too busy trying to figure out what to do with your old car sitting in your driveway? Let us take it off your hands! BREDL's grassroots work relies on the donations of our donors to keep us doing the work we do. ■



Sabal Trail Pipeline (Spectra Energy)

by Dr. Michael Noll

In early 2014, WACE and other groups in our region became aware of plans by Texas-based Spectra Energy to construct a >\$3 billion 36 inch pipeline from central Alabama (near Alexander City) to central Florida (south of Orlando) for the transmission of more than 1 billion cubic feet of (un)natural fracked gas daily ... should they succeed with their proposed project.

After some brainstorming and reaching out to allies, we hit the air waves, wrote letters, made phone calls, organized panel discussions and protests, and became regular guests at meetings of county commissions and city councils. In late 2014, the hard work of so many started to pay off as counties like Dougherty, Terrell, and Lowndes and cities like Albany and Valdosta came out one-by-one in opposition to Sabal Trail Pipeline.

In October of 2015, BREDL submitted comments to FERC in regard to the draft EIS outlining why the denial of the "certificate of convenience and public necessity" is

the only sensible course of action once all potential impacts of such a project are weighed. That same month we were also delighted to learn that the EPA stated in a letter to FERC that it had "very significant concerns" that the proposed route posed a threat to the Floridan Aquifer and to our drinking water supply, and raised concerns about the pipeline's impact on wetlands, conservation lands, and minority communities in the region.

In November 2015, BREDL provided comments on the air quality permit application with the Georgia EPD Air Protection Branch in regard to the planned compressor station near Albany. Here too the message was clear: the compressor station would, among other things, be a major source of air pollution and would be in violation of the federal Clean Air Act. In other words, we were hitting Sabal Trail Pipeline where we could and in that month it seemed that everything was falling into place. Some of us perhaps saw the end of our battle in sight. We were wrong.

In December 2015, the EPA reversed its position by 180 degrees and dropped its objections. Why? Because it had met with representatives of Sabal Trail, reviewed the company's comments to FERC, and all of the sudden there were no more environmental concerns, and no more issues of environmental justice.

In February 2016, Sabal Trail Pipeline received its FERC certificate, and a month later the Georgia Corps of Engineers okayed permits for Sabal Trail, even though it would run through conservation areas, under rivers, near springs, and through sinkhole-active territory. We were dumbfounded.

We knew, of course, that in its 40 year history FERC hardly ever denied a permit for a pipeline, but we did not expect that the "R" in FERC stood for "Rubberstamping", and that the "C" stood for "Corruption". We see how greed has no limits, as we learn that contractors hired by FERC to review pipeline projects may be working for the very companies they are reviewing, even if on different

Dr. Michael G. Noll, President (far right in photo)

Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy



pipelines; and that the Governor of Florida, who spearheaded this project, is a stockholder in Spectra Energy; and that the Governor of Georgia received donations from Spectra Energy during his last re-election campaign. So now the LNG/CNG export markets in Florida are expanding: Pivotal LNG (Jacksonville), Eagle LNG (Jacksonville, FL), Carib Energy, LLC (Martin County, FL), Advanced Energy Solutions, LLC (Martin County, FL), Floridan Gas Storage Company (Martin County, FL), Strom Inc. (Crystal River, FL), American LNG Marketing, LLC (Miami, FL), American LNG Marketing, LLC (Titusville, FL), and Emera CNG, LLC (Palm Beach, FL).

So where are we in our battle?

The events and protests surrounding Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) clearly breathed new life into the opposition to EVERY pipeline in the nation. No matter where you are, protests are scheduled to oppose a fracking industry and its pipeline infrastructure. On September 22, the Florida Sierra Club, Flint Riverkeeper and Chattahoochee Riverkeeper filed a lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals challenging FERC's approval of the massive Southeast Market Pipeline project, which includes Sabal Trail Pipeline. In other words, this fight ain't over!

"Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance."

Theodor Roosevelt

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BREDL
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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 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!**

Thank you for supporting Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
Check out our secure online donation forms and use your credit card at **www.BREDL.org**.

Or send your check to: BREDL PO Box 88 Glendale Springs, NC 28629

For more information contact BREDL at 336-982-2691.

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