As part of the Global Climate Strike week of action, BREDL chapters and members joined over 40 organizations from North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia in two-days of activities in Roanoke, VA. The calls to action included protecting energy customers from exorbitant rate increases caused by the unnecessary buildout of fracked gas infrastructure, and for both the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines be stopped!

On Sunday, September 22, we participated in a day of workshops, strategy sessions and a concert performed by the SunSing Collective at the Circle of Protection: Bent Mountain.

On Monday, September 23, nearly 200 people from all three states participated in a rally with music and a mobile art installation illustrating the Earth on Fire created by Artivism Virginia. Speakers shared their personal stories about the devastation caused by pipeline construction. Others pointed to the intersectionality of pipeline construction with environmental and economic justice in indigenous, black, brown and rural communities.

At the end of the rally, a delegation from the coalition delivered a letter demanding that Wells Fargo divest from fossil fuels, pointing out the climate effects caused by the use of fossil fuels.
SEEKING VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE ON BREDL'S CAMPAIGN CABINET

By Ann Rogers

Calling all BREDL friends!

Have you ever wished that you could get more actively involved with your environmental cohorts at BREDL?

Ever wished that your involvement could go beyond attending the board meeting and working on a local environmental campaign?

Do you have an interest in spreading the word about BREDL's work over the past 35 years, and about our current hot button campaigns?

THIS MAY BE YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED!

BREDL is seeking 15 volunteers to serve on our Campaign Cabinet, which is a group of BREDL supporters who will be assigned the job of cultivating and soliciting financial support for BREDL's programs from folks living in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina.

Your work as a BREDL Campaign Cabinet volunteer will begin when you attend a luncheon in Durham on December 3 at which we educate a roomful of guests about BREDL's programs past, present, and future. Those guests will hear motivational presentations by selected BREDL staff and chapter representatives. We will need you there to mingle with the guests and help us make sure they are comfortable and positively engaged.

During 2020, your work as a volunteer on BREDL's Campaign Cabinet will involve attending meetings in January, February, March, and April, at which you will be trained and coached on how to ask individuals for financial support. You'll attend another BREDL informational luncheon in May. And finally, during June through November, 2020, you will use the fund raising skills you learned earlier in the year to do actual fund raising in support of BREDL's programs.

Your work will help us get to know people who are willing and able to make significant financial contributions in support of BREDL's continuing work in the southeastern U.S.

If this sounds like something you'd like to discuss, please contact BREDL's Executive Director, Lou Zeller (bredl@skybest.com) or BREDL's Director of Development, Ann Rogers (amelvin3@verizon.net).

Thank you for considering taking on these volunteer duties! We need you!
A member of the BREDL chapter, Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff from its conception, the Rev. Willie Tomlin served for more than a decade as state representative of Georgia and vice president of BREDL’s Board of Directors Executive Committee.

In addition to being an environmentalist and a warrior of justice and equality, he was a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was among very few who knew scripture and verse by memory, which he imparted to listeners with wisdom and understanding.

His ministry spanned over 40 years, 36 of those years spent serving at Thomas Grove Baptist Church, Waynesboro, GA. His first assignment (calling) to pastor was at Morrison Grove Baptist Church, Millen, GA.

In addition to pastoring, he was involved with community issues and human rights, becoming an icon for environmental justice.

He was known to many as a “mover and a shaker”, one to be dealt with. Other environmentalists referred to him as a calming presence in the room, a man of wisdom, foresight and vision.

He worked to make communities a place of equity and equality for all people.

His first foray in the political arena was in 1976 when he challenged the incumbent candidate for District 4 Jefferson County Board of Commissioners.

He later became a viable candidate for the Georgia House Seat 104, as well as State Coordinator for the 10th District of the United States Congress.

His community service included:

- First Vice President and Youth Council Director of the Jefferson County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as well as the second Vice President for the Georgia branch of the NAACP.

- A member of the Yorkrite Masonic Lodge #605

- A charter member of the Wadley-Louisville Optimist Club, as well as a member of the Wadley-Bartow Citizens League.

Through it all, he was a man who believed in healthy eating and physical wellness. He always strived to maintain a proper diet.

His life’s work and his commitment to be a servant will always be remembered by the many lives that were touched by his presence and his engagement with others in worship and in community life.
The LEAGUE LINE AUTUMN Edition 2019—Page 4

LEAGUE LINE DIRECTOR’S REPORT
Louis A. Zeller, Executive Director
October 2019

GRAVITY’S RAINBOW

During the last three months the United States Department of Energy (DOE) has begun two initiatives to resume and expand construction of nuclear weapons. The impact of this program directly affects two sites: Los Alamos Nuclear Labs in New Mexico and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, but would have national and even global consequences.

The basis for the plan—new facilities for producing eighty plutonium warheads or “pits” per year—is the Nuclear Posture Review, published in 2018. The review was ordered by President Trump, who, without irony, called for the U.S. to “expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” Then-Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis echoed the review’s conclusion, stating, “we must recapitalize our Cold War legacy nuclear forces.”

However, this drive for financial recapitalization is based on some of the same questions used to justify $6.3 trillion (with a “T”) of actual military purchases during the Cold War. (The Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union extended from 1947 to 1990.)

An inescapable fact is that international treaty obligations and U.S. law prohibit further development of atomic weapons. The 180 nations which are party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, including the U.S., committed to ending the nuclear arms race and to continuing nuclear disarmament. The treaty is unequivocal:

“If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers.”
— Thomas Pynchon, Gravity’s Rainbow

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Subsequent agreement to reduce nuclear weapons by Presidents Reagan, Clinton, Bush and Obama reinforced the pledge to maintain international peace and security without the excessive diversion of economic resources for military purposes. Therefore, to what question is the answer: annual production of fifty plutonium pits at Savannah River and thirty more at Los Alamos? Because that is what is now undergoing environmental review. (For details, go to BREDL.org to see our comments opposing the plan under Savannah River Site.)

There is an immediate reason for concern: the specter of environmental injustice overshadows SRS and other DOE sites. This injustice extends broadly to nuclear reactors, uranium mines, fuel enrichment plants, waste sites and nuclear weapons production; and primarily affects communities living near radioactive facilities. During the Cold War, the United States produced 122 tons of Plutonium-239 for nuclear weapons. The radioactive contamination created persists to this day. We cannot ignore this pernicious, unwanted legacy.

Columbia University economist Seymour Melman wrote that the “relentlessly predatory effects” of America’s weapons industry are a source of the nation’s economic woes. In his book The Permanent War Economy, he shows that excessive military spending diverted the resources needed for the development of a healthy economy, creating a nation of haves and have-

(Continued on page 8)
On August 6, 2019, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and our chapters EnvironmentaLEE and Chatham Citizens Against Coal Ash Dump returned to court on our 2015 cases opposing the permitting of so-called “mine reclamations”, which are, in truth coal ash landfills. We were back in court because the North Carolina Court of Appeals found errors in the Office of Administrative Hearing’s ruling on the original case, as well as the ruling from our appeal to Superior Court.

Our attorneys from the Brice firm, Cathy Cralle-Jones and Seth Barefoot argued against North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) motion to dismiss our case, with prejudice. Seth Barefoot argued, “This opens a Pandora’s Box, setting forth a dangerous precedent that any party with a mining permit to do this can, as long as it’s within the property boundary.” Judge Melissa Owens-Lassiter did not grant DEQ’s motion and allowed the oral arguments and testimony to go forward. That’s when things got interesting.

We had subpoenaed several DEQ staff, including a hydrogeologist with the Division of Waste Management. During permitting, although Charah (the company that owns the site and is seeking the permit) proposed four background groundwater monitoring wells, she allowed them to install only one. Cathy Cralle-Jones asked this important question: “Why did the department allow a method that was less protective than the permittee suggested?” (See article at footnote 1). DEQ objected to the hydrogeologist’s testimony; the judge sustained their objection.

DEQ did not object to testimony from one of the staff people we called, perhaps because they knew what a poor memory he had. He inspected the Colon (Lee County) site prior to the sale to Charah and permitting of the facility. An email he wrote that we obtained through a public records request stated, “I looked at the areas that General Shale are interested in releasing from the permit, and all the areas either have been completely reclaimed or were never disturbed to begin with.” Upon questioning, he could not recall visiting the site. He also didn’t look for wells on the Brickhaven site.

As of this writing, we have no decision on this case, although additional filings have been requested by the judge. The coal ash landfill at Brickhaven in Chatham County may be leaking. DEQ has directed the company to assess the site.

The Richmond County Combustion Turbine Facility (RCCTF), operated by Duke Energy Progress, is a fossil fuel-powered plant for electricity generation. The facility uses two combined-cycle combustion turbines continuously and five simple-cycle turbines as needed (Zeller, 2014). The current operation permit allows Duke Energy Progress to distinguish six units to be owned by Piedmont Natural Gas, effectively bypassing Clean Air Act provisions by reclassifying emission sources operating within its complex. This enables Duke Energy Progress to release excessive pollutants into the atmosphere. Further, inefficiencies of turbine powerplants indicate that 40 – 85% of the fuel consumed does not yield power generation (Zeller, 2014). In addition to these inefficiencies, turbine power plants are prone to incomplete fossil fuel combustion (Zeller, 2016), and incomplete combustion of organic carbon yields toxic air pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). From 2008 to 2012, emissions from RCCTF increased by 115% for NOx and 146% for formaldehyde, a VOC (Zeller, 2016).

In 2017, Enviva was granted a permit that authorized the construction of a pellet mill in Hamlet, NC. Operation of this facility would further emit hundreds of thousands of tons of pollutants each year. While pollution control devices and processes are available to mitigate emissions, the Department of Environmental Quality did not require Enviva to deploy all available control measures, such as those to reduce VOCs by 90% (Blake, 2017).

According to the Toxic Release Inventory published by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 2019), 267.5 thousand pounds of air pollution were released in Hamlet, NC in 2017. The largest emitter was Duke Energy Progress, which released 266.3 thousand pounds of air pollutants (99.55% of all emitted pollutants). The 267.5 thousand pounds of chemicals released was comprised 79% was ammonia and 21% formaldehyde (EPA, 2019). It can be reasonably assumed that operation of the Enviva pellet mill will further exacerbate pollution levels in the Hamlet region.

In addition to participating in atmospheric chemistry, ammonia and formaldehyde can cause adverse health effects at chronic exposures and acute high exposure levels. In such, precautions taken by community members are imperative; however, point source pollution control measures are a more worthwhile investment. The primary challenge with mitigating air pollution is characterization of pollution levels and sources. This research hopes to identify valid methodologies for pollutant characterization that can be employed by local community members.

On Friday, May 17th, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League Executive Director Louis Zeller and Stanback Intern Michael Ong attended the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County meeting in Hamlet, NC. During this meeting, data regarding pollution levels in the community, as previously discussed, were presented to the five attendees. Members began

(Continued on page 11)
Stonecrest, Georgia is a newly formed city which has been in existence for two years. Unfortunately, the city is constantly under attack by developers who build cell towers in residential areas with no notice to the residents according to complaints from the residents.

One of the latest and most devastating projects to negatively impact Stonecrest is the construction of a cell tower that is 199 feet tall inside a residential area. Admittedly, we need cell towers because they transmit signals to our cell phones, but do we need cell towers in residential areas and near our schools? No, we do not. According to the Federal Communication Commission cell towers in residential areas typically should not be 199 feet tall.

On September 21, 2019 residents of the City of Stonecrest, Citizens for a Healthy and Safe Environment, Atlanta for the Planet, BREDL staff, and emerging Young Moguls led a protest to bring awareness to the community about the negative impact of cell towers when they are placed too close to residential areas. Several residents came out of their homes and spoke with protesters. The community engaged the residents and said they were happy to see support for the removal of the cell tower.

A movement called, “Remove The Cell Tower” was launched in February, 2019 when residents of Stonecrest noticed a cell tower being constructed in their new subdivision in January, 2019. The builders of the cell tower are Vertical Bridge, Inc. a company based in Boca Raton, Florida. The tower was built on a parcel of land which was conditionally zoned for a day care center. The property was initially zoned R-100, which is single family dwellings, and subsequently zoned C-2 as the owners of the land wanted to operate a day care center on the property.

It appears as though the cell tower was placed at 3610 Evans Mill Road illegally. The property was re-zoned for a day care center not a cell tower. The permit to build was issued by Special Administrative Permit from the staff at the City of Stonecrest.

According to Physicians for Safe Technology the number of cell towers worldwide has had exponential growth since the 1990’s. In the U.S., large cell tower numbers have risen from 900 in 1985 to over 308,344 cell sites in service in 2016. This is according to the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA), established in 1984 just before the rollout of cell towers. The telecommunications industry places cell towers in cities but also leases rooftops on schools, churches, businesses and apartment buildings for one or more carriers such as AT&T or T-Mobile. These base stations emit a continuous stream of microwave radio frequencies exposing residents to whole body exposures.

The majority of published studies in different countries have shown a relationship between distance from base stations and a variety of health complaints. They have found that the closer to the towers people live there is an increased
Upon my graduation in May 2018, I landed my first job as a Regional Organizer, organizing the community of Chattanooga, TN around the issue of clean, affordable energy. Tennessee is all TVA territory, and my goal as a TN Regional Organizer was to create awareness and a movement around TVA’s lack of transparency and huge energy burden in a campaign called Renew TN. In order to do that I needed to get community members rallied alongside me. I was starting from zero - with few connections and not a whole lot of experience.

My first step was making initial contact with people who were somewhat familiar with the matters surrounding TVA. This included hours of cold calls. At the end of each call, I would ask if they wanted to meet for coffee to talk more and see if they wanted to get involved in the campaign I was heading up. After hundreds of calls, lots of hesitation, and being denied multiple times, I ended up meeting with about 25 people in person within a month and got to know them better. I built a relationship with most of those 25 people with honest conversation and a desire to want to take action.

My next step was to hold an official meeting with everyone I’d come in contact with. 20 people showed up on a random Tuesday night and, as a group, we got to know each other and talk about tangible steps for the campaign. It was cool to see a community come about just from making simple 2 minute cold calls.

A big event planned from this meeting, called the TVA Run Around .5K, is a stunt race around the TVA Chattanooga offices to symbolize how TVA has been running around us and our questions. The goal was to put pressure on the TVA leadership while doing it in a creative and fun way. Roles were assigned, such as photographer, race starter, media person, etc. It was a community involved event. There was a great turnout for a Saturday morning, we had official race bibs and ran around the offices successfully. We even made it to the front page of the Chattanooga Times Free Press.

Ultimately, starting a campaign from the ground up can seem like a daunting task, but it is such a rewarding experience. The skills I learned and the people I met gave me great confidence as I started my work with BREDL. I have enjoyed working with the Chapel Hill Organization for Clean Energy (CHOCE) chapter members, and am using some of the same skills and knowledge I gained with them!

(Director’s Report—Continued from page 4)

In Gravity's Rainbow, author Thomas Pynchon considers the “rainbow-shaped” path of a World War II V-2 rocket, and how a democracy may contain the seeds of its own downfall, and that the questions asked are as important as the answers.

The world is watching what we do. Perilous and uncertain times call for leadership, not an unjustifiable, ruinous arms race.

The LEAGUE LINE AUTUMN Edition 2019—Page 8
Rabun County sits high in the northeast corner of Georgia's ancient stretch of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The ridgeline is a deep blue, the peaks sit in the oldest part of the Great Smokies.

If you live here, you're lucky enough. Over 60% of the county is protected U.S. Forest Service land. In historic Rabun Gap, we live side-by-side on the headwaters of the Little Tennessee River. There's a duty to protect and act as stewards of this rugged, yet vulnerable environment. As in most of Appalachia, extraction of natural resources and highly prized personal property rights replace common sense when it comes to environmental concerns.

So by anybody's standards, it took a leap of faith to organize a chapter of BREDL here to take on our county over a level one hazardous waste site.

In early 2018, we began to research a former Burlington Carpet Mill purchased by our county with taxpayer dollars and no public hearing for five times the actual value. Now called the "business park", we discovered the toxic plant was bought in order to gain the water rights to the Little Tennessee River. Reaching out to BREDL for assistance became our next step.

The Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority had also built a $5.5 million water treatment plant on this toxic property that had been placed on the Georgia EPD hazardous site list 25 years ago in 1994. Ten toxic chemicals were found in the groundwater and five in the soil, including TCE. To date no cleanup has been done. A 2018 monitoring report concluded that toxic plumes of chloroform were still being emitted from the monitoring wells on the site. The closest drinking water well was noted to be just a half mile from the mill.

Meanwhile, the county has been trying to close a sale on this hazardous site, the former million square foot mill to a buyer from Pennsylvania. The transaction began in March with the latest closing date moved to the end of September.

Our first meeting of the Rabun Gap Chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was timely. Held at the local Episcopal Church on September 25, aggressive marketing efforts yielded over 20 community attendees, including Atlanta BREDL members Rene Cail and Brenda McCormick, a county commissioner, our University of Georgia Extension agent, and former employees of the old Burlington Mill and Fruit of the Loom plant.

Using allocated funding from our Center for Health and Environmental Justice (CHEJ) grant, two newspaper ads ran in

(Continued on page 10)
NEW STAFF: BREDL WELCOMES MARVIN WINSTEAD

As the newest member of the BREDL staff I would like to thank Lou Zeller and the Board of Directors for offering me the opportunity to become a staff member. I hope that I can come close to doing as good a job as my predecessor Cary Rodgers.

My immediate challenge is to rejuvenate the BREDL chapters that were chartered in counties along the proposed route of the ill-conceived fracked gas Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The members of these chapters need to make a final push to let their Congressional representatives know that this heinous project will not only harm our environment, but will stifle eastern North Carolina’s economy as well.

Prior to this community organizer position, as the president of Nash Stop The Pipeline I have engaged in many and varied actions against the proposed ACP working cooperatively with other environmental organizations.

One of my most recent actions this summer involved working with Sarah Murphy of Afton, Va. You may have read some newspaper articles about her successful feat of riding horse back along the entire proposed route of the ACP....alone!

Where do I fit in with Sarah’s “mission” to call attention to the infamous proposed ACP? She got my name from Clean Water for North Carolina as a person who might be able to help her as she passed through the Nash County area on her trek. The area got extended up to Halifax County and down to Four Oaks in Johnston County. By the time she completed the entire 600 miles of the proposed route I had contributed 8 bags of horse feed to her journey. While she was in the area, The Washington Post picked up the story and it went international. Have to admire her determination to reach her goal.

- Marvin Winstead

(Rabun Gap—Continued from page 9)

our weekly paper. A total of twenty-two 30-minute radio commercials ran on each of two local stations two days prior to our meeting. Flyers were posted throughout town and emails were sent to 150 persons. Our 4’ X 2’ BREDL banner is now ready for display at tabling events year round starting with our annual Foxfire Appalachian Heritage Festival in October. We plan to walk with our BREDL banner in Rabun County’s Bicentennial Christmas parade as advocates for no new hazardous waste sites in Rabun County’s future.

The efforts from our first meeting resulted in three new members and cash donations. Now six members strong, we look forward to more victories as we press for offsite testing for TCE to ensure public health and safety in the Gap. We invite you to please like us on Facebook at Rabun Gap Chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. Y’all come see us!

(Cell Towers—Continued from page 7)

incidence of reported physical problems, similar to symptoms reported by military personnel working on radar and people who have microwave illness, aka electrosensitivity. They are similar to what Cuban and Chinese diplomats reported in unusual “attacks” in 2017 (New York Times, Cuban Diplomats Likely Hit by Microwave Weapons), including headaches, insomnia, dizziness, memory loss, and neuropsychiatric problems such as depression. Blood cell abnormalities and other issues are being researched. We are greatly concerned about the cognitive decline in students and the rates of cancer now being correlated to the proximity of cell towers to residences.

The focus on cell towers will continue as the residents and community are kept abreast of any developments regarding the removal of the cell tower. Currently, the request for the removal of the tower is being reviewed by the Office of the Solicitor General, and a stop work order has been issued. We must continue the fight for environmental justice.
## BREDL WELCOMES 2019 INTERNS

### David Nimer

I am enrolled in Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University, graduating in 2020, and earned an undergraduate degree at University of Colorado, Boulder in 2015. I was thrilled to join the BREDL team for the 2019 summer, investigating the financial arrangements underpinning current pipeline construction, specifically the Atlantic Coast (WV/VA/NC) and Mountain Valley (WV/VA) Pipelines, and other regulatory aspects, to assist BREDL’s efforts to challenge and roll back construction of these environmentally and economically deleterious pipelines. My favorite past jobs have also been research positions, and I find this assignment the most fascinating yet. I studied Political Science and History at CU Boulder, am halfway through a Masters in Environmental Management (MEM), concentrating in Environmental Economics and Policy, and plan ultimately to pursue environmental law.

I enjoy sports, politics, music, and recreating in nature. I hope to visit national parks at every available opportunity.

### Michael Ong

I am a senior at Duke University majoring in environmental chemistry with a minor in Environmental Science.

My interests lie in the intersection between the environment and public health, and I’m particularly interested in examining how consumer goods and perturbed environments affect public wellbeing.

After I finish my undergraduate studies, I hope to go to medical school to gain the necessary skills to work directly with patients in this regard. At BREDL, I worked with community members in Richmond County to investigate air pollution metrics resulting from a combustion turbine plant and an impending wood pellet plant. With this project, I hope to enable the citizens of Richmond County to become proactive advocates for their environmental health.

In my free time, I enjoy cycling and cooking.

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(Air Quality—Continued from page 6)

actualizing the consequences of living in a polluted area, as every individual present had respiratory problems, namely asthma, which may be caused or perturbed by atmospheric contaminants. Following this discussion, community members were involved in the assessment of potential methods for data collection. Five devices, three for ammonia and two for formaldehyde, were analyzed for efficacy, which includes accuracy in measurement, cost of device, and ability for community members to use and interpret results. After discussion, it was found that all five devices would be pursued. These devices included a diffusion tube, pump tube, and ammonia strip papers for testing ambient ammonia and a badge and commercial monitor for testing atmospheric formaldehyde.

### References


Louis Zeller. (2014, January 17). The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League’s Petition to the Environmental Protection Agency to Object to the Title V Air Quality Permit Issued to Duke Energy Progress Richmond County Turbines.


Contact BREDL to help organize your community and plan events to educate others 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 35 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. It’s easier than ever to join, renew and donate online. 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. All donations are tax deductible.

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