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Residents call for Frack-Free WNC

By Melissa Dean

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Don't frack with my mountains, is the message residents brought to AB-Tech last week.

Dozens of concerned citizens met in Marshall Thursday, July 10 hoping to bring a change in fracking regulations recently pushed through the state legislature.

"People are fighting- People in North Carolina are fighting," Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) Executive Director Lou Zeller told the crowd. "I think it is time right now for communities in Western North Carolina to say no...We don't want exploration- We don't want Fracking..."

Zeller spoke during a two-hour Q&A session on the dangers of fracking and how best to mobilize as a community to speak up against the controversial method.

BREDL is a non-profit grassroots organization that helps community groups solve pressing local problems by developing a citizens' campaign with goals, strategies, activities and assessments.

"There is a window of opportunity here folks," Zeller told the crowd, citing hazardous and nuclear waste dump sites that communities have historically been able to fight. "They never happened. Why? Because one after another, scores of communities rejected it...It happened

through dedicated community volunteers like the group in this room."

Though Madison County is currently not on the list of western counties slated for testing, environmental groups are mobilizing with hopes to put the brakes on the controversial method.

Activists currently have over 750 signatures in Madison, but organizer Elaine Robbins said at any point in time there are 10-20 active signature pages being circulated in the county, as well. Frack-Free Madison, a Facebook page dedicated for sharing information about fracking in the region has over 1,200 supporters.

The mountain counties

where the samples will be collected are Clay, Cherokee, Macon, Graham, Swain, Jackson and Haywood.

Gov. Pat McCrory signed the Energy Modernization Act into law in June.

The bill clears the way for fracking, a controversial method of extracting oil and gas from the ground by injecting high-pressure chemical mixtures into rock, a cocktail activist say could contaminate drinking water.

In North Carolina the method could be used as soon as next spring.

The bill lifts a 2012 moratorium that blocked permits to test for the presence of significant natural gas deposits.



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PHOTO BY MELISSA DEAN/THE NEWS-RECORD & SENTINEL

Bee Tree Farm home

Mother charged

with felony