

BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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LEAGUE CALLS UPON MINING COMMISSION TO HOLD ADDITIONAL HEARINGS ON FRACKING

Reidsville- Today, in a statement to the NC Mining and Energy Commission, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) demanded that the state hold additional hearings on the rules for hydraulic fracturing in North Carolina. BREDL's objections to the hearing process centered on the lack of public participation. The statement, delivered in testimony before the MEC public hearing in Reidsville, said that the current hearing process does not allow all citizens to publicly address the commission, that each hearing is limited to only four hours and that many attendees who sign up to speak are arbitrarily eliminated.

Kate Dunnagan, Development Director of BREDL, said, "Closing the hearings after four hours is not a democratic process. It is arbitrary and capricious. All residents who want to address the commission must have the opportunity to do so, regardless of any time limit imposed by the state." She added that if the MEC denies the request for additional hearings, the League will hold their own "People's Hearing" on the proposed fracking rules for North Carolinians.

Local residents in Rockingham and neighboring Stokes County have been very vocal about their concerns, and attended the hearing tonight in large numbers to address the MEC in person. The local organizing group *No Fracking in Stokes* is a chapter of the BREDL, which has many members across the region. BREDL Executive Director Lou Zeller said, "The state has had years to write these rules and we don't even get 5 minutes to speak? This is unacceptable!"

Today's hearing is one of four that the Mining and Energy Commission is holding across the state. MEC will accept comments from the public on the draft rules created to regulate the hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, industry in North Carolina. Dunnagan said that public participation is paramount as the residents, landowners and business owners in the affected areas

must have a voice in the process that will determine such decisions as set-backs from occupied buildings and streams, waste management, water withdrawal and contamination, and chemical disclosure, all which will impact their day to day lives.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984 by residents opposed to a federal project seeking a dumpsite for high-level radioactive waste from commercial nuclear power plants. In the 1990's the League worked in many places to prevent both an eight-state low-level nuclear dump and a five-state hazardous waste incinerator. The League was successful in all three campaigns. Today Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has chapters and projects in many communities extending from Charlottesville, Virginia to Valdosta, Georgia.

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