

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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LEGISLATION SETS UP RANDOLPH COUNTY TO BE COAL ASH DUMP

Waste Management, Inc. bets on coal ash disposal revenue

Raleigh-The proposed Randolph County regional landfill could now be at risk from recent state legislation on the disposal of thousands of tons of coal ash.

Randolph County has chosen Waste Management Inc. to be its contractor to operate the proposed landfill. The county's operating agreement with the company specifically includes "power generation" residues, or coal ash. BREDL organizer Therese Vick said, "Waste Management is banking on the disposal of coal ash. Randolph County is putting itself at risk to be a dump for the industry's coal ash problem." Coal ash contains toxic heavy metals which have caused severe problems at other Subtitle D landfills, Vick added, "Coal ash does not belong in a municipal solid waste landfill."

The North Carolina General Assembly approved the Coal Ash Management Act on August 20, 2014. Under the new law, Duke Energy will have five years to dig up and dispose of ash at four of its coal-fired power plants.

Vick compared Randolph County to Alabama's Perry County, a municipal solid waste landfill which received four million cubic yards of coal ash from Tennessee Valley Authority's 2008 ash spill in Kingston, Tennessee. There residents have reported blowing dust, paint peeling off of vehicles, and run-off contaminating water bodies. Vick said, "This hazardous coal ash has

damaged the environment and threatened public health in Alabama. Is Randolph County next?" Perry County's Arrowhead Landfill is currently the subject of a civil rights lawsuit.

Vick testified at a public hearing on August 27, 2014, held to take comment on the Environmental Impact Assessment prepared by the County's consultant, Golder Associates. The League pointed to several inconsistencies in the consultant's comments, the most glaring being the finding that there is no "disparate impact" on the surrounding predominately African American community. Vick stated, "This is just plain wrong. The community is already living with the closed Randolph County landfill, contaminated groundwater, a transfer station and the Eveready industrial landfill."

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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