

# Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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## **For Immediate Release**

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## CITIZENS CALL FOR EXPANDED PROTECTION FROM POLLUTION

Today the Watauga Citizens for Local Control requested that the Watauga County Board of Commissioners adopt a buffer zone of 1,500 feet between polluting industries and residential dwellings, commercial buildings and churches. The group said that augmented buffer zones, or setbacks, would better protect people from smoke, noise and health risks caused by asphalt plants, electric power facilities, fuel storage tanks and other industrial facilities. The county already requires such setbacks from daycare centers, schools and nursing homes.

The author of the group's formal letter of request to the county commission, Annette Reeves, stated, "The citizens of Watauga deserve to live in a healthy, peaceful environment."

Watauga Citizens for Local Control has followed closely the recent planning board hearings and meetings on the county taking over the Town of Boone's extraterritorial jurisdiction. Although generally pleased with the proceedings, the citizen's group wants more than a cursory consideration of protections for residential areas. Butch Reeves, a member of the citizen's group, said, "We need the Planning Board and the County Commissioners to continue to step up and protect our citizens."

The citizen's request pointed out that the overwhelming consensus of residents who attended recent planning board hearings favored a high impact land use moratorium

and a strengthened county ordinance. The moratorium would allow the county time to replace the protections that were lost when the NC General Assembly took away Boone's power of extraterritorial jurisdiction.

In support of the request, Lou Zeller, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said, "People spend most of their time in their own homes. They should not be assaulted by smoke, noise and pollution." He added that the additional buffer zones would also protect private property values and the sanctuary of religious meetings.

Since 1985 the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has served its members in Watauga County. The founding issue was protection from a high-level nuclear waste dump in the mountains. Watauga Citizens for Local Control became a League chapter in response to the removal of ETJ protections.

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