

# CITIZENS FOR A HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Local Group Joins Forces with Defense League to Oppose Biomass Incineration

Lithonia– Today, Citizens for a Healthy and Safe Environment (CHASE) announced they have joined the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), a regional environmental justice non-profit organization. The link with the multi-state organization will give CHASE greater capacity to defend the residents of Dekalb County from toxic air pollution.

Renee Cail, CHASE President, said, “We will continue to fight for environmental justice to stop energy corporations from bringing industrial projects to our communities that threaten the public health of people in Lithonia.” CHASE was founded by local residents opposed to a biomass power plant.

CHASE member Sandra Honore said, “We will increase our community power by holding community educational meetings, rallies and protests to prevent the Public Service Commission from granting a license to Green Energy Partners. That’s why CHASE is joining with Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League.”

Rev. Charles Utley, EJ Campaign Director for Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said, “CHASE has done well, focusing its efforts on preventing the development of a biomass gasification burning electric plant located on Rogers Lake Road in Lithonia. The plant has not been built, and it’s not too late. We must remain steadfast in our goal.” Min. Stevie Banks, Vice President, agreed and said, “Several local churches and health organizations, members of the legal community and other grassroots organizations oppose development of the plant.”

Dr. Darren Harper, a medical doctor and member of CHASE, spoke about the negative health impacts of biomass incinerators. He said, “We are concerned about the residents of Lithonia who are suffering with respiratory illnesses, fighting stenches from the landfills and facing toxic emissions from trucking and gravel companies.” According to a study by BREDL, the nitrogen oxide emissions from Green Energy Partner’s proposed biomass gasification plant would be like adding 16,491 cars on the roads in South Dekalb County. Harper continued, “We do not need another smokestack in Dekalb County.”

The CHASE group was formed by long time civil rights activists and Lithonia residents in July 2010 when they were notified about the proposed plant. The group's first meetings were hosted by member Johnny Dougherty, now deceased. BREDL has provided the group with technical assistance throughout their campaign, and in 2014 CHASE became an official chapter of the organization.

BREDL has helped organize chapters in diverse communities across Georgia since 2002, and continues working across the state to protect water, air and environmental quality. In Lowndes County in 2011, a company seeking to build a biomass incinerator similar to the proposed plant in Lithonia, backed out of its plans after months of protesting by BREDL's chapter in Valdosta, the Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy. The group also secured a "no biomass clause" for any future lease or sale agreements of the land, a strategy that activists in Lithonia can learn from.

On March 15, 2014 BREDL celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. The League has won successful environmental justice campaigns in six states and has incorporated more than one hundred chapters across the region, including preventing and shutting down nuclear waste sites, hazardous waste dump facilities, and asphalt and other polluting industrial plants in rural and low-income areas and communities of color across the Southeast.

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