

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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LEAGUE INITIATES LEGAL ACTION PETITIONING MINING AND ENERGY COMMISSION TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES FROM FRACKING AIR EMISSIONS

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Today Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) presented the Mining and Energy Commission (MEC) with a formal petition requesting that the MEC develop rules to control and monitor air emissions from fracking sites.

The League's petition points to the need for action, stating: "Air emissions from hydraulic fracturing are affecting public health in other states. The recommendation and adoption of the Rule would protect the residents who may find themselves in proximity to gas fracking operations in North Carolina."

The 28-page petition charges the MEC with violation of its founding law. Therese Vick, BREDL's Anti-Fracking Campaign Coordinator who has attended most of the MEC's meetings, said, "The Mining and Energy Commission has been working on rules to regulate fracking since 2012. Their final package of over 100 rules out for public comment does not include specific requirements for air emissions- even though legislation enacted in 2012 directed the Commission to do so." She added, "For over a year, BREDL and others have repeatedly requested that the Commission perform its legal duty and develop rules to protect communities."

Lou Zeller, the League's Executive Director, said, "The MEC has clearly misplaced its priorities, rushing to enable the industry but neglecting the people who they are charged to protect." The petition provides evidence from a large number of studies and reports detailing the health problems that communities are experiencing from fracking facilities in their midst. Vick added that, unless controls are put in place, uncontrolled air emissions from the well pads would have a negative impact on public health. She said, "Wherever fracking goes, air pollution follows."

Vick said that the exploration and development of hydraulic fracturing in North Carolina is a statewide issue, affecting huge numbers of residents in fourteen counties extending across

the Piedmont, six counties in Southeastern part of the state, plus seven counties in westernmost North Carolina.

Addressing the urgency of the petition, Zeller explained, “We are directing these concerns to the MEC now because of the looming injustice created by the location of gas facilities in rural communities.” The petition cites a study by the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill which determined that hydraulic fracturing leases in North Carolina are disproportionately located in communities of color and low wealth.

The group plans to continue its campaign based on the response of the MEC.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984 in response to a federal project to locate a nuclear waste dump in North Carolina. One of the semi-finalist sites considered was a geologic formation in Madison, Haywood and Buncombe counties.