

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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GROUPS PETITION EPA TO OPPOSE NATURAL GAS PERMIT IN WADESBORO

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and Pee Dee WALL have filed a petition with the US Environmental Protection Agency opposing the natural gas pipeline compressor in Wadesboro. The petition calls upon the EPA to revoke the permit issued by the NC Department of Air Quality in September because it allows excess toxic pollution levels. The plant is operated by Piedmont Natural Gas.

Lou Zeller, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, explained that his group took action under Clean Air Act Section 505 because the state had failed to heed earlier requests. He said, “We filed our petition to the EPA in part because the state’s permit allows 17,560 pounds of formaldehyde to be emitted into the air over Wadesboro annually.” Formaldehyde is a toxic gas dangerous to human health. Zeller continued, “Not only is pollution from the plant excessive, it places a disproportionate burden on low income and minority populations.” The petition calls for a cumulative impact analysis of pollution in Anson County.

Denise Lee, President of Pee Dee WALL, agreed saying, “This is one of the many threats to Anson County's environment. The industry is relying on the citizens’ lack of knowledge so they can push this on us. We will not be silent.”

The groups’ petition points to studies showing historic patterns of high pollution in at-

risk communities and faults the DAQ with not performing an environmental justice analysis.

Cary Rodgers, the League's environmental justice community organizer, sees the permit as an example how North Carolina is trying to deregulate pollution. He said, "It appears that DAQ is cooking the books in order to allow energy companies to profit." Last month the League filed a similar petition against a Duke Energy Progress gas-powered electric plant in neighboring Richmond County. Rodgers added, "People have no clue that PNG is approved to dump tons of toxic cancer causing pollutants in their air. EPA needs to revoke this permit."

Rodgers associated the compressor with a larger issue. He said, "This plant is related to fracking issue in Anson County." He said that once the gas is extracted from the earth, it is transported in trucks, compressed and delivered by pipelines to be burned for heat and power. At each stage in this process, pollution is created. "This is an example how they are setting up and expanding the infrastructure for gas."

Rodgers and Lee encouraged all Anson County residents to attend the next anti-fracking meeting at Hampton Allen Library at 6:00 on November 13.

The Piedmont Natural Gas compressor station is located on Pleasant Grove Church Road in Wadesboro, North Carolina. Power for the compressor is provided by eight natural gas-fired internal combustion engines, each rated at 4,735 horsepower.

The petition was filed on October 3; the EPA has 60 days to respond.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984 and has chapters in six states. Its local chapter Pee Dee W.A.L.L. (Protecting our Water, Air, Land and Lives), formerly Anson County CACTUS (Citizens Against Chemical Toxins and Underground Storage) was organized in 1982.

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