

# Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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## ***NEWS RELEASE***

### **Sabal Trail Pipeline Approval Challenged**

“Pipelines are not above the law.”

Today anti-pipeline groups announced a new legal challenge to the proposed Sabal Trail pipeline. The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and its chapter Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy have filed a request for rehearing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, challenging the recent Order of Approval issued by the federal agency. The challenge centers on three issues: economics, environmental justice and eminent domain.

In their brief, the groups pointed to significant damages that would occur over the long term, the project’s lack of financial viability and contradictions with Georgia eminent domain laws. They also noted that the project would violate environmental justice requirements, disrupt communities and create health risks in a vulnerable population.

Mara Robbins, BREDL campaign coordinator and author of the brief, said, “There were many valid objections from communities all along the proposed route of the pipeline, things which FERC has ignored or dismissed. Approval of this line threatens public health and safety.” Environmental justice centers on disproportionate impacts on communities of color. Robbins added, “We know that 82% of the communities along this proposed route are environmental justice communities. But Sabal Trail would plow through private property and threaten health and safety. Pipelines are not above the law. We must fight to prevent this injustice.”

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Michael Noll, director of Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy (WACE), was appalled. "I was upset when I heard that the project had been approved without the necessary permitting regarding the Clean Air and the Clean Water Act. But when I discovered that the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act had not been addressed at all, I was furious." Noll, who lives in Valdosta near the pipeline route, is taking a stand for the health and safety. He concluded, "We demand clean energy. We will challenge injustice. We will not back down."

In the request for rehearing, BREDL cited portions of Georgia eminent domain law that expressly prohibit the construction of commercial interstate pipelines through private land. They concluded that the rights of corporations cannot be more powerful than the rights of property owners.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League contends that the project is not economically viable in the current financial climate. Lou Zeller, executive director of BREDL, said "Pipelines rely on investors. As we saw in Paris, the whole world is moving away from fossil fuels, including natural gas. Sabal Trail is a dinosaur technology in a digital world."

BREDL filed their request for rehearing with FERC on March 1, stating that at a minimum approval of the Sabal Trail Pipeline project could not possibly be done until the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act had been addressed and the proper permits been issued. The FERC has 30 days to respond to BREDL's request.

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The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a 32-year old community-based, non-profit environmental organization with chapters in six states. Our founding principles are earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice, and community empowerment.