

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

www.BREDL.org PO Box 88 Glendale Springs, North Carolina 28629 BREDL@skybest.com (336) 982-2691

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CONTACTS:

Louis Zeller (336) 982-2691

John Runkle (919) 942-0600

Groups Call for Environmental Secretary to Reopen Glendale Springs Asphalt Plant Air Permit

Today in a written request to the NC Department of Environmental Quality, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and Protect Our Fresh Air appealed to the state to reopen the asphalt plant air pollution permit the agency issued last year to Appalachian Materials. The six-page letter pointed to the state's failure to account for the permit's impact on Camp New Hope, just a few hundred yards from the site of a proposed asphalt plant.

The letter of request, delivered in person by BREDL's attorney to NC DEQ Secretary Michael Regan, states, "A unique constellation of circumstances—an extremely vulnerable population, the river valley terrain, and the imminent pollution from an asphalt plant—exist at the Glendale site."

Lou Zeller, co-author of the request and executive director of the League, said, "We want to reopen the permit because the Division of Air Quality has failed to protect the residents of Camp New Hope, children with life-threatening medical conditions." Zeller listed some of the toxic air pollutants which would be emitted by the Appalachian Materials asphalt plant: mercury, nickel, arsenic cadmium, dioxins, benzene, formaldehyde, hydrogen sulfide, tetrachloroethylene and many more. He observed, "The impacts on children with no ability to withstand further damage to their health would be devastating."

The other author of the request, attorney John Runkle, advised the Secretary to act now, saying, "At the present, the air quality permit is tied up in court on the issue of whether the activity complies with the Ashe County Polluting Industry Ordinance. This would be the time for you to take leadership and require your agency to reopen the permit and conduct the potential health risk study it should have done initially."

Under state law, the Division of Air Quality has the authority to reopen any permit. This is a standard provision in every air permit including the one issued to Appalachian Materials. And, based on new information, a permit may then be modified.

Protect Our Fresh Air is a chapter of the statewide Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. The League was founded in 1984 to defend Ashe County from a nuclear waste dump and today has chapters and projects in six southeastern states.

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