



THE LEAGUE LINE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF BREDL!

On March 15, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League celebrated its 40th anniversary. See some of the impact that the group has had over the years. (page 6)

EPA REVIEW DELAYS START OF AIR MONITORING PROJECT

While construction of BREDL's air monitoring trailer is nearing completion, the launch of the project now faces delays due to EPA review. BREDL had originally planned to launch the program in April, 2024. (page 10)



For more information on this story and others, visit our website!

<https://www.bredl.org>



Image: Wilbur Services

**Dominion Plans 45-Mile
NC Pipeline
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Report
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PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY

BY: KATHY ANDREWS, BREDL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



According to Global Witness, between 2012 and 2022, 1,910 people advocating for environmental protection were killed worldwide. Columbia is considered the most deadly country with Brazil, Honduras, and Venezuela following. The US environmental community has never experienced the type of violence seen in Latin American countries where indigenous people who serve as guardians of the forests, are often murdered for doing just that.

In 2023, U.S. environmentalist Manuel Teran was shot and killed during a police raid at one of the camps surrounding the controversial Atlanta Public Safety Training Center. He is believed to have been the first American to be killed by police during an environmental protest. Twenty-six-year old Teran was just one of a dozen environmentalists protesting the clearing of forest near Atlanta to construct the police and firefighter training center. Teran, a graduate of Florida State University, believed the center would lead to greater police militarization in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder. The center is slated to be finished this year in a predominantly black neighborhood. Members of Congress have asked for an independent investigation of Teran's shooting.

Many environmentalists and landowners in the US will tell you they have experienced threats, intimidation, surveillance, and harassment from organized groups affiliated with fossil fuel companies. During the construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Virginia, landowners reported being intimidated. Numerous residents and landowners report experiencing PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome) from the constant stress of dealing with individuals who ultimately took their land by eminent domain against their will.



It is the belief of environmentalists that greed is the determining factor when it comes to the taking of land by private companies in the guise of public good. In a time of global warming and climate change, there is no need for dangerous gas pipelines or coal or wood pellet plants. These fossil fuel industries tend to prey on the working class, especially African American heirs. In Pamplico, South Carolina, elderly African American landowners who vividly remember the Jim Crow South reported being threatened by land agents representing the proposed River Neck to Kingsburg gas pipeline.

Despite being threatened by rogue corporate entities, environmentalists and landowners are committed to defending land and the rights of landowners and ecosystems against private companies.

BREDL is urging the government to enforce laws to protect environmentalists, landowners and concerned citizens from dangerous and violent intimidation tactics. Most environmentalists will tell you, no amount of threats will force them to stop fighting for the health and welfare of citizens, property rights, and the right to live in a world free of toxic chemicals from the fossil fuel industry. But there must be something done to protect innocent citizens from the devices of fossil fuel companies who appear willing to do anything in order to make billions, even if it means terrorizing innocent people.

BREDL Grassroots Mini Grant Program

The BREDL Grassroots Mini Grant Program (GMGP) is a grant being offered by BREDL to its chapter organizations and other grassroots groups who need cash for the purpose of developing, expanding, enhancing, promoting, or otherwise improving their campaigns to protect the environment in the communities where they live. The GMGP will be offered in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,500.

For more details, please contact Kathy Andrews (843-698-9816, kandrews@bredl.org) or Ann Rogers (540-312-3104, amelvin3@verizon.net).

STATE AGENCIES MAKE A MOCKERY OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC RECORDS LAW

BY: THERESE VICK



Access to public records is vital to anyone concerned about good governance. Unfortunately, in North Carolina, state agencies can take many months to provide records regardless of the timeline and complexity of what is requested.

The scope of my work for Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) includes helping communities to obtain as much information as possible regarding an existing or proposed facility that could negatively impact them. The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)'s response to public records requests results in months of delay. Eight months, eleven months or longer are typical, and by the time documents are finally received the permit has been granted, other decisions made, pollution has continued, and people have been exposed.

Asserting that they are trying to reduce response time and touting their commitment to the public, the DEQ has instituted a new public records request "portal." The first and only time I sent a request through the portal it took over a year to get an answer. The ask was for one letter – we provided the necessary information to make the request as clear and concise as possible. The answer had to come from one of the public information officers, who advised us that there was no such letter despite it being mentioned in several emails between DEQ staff.

BREDL has been fortunate to receive assistance from the Duke First Amendment Law Clinic on languishing public records requests. One to DEQ and one to the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The Clinic sent a demand letter to DEQ regarding a request that was eight months old, and we received the records in 24 hours. We could not get any response at all regarding the status of our request from Commerce, which was almost a year old. For a while Duke Law could not either, until they contacted the Department of Commerce's general counsel. It should not be this way. The public should not have to obtain legal help to receive information that agencies are required by law to provide. Perhaps state agencies should stop using staff time to send press releases, lobby, and issue permits unless and until public records requests are fulfilled in a reasonable timeframe.

For more information or help with sending public records requests contact staff@bredl.org.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER



Episode 57: Lisa Sorg is the Assistant Editor and Environmental Reporter at NC Newsline. She helps manage newsroom operations while covering the environment, climate change, agriculture and energy. She talks with me in two other so listen to episodes 8 and 11 to hear more from her.

Within the episode we mostly reference NC drinking water suppliers, although you can apply this same information to your own area. According to the EPA, there are approximately 150,000 [public water systems that provide](#) drinking water to most Americans. Customers that are served by a public water system are able to contact their local water supplier and ask for information on contaminants in their drinking water, and are

encouraged to request a copy of their [Consumer Confidence Report](#). This report lists the levels of contaminants that have been detected in the water, including those by EPA, and whether the system meets state and EPA drinking water standards. Then about 10 percent of people in the United States rely on water from private wells. Private wells are not regulated and people who use private wells need to take precautions to ensure their drinking water is safe.

Host Jenn Galler always interviews great guests! Search for "In Our Backyard Podcast" on your podcast app or go to <https://anchor.fm/bredl>



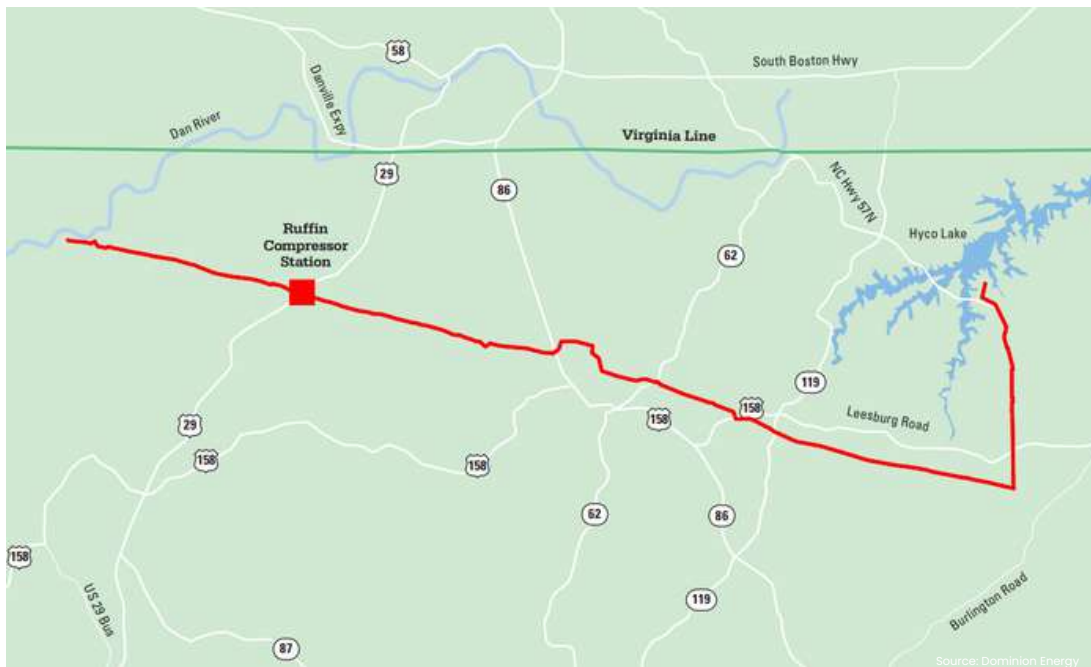
DOMINION ENERGY PLANS 45-MILE-LONG NC PIPELINE

BY: JASON TORIAN



In August of 2023, Duke Energy released its updated carbon plan for the state of North Carolina. As a part of that plan, Duke will retire both of its coal plants in Person County, NC by 2034. While these plants have provided jobs to Person County citizens for nearly 60 years, throughout that time they have also contributed negatively to the environment and the health of the people who live near it. In one recent example, the company was forced to clean up and close its coal ash pits, in Person County and other sites across the state of North Carolina. The company was also required to provide alternative sources of water to residents who live within a half-mile of the coal ash sites and are served by wells.

Duke has now announced plans to build two new gas power plants in Roxboro. While this does ensure that the coal plant retirements will not cause the county to take a significant hit to its tax revenue, it also causes additional concerns for citizens living near the site, as well as some living well beyond it. For example, the gas plants will require additional infrastructure. Dominion Energy will be constructing a 45-mile intrastate pipeline that will cross three counties, in order to supply gas to the plant. The project, known as the "TR15 Reliability Project", will stretch from Eden in Rockingham County, NC to Duke Energy's Hyco Plant in Person County, NC, while spanning the entire length of Caswell County, NC horizontally. The pipeline will run adjacent to an aging gas pipeline, also owned by Dominion. Since the pipeline will not cross state lines, it will not be regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).



Energy production has been a major part of Person County's economy for more than 60 years. As energy giants transition away from coal, Person County in particular now appears primed to be in the crosshairs of gas infrastructure plans for the foreseeable future. In February of this year, a group of eight citizens in the Moriah community filed a lawsuit against the local Board of Commissioners to prevent the rezoning of 485 acres of "rural conservation" land to "general industrial" for a proposed liquified natural gas storage facility, known as the Moriah Energy Center (MEC).

"What I see happening is, we are going to have natural gas all over this county. It is going to turn us into a modern-day coal town, except it's going to be natural gas facilities." Those were the words of Andrea Childers, a member of local BREDL chapter Neighbors Opposed to the Moriah Energy Center (NoMEC), which is currently fighting the Dominion MEC project.

The destruction caused by pipeline construction is well documented, as are the dangers associated with living near pipelines. Aside from the dangers involved, this project also fails to appropriately address climate change, by continuing to contribute greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere, at a time when addressing climate change is more critical than ever. What could have been an opportunity to turn over a new leaf and embrace cleaner energy solutions, now appears to be more of the same. This is a developing story that BREDL chapters in Caswell and Person Counties will continue to monitor.

BURKE COUNTY, GA DEATH RATES RAISE CONCERNS

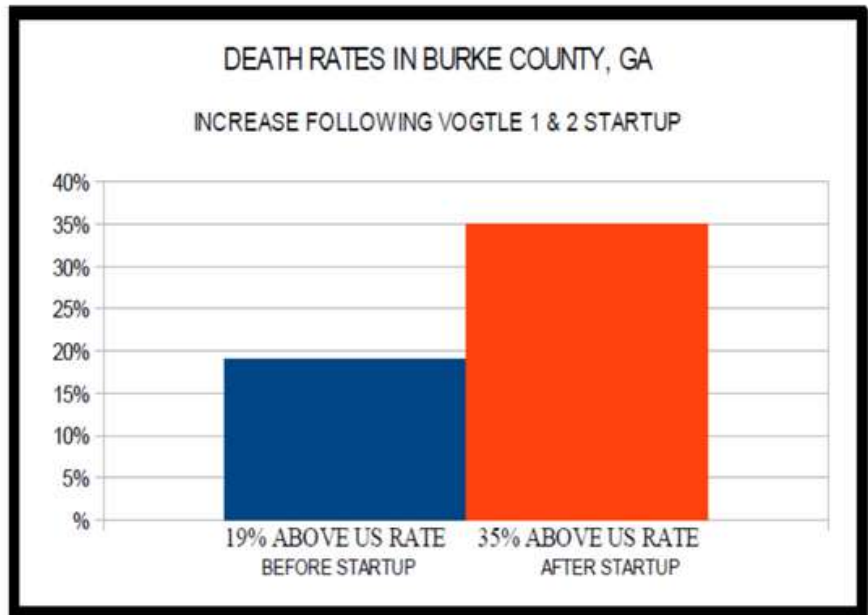
BY: ANN ROGERS



On March 28, BREDL held a public meeting at Burke County Library to discuss a new report on death rates in Burke County, GA following the startup of the Alvin Vogtle Nuclear Plant. The report was written by the Radiation and Public Health Project (RPHP) with funding from a grant which BREDL received from Center for Health Environment and Justice (CHEJ) last September.

The RPHP report found that:

- The death rate in Burke County, GA, which was 19% above the U.S. death rate before Vogtle 1 and 2 nuclear reactors began operation in the late 1980s, has since increased to 35% above the U.S. death rate.
- This change resulted in 1,223 excess deaths in Burke County from 1988 to 2020.
- Death rates increased for both Black and Caucasian residents of Burke County and were largest for young and old residents. For example, the mortality rate for infants under age 1 in Burke County rose from 34% to 79% above the U.S. rate during the 32-year period studied.
- The county death rate from all cancers shifted from 7% below to 13% above the U.S. rate after Vogtle startup; 303 of Burke County's 1,223 excess deaths were due to cancer.



The report was authored by Joseph Mangano, who is an epidemiologist and Executive Director of the RPHP. Said Joe about the report's findings, "Since the late 1980s, dramatic increases have occurred in Burke County death rates. Many factors can affect mortality, but adding two large nuclear reactors must be regarded as a major cause."

Lou Zeller, Strategic Advisor and former Executive Director of BREDL, has developed the following recommendations in response to the findings of the RPHP study. Lou's recommendations were developed in coordination with Charles Utley, Chair, BREDL chapter, Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff:

1. Public leaders, especially health officials, should review this report and conduct further analysis of trends in Burke County health status. This analysis, along with others in this list, should be presented to the public for comment.
2. Further analyses should include assessments of environmental injustice and environmental racism in placing two nuclear power plants plus two more at Plant Vogtle.
3. Review the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's decision to grant license extensions for Vogtle Units 1 and 2, which allow operation until 2047 and 2049, and revoke the extensions until it can be determined that Plant Vogtle emissions have not harmed the health of Burke County residents.
4. Assess the potential cumulative impacts posed by Plant Vogtle Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 and compare them with other sources of electricity now available, such as safe, economical solar and wind.

BREDL CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF ACTION

By: Lou Zeller



This year, March 15, the Ides of March, marks BREDL's 40th anniversary. It was on this day at a meeting of a church women's committee—at Holy Trinity Episcopal—located in the rural hamlet of Glendale Springs, North Carolina, and the home of Janet Marsh, that BREDL was founded.

Despite Shakespeare's literary omens regarding Julius Caesar, for us the Ides of March has a useful history. In Roman times, the Kalends, Nones and Ides were monthly date markers used in relation to lunar phases. The Ides marked the first full moon of a given month, which usually fell between the 13th and 15th. In early Roman times, March was the first in a ten-month year; hence the time for new year's celebrations.

So, for BREDL, the Ides of March in 1984 marked a new, hopeful beginning. As we know, it was an ominous date for the Crystalline Repository Project, run by the US Dept. of Energy. For the newly formed BREDL, the 15th of March Ides forecasted the demise of the high-level radioactive waste dump planned for the southern Appalachians and other politically targeted sites by the atomic Caesars of the day, the electric power companies. Their machinations were defeated by what was begun here by a small group of mountaineers and many others like us across the nation. Bottom line: no dump was ever built here, there or anywhere.

Although our opponents are unrelenting, the 21st Century's caesars should still beware the Ides of March.







THE HEART OF AN ACTIVIST

By: Renee Cail



The word activist has been defined as a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change. Someone who participates in a march protesting police brutality or the closing of a neighborhood YMCA is often called an activist. Participation in demonstrations, strikes, and sit-ins is one of the ways that activists bring about change.

Boycotting businesses or running or even contributing to a political campaign displays activism. Activism may be performed in a variety of ways. In March, 1871 the Barricade at the Paris Commune took place. In August of 1963, civil rights activists were involved in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom during the civil rights movement. A women's liberation march took place in Washington D.C. in 1970.



In our society today what seems to be the most impactful expression of activism is collective activism. This is a highly visible form of activism in which many individuals plan an act of protest to hopefully make a much bigger impact. Collective action that is purposeful, organized, and sustained over a period of time becomes known as a social movement.

From a historical standpoint, activists have used literature, pamphlets, books, flyers, meetings, and signs to disseminate their messages and persuade their readers to support their cause. Today social media is a tool that has spurred the calls for activism. It has become quite effective as the technology has advanced.

From working with activists throughout the years I have learned that they are fearless, dedicated and unwilling to stop the quest for freedom and equality in our country. I have seen tears fall, cars break down and countless sacrifices made to heighten awareness of a cause that enhances the lives of others. I have witnessed activists with aching knees and growling stomachs, those getting to the school late to pick up their children. People caring for family members, the list goes on and on.

Activists seek changes that we hope will change life for the better, but we sometimes view those who harm others and advocate for violence. I don't believe they are truly striving for a society that works for the betterment of all.

Yes, I see the hearts of activists all over the world. Trust and know that what hurts one hurts all in some form or fashion. The heart of an activist never dies, and we walk in truth to save a chaotic world. Activists should continue to search their hearts for a better day for all. I am certain that I will.



BREDL AIR MONITORING PROGRAM UPDATE

BY: CARE-4-AIR TEAM

Our air monitoring trailer has arrived at Wilbur Technical Services (WTS)'S New Hampshire headquarters. The B.E.A.S.T., BREDL Environmental Air Sampling Trailer, is scheduled to be complete in April. The B.E.A.S.T. is having insulation, flooring, electrical outlets, and equipment installed. After installation has been completed, WTS will test the air monitoring equipment and verify the electricity usage of the trailer.

Meanwhile, BREDL submitted our Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) to EPA on February 1. EPA will need to approve our QAPP prior to data collection. BREDL staff met with the EPA technical project officers on March 15. We were informed that our QAPP review, expected revisions, then final review will probably run into June, if not longer.

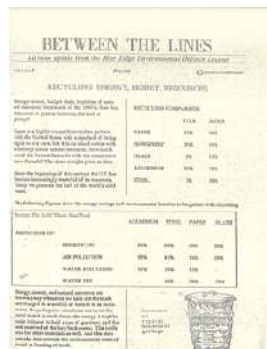
We had hoped to begin collecting data sometime in April. However, data collection will now be pushed back to the end of July or early August.

With this recent EPA delay, we will be submitting a revised work plan, revised budget, and a request to extend our grant end date.

Our CARE-4-Air project will cost \$432,854. \$365,368, nearly 85% of the project funding, comes from an EPA Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities Grant. The remaining \$67,486 will be contributed by BREDL as part of our cost-share agreement with EPA. We anticipate that our project will run through April 2027.



A WORK IN PROGRESS: B.E.A.S.T. being outfitted with insulation, flooring, electrical outlets



Over the course of 40 years, BREDL's quarterly newsletter has taken on a number of different forms. Here is a look at a few of them!



BREDL: WHO AND WHAT WE ARE

In March 1984, fifty citizens of Ashe and Watauga Counties met in the Mission House of Holy Trinity Church in Glendale Springs, North Carolina. Teachers and farmers, home-makers and merchants listened to the report of the Episcopal Church Women on the US Department of Energy's siting search for a high-level nuclear waste dump in the rain-rich east. Recognizing that the North Carolina mountains were a region at risk, the assembled group organized the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) to protect their own backyard and those of other threatened communities.

Since then, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has grown to be a regional community-based, nonprofit environmental organization. Our founding principles - earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice and community empowerment - still guide our work for social change. Our staff and volunteers put into practice the ideals of love of community and love of neighbor, which help us to serve the movement for environmental protection and progressive social change in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee.

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**Does your chapter have a story to share in the League Line?
Submit your article to bredl@bredl.org!**

View archived newsletters at www.theleagueonline.org

BREDL Credo

We believe in the practice of earth stewardship, not only by our league members, but by our government and the public as well. To foster stewardship, BREDL encourages government and citizen responsibility in conserving and protecting our natural resources. BREDL advocates grassroots involvement in order to empower whole communities in environmental issues. BREDL functions as a "watchdog" of the environment, monitoring issues and holding government officials accountable for their actions. BREDL networks with citizen groups and agencies, collecting and disseminating accurate, timely information. BREDL sets standards for environmental quality, and awards individuals and agencies who uphold these standards in practice

Grassroots Campaigns

Nothing creates hopefulness out of helplessness like a successful grassroots campaign -and our chapters have a history of winning. For over three decades Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League chapters have protected their communities by stopping dangerous facilities and promoting safe alternatives. In the 1980's and 1990's, BREDL prevented a multi-state ThermalKEM hazardous waste incinerator, a southeastern nuclear waste dump and a national nuclear waste dump. In the 2000's, our coordinated grassroots citizens' campaigns have had further victories. We won a legislative victory with the passage of the NC Solid Waste Act, effectively blocking at least four multi-state mega-dumps. Our Person County chapter convinced their Board of Commissioners to reject expansion of the Republic Services landfill. Our Cascade, Virginia, chapter shut down a huge hazardous waste incinerator. We eliminated mercury waste from the Stericycle incinerator, shut down a tire incinerator in Martinsville, won the landmark environmental justice court decision in Greene County, North Carolina. Further, with our chapters we have protected air quality by blocking scores of asphalt plants, four medical waste incinerators, a PVC plant and a lead smelter, and passage by local governments of eight polluting industries ordinances. Our work on nuclear power and coal plants laid the groundwork for our new Safe Energy Campaign. Victories over twenty-four mega-dumps have resulted in our affirmative Zero Waste Campaign. Guided by the principles of earth stewardship and environmental justice, we have learned that empowering whole communities with effective grassroots campaigns is the most effective strategy for lasting change.

Annual Membership is only \$20

Thank you for supporting Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
It's easier than ever to **join, renew** and **donate** online.

Check out our secure online donation form and use your credit card at
www.BREDL.org

Or send your check to: BREDL, c/o Virginia Staton, CPA, PO Box 2168,
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All donations are tax deductible.

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**Janet Marsh Zeller
Honorary Fund**

The BREDL Board of Directors established this fund to honor the work of Janet



Marsh Zeller, who founded the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and served as its executive director for over two decades.

The honorary fund supports BREDL's endowment and our long-term ability to serve communities. Individual gifts are accepted throughout the year. All donations to BREDL are tax deductible. Contributions to the fund will benefit the organization and honor the woman who gave so much to make our world better, one community at a time.