

BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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Scotland County Landfill Decision Prompts Citizens' Call for Legislative Action to Protect North Carolina

Laurinburg, NC, Tuesday March 20, 2007 Today in Laurinburg local members of Scotland County Of Tomorrow (SCOT) and Save Our Abundant Resources (SOAR) responded to Thursday's landfill decision in Scotland County by appealing to their local representatives in the General Assembly for action to protect the state. Last Thursday Scotland County officials announced that they had broken off negotiations to host a multi-state solid waste landfill in the county.

North Carolina is currently under a moratorium for permitting new landfills; legislation to expand the state's oversight of solid waste is expected soon. Last year's moratorium legislation passed after a successful statewide campaign that included both SCOT and SOAR. The bill called for studies of landfills and related environmental justice issues. The moratorium expires August 1, 2007.

Bob Davis, who chairs Scotland County Of Tomorrow, said, "The recommendations that are to be debated in the N.C. General Assembly point out the dangers of these 'MEGA LANDFILLS' to the health and welfare of our citizens and the environment."

The North Carolina Division of Waste Management has submitted recommendations that would affect where and how landfills are permitted and it was these recommendations that officials cited in Thursday's decision.

The two citizen groups that have mounted opposition to the landfill, SCOT in Scotland County and SOAR in Richmond County, reacted to Thursday's announcement with cautious optimism.

Both SCOT and SOAR are chapters of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. The League is a regional, community-based environmental non-profit with chapters in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee.

David Mickey, Zero Waste Coordinator for the League, pointed out, "The door is still wide open for a mega-dump in Scotland County. We hope to see meaningful legislation that protects all of North Carolina and reverses the state's trend toward more waste and bigger dumps."

In Richmond County, SOAR's Co-chair Svea Strong saw the decision as an opportunity. "We hope that the postponement of this franchise hearing will give the Scotland County Board of Commissioners time to revisit the decision that they made last year. Perhaps they can determine other ways to improve their economic situation besides saddling Scotland and surrounding counties with this kind of environmental disaster. They need to take a long-range view rather than reaching for a quick fix. Mega dumps are not economic development", Strong said.

SOAR member Dr. Fred McQueen, who represented the NAACP on the Select Committee for Environmental Justice that was created by the moratorium legislation, said, "We don't want North Carolina to be second to any state regarding the Environment. We want the very best environment we can get for North Carolina. We need to move toward zero waste."

"North Carolina should take care of our own trash and not take trash from other states. We need to take care of the land and save it for future generations. We need to be aware of how sites are selected in relation to Environmental Justice," Dr. McQueen added.

SCOT's Jim McMillan, who has often expressed concerns about future water resources and water quality in Scotland County, asked, "Does it cost too much to be safe?" Both SCOT and SOAR expect that the General Assembly will soon have answers to his question.

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