



ADVOCATES SAY THE STATE IS ALLOWING ENVIRONMENTAL HARM IN LOW-INCOME, MINORITY COUNTIES – NEWS & OBSERVER

NOVEMBER 20, 2019

By Lynn Bonner

The state is failing low-income communities with large African-American and Native American populations by allowing polluting industries to concentrate in their counties, a group of residents said Wednesday as they demanded that an environmental justice advisory board do more to advocate for them.

Michael Regan, secretary of the state Department of Environmental Quality, set up the Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board last year. The board has had a low profile even as the state deals with environmental issues that residents say heap harm on economically disadvantaged counties.

Opponents of Enviva, a company that produces wood pellets by the ton for export, the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline, coal ash disposal sites, and industrial agriculture said the DEQ is watching out for industries and not the people who live near those operations.

This year, DEQ issued permits to allow for a new Enviva plant in Richmond County and for expansions at Sampson and Northampton county plants. Last year, DEQ issued a crucial permit to allow the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, a 600-mile natural gas line planned to run from West Virginia and through eight counties in North Carolina. Environmental groups want DEQ to revoke the pipeline permit.

The meeting attendees applauded and cheered after the advisory board unanimously adopted “a statement of concern” about the pipeline offered by board member Rodney S. Sadler Jr., an associate professor at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte.

Lawsuits have stalled pipeline construction, but its owners are confident it will be built. In a press release last month, Dominion Energy said the pipeline is needed to ease natural gas shortages. “The economic vitality, environmental health and energy security of our region depend on it,” the press release said.

‘TELL DEQ THAT THEY HAVE FAILED US’

At a news conference after the meeting, William Barber III, an advisory board member who works with The Climate Reality Project and North Carolina Poor People’s Campaign, said DEQ should be required to consider the cumulative impacts of “extractive industries” before granting permits, and should start with the wood pellet industry.

Belinda Joyner, a Northampton County resident, told the advisory board that it wasn’t by accident that Enviva, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline route, and a hog farm ended up a few miles from one another in the economically distressed county that is majority African-American.

“Go back and tell DEQ that they have failed us as people, as a community,” Joyner told the advisory board. “We need somebody who’s going to be there for us and not against us.”

“They had three different hearings in three different counties,” Joyner said. “It’s amazing how we got the same result in all three counties.”

[Continue reading](#)

POSTED IN: [BIOMASS IS NOT RENEWABLE](#), [CLEAN ENERGY](#), [DUKE ENERGY & STATE REGULATORS](#), [ENERGY JUSTICE NC](#), [ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE](#), [NEWS](#)

SHARE THIS PAGE



PREVIOUS ARTICLE

NEXT ARTICLE



P.O. BOX 61051
DURHAM, NC 27715

PHONE (919) 416-5077
NCWARN@NCWARN.ORG

HOME

OUR WORK

ABOUT US

EVENTS

DONATE

VOLUNTEER

VIDEOS

LEGAL
FILINGS

PUBLICATIONS

NEWS
RELEASES

NEWS

STAY CONNECTED



© 2020 NC WARN

SITE BY: [STATUS FORWARD](#)

SIGN UP FOR NEWS & ACTION ALERTS

