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Contact: Terry Lansdell
Program Director, Clean Air Carolina
980-213-6446 or terry@cleanaircarolina.org

Groups Call on Governor Cooper to Pull the Brakes on Wood Pellet Industry in North Carolina

Over 10,000 Individuals and 50 Organizations, Representing Millions of People, Supporting Communities, Public Health, Climate and Forests Ask Governor to Revoke World's Largest Wood Pellet Manufacturer's Flawed Air Quality Permit in Richmond County

RALEIGH, NC – The Concerned Citizens of Richmond County and Dogwood Alliance joined with faith, justice, health and science leaders to call on North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper to stop the continued growth of the wood pellet industry in the state. The groups held a press conference to share a letter signed by over 50 NC organizations and a petition from over 10,000 people asking the Governor to revoke a flawed air permit granted to Enviva, the world's largest wood pellet manufacturer. Community members opposing Enviva hand-delivered the petitions and letter to the offices of Governor Cooper and NC DEQ following the event.

The organizations contend that biomass and the wood pellet industry are an environmental injustice. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than Richmond County in rural North Carolina. For the last several years county officials have been working, mostly behind closed doors, with Enviva to gain approval for the construction of a wood pellet manufacturing facility in the town of Hamlet. Residents of the county have repeatedly attempted to deliver public comments to their elected officials at the Richmond County Commission, and have been denied on multiple occasions in a practice that NC Policy Watch reports "clearly violates the first amendment."

Under the McCrory Administration, the NC Department of Environmental Quality issued an air quality permit to Enviva without any notice or opportunity for the local community to comment, resulting in a lawsuit challenging the permit. The Southern Environmental Law Center is representing the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County in the case. Now, the local group is joining with state and national organizations to urge Governor Cooper to oppose this pellet mill and stand for justice, the environment, and communities.

"We hope Governor Cooper will respond to our call for environmental justice and revoke Enviva's air permit, we were not provided the opportunity for input and this directly impacts us

all” said Debra David, secretary of the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County. “Adding a wood pellet mill that harms our forests, health and quality of life to CAFOs, a dirty coal plant, and a potential terminal for the Atlantic Coastal Pipeline would be an injustice.”

The Enviva facility will be an additional burden to a community already taxed with extractive industry, pollution, and economic hardship. Residents currently live with a Duke natural gas turbine, a CSX rail station, coal ash transportation, and are on the route for a connecting line for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

The wood pellet industry has exploded in the South over the last few years based on the growing demand for biomass electricity in Europe. Environmental organizations such as the Dogwood Alliance have criticized Enviva and other wood pellet manufacturers for logging in ecologically sensitive areas and increasing carbon emissions.

“We commend Governor Cooper for his commitment to upholding the Paris Climate Agreement and hope he will recognize how dirty energy like biomass is bad for our climate and that these types of extractive industries are not the future that our state needs,” said Danna Smith, Executive Director of Dogwood Alliance. “North Carolina should invest in truly clean energy and promote businesses that support healthy communities and protect our forests. Together we can lead the way to a prosperous and just future.”

Concerned citizens fear this facility will create harmful particulate matter and pollutants, will create constant noise and disrupt their quality of life, and clog up roads with dangerous truck traffic. The County has offered Enviva \$1.6 million in direct cash incentives and property tax breaks of up to 85%, which residents oppose as a wasteful expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Richmond County already faces some of the highest levels of asthma in the region, and a 2016 study showed Richmond County ranking in the bottom 10 percent of North Carolina counties for health outcomes.

“North Carolina forests do their job to clean the air when they are a living part of our environment”, said Terry Lansdell, Program Director at Clean Air Carolina. “From production to combustion, wood pellet chain emissions are higher than coal, release large quantities of respiratory pollutants and release levels of particulate matter that disproportionately affect residents already overburdened with health impacts like asthma and COPD from air pollution exposure.”

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Adapted from Scot Quaranda of Dogwood Alliance

Based in Hamlet, NC the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County is a local environmental justice group that is an advocate for clean air and water in Richmond County. The group is a chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL).

Founded in 1996 and based in Asheville, NC, Dogwood Alliance mobilizes diverse voices to protect Southern forests and communities from destructive industrial logging. The group's Our Forests Aren't Fuel campaign is part of an international coalition opposing industrial-scale forest biomass energy.

Clean Air Carolina is a nonprofit organization based in Charlotte, NC with a satellite office in the Triangle. Our mission is to ensure cleaner air quality for all North Carolinians through education and advocacy and by working with our partners to reduce sources of pollution. Visit us at www.CleanAirCarolina.org and follow us on Twitter [@CleanAirNC](https://twitter.com/CleanAirNC).