



ABRA Update #75 – April 14, 2016

One Week to Register for Pipeline Summit: Energize, Equip, Empower

The Pipeline Summit on Saturday, April 23 at the Weyer's Cave Community Center in Weyer's Cave, VA, is attracting registrants from throughout Virginia and West Virginia who are opposing the proposed Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines. Co-sponsored by the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance and the POWHR coalition, the 10 am to 3 pm Summit is still open for registration, but only a week remains. If you've not already done so, register today at: <http://abralliance.org/beta/wordpress/event/pipeline-summit/>.

Among featured speakers and participants will be [Jane Kleeb](#), the citizen-activist from Nebraska who led the ultimately successful fight against the XL Pipeline. She will be part of a panel presentation in the morning session entitled "Lessons from the Battlefield," recounting grass roots techniques that have been successful. A breakout group in the afternoon will continue to discuss this topic. Also participating on the panel will be Nancy Sorrells, Co-Chair of the Augusta County Alliance, and Ellen Darden and Laurie Ardison of the POWHR coalition.

The Summit will begin with a panel discussion on "Pipeline Economics," exploring whether there is a real need for new natural gas pipelines and the economic impacts on affected communities and economies should either the ACP or MVP be built. Panelists for that session will be: Greg Buppert, Southern Environmental Law Center; Tom Hadwin, Friends of Central Shenandoah; Spencer Phillips, Key-Log Economics; and Lorne Stockman, Oil Change International.

Rick Webb of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition will round out the morning session with a presentation on a new study on water testing protocols for wells, springs and municipal water systems in the proximity to a pipeline. He will also present the latest information about the Geological Information Systems (GIS) technique that is being utilized to map geological and ecological characteristics of proposed pipeline routes. The GIS technology will also be the subject of an afternoon breakout group.

Other breakout discussion groups in the afternoon will explore "Political Climate Change," how to improve the understanding and receptivity of public officials to our messages, and "Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement," regarding what further steps that need to be taken to make a PEIS a reality. The Summit will conclude with a plenary session to hear reports and recommendations from the breakout groups.

Forest Service Permits Surveying of New ACP Route

The National Forest Service (NFS) has issued new temporary special use permits for surveying on forest lands for the new proposed route of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (GWNF-6). The April 14 announcement provides for a one-year permit for site surveys and testing activities in a 300-foot wide corridor along 5.4 miles of the Monongahela national Forest and 14.3 miles of the George Washington National Forest. Several ABRA members had urged the NFS to delay issuing the permit until further analysis of the GWNF-6 impacts could be assessed.

The surveys will include evaluations of wetlands, water, soil, sensitive species, soils, geology and other features, according to the NFS [news release](#).

Greensville Power Station Permit Eligibility Challenged

The Sierra Club and Appalachian Voices, both ABRA members, have asked for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to not grant a Significant Deterioration Permit for the proposed Greensville Power Station in Greensville County, VA. The project, a 1600-megawatt facility of Virginia Electric and Power Company (a subsidiary of Dominion Resources) would receive a portion of the natural gas to operate the plant from the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). Allegheny Mountain Advocates (Appalmad), also an ABRA member, argued on behalf of its clients that:

“The proposed project is legally ineligible for a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit under Virginia’s State Implementation Plan, Virginia’s State Air Pollution Control Law, and the Clean Air Act. Remarkably, Dominion fails to provide any information or analysis on major pollutant-emitting activities connected with the plant. It indefensibly omits any mention of its own Atlantic Coast Pipeline—a project with the potential to emit enormous amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas and a major driver of climate change. Because the two projects are linked, both literally and functionally, the law is clear that the pipeline and its compressor stations must be considered alongside the Greensville plant. Accordingly, all activities associated with the proposals require the best available controls on greenhouse gases and other emissions. For this reason alone, Dominion must be sent back to the drawing board.”

The Appalmad March 30 letter is available on the ABRA [website](#).

ABRA Members Call for FERC to Reject Expedited Review of ACP

Four ABRA members (Shenandoah Valley Network, Highlanders for Responsible Development, Virginia Wilderness Committee and Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation) plus the Natural Resources Defense Council filed [comments](#) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on April 12 requesting that the agency 1) reject the recent request by Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC (Atlantic) for an expedited processing of its application and 2) to set a schedule for environmental review that provides at a minimum, one year before the release of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The comments, prepared and filed by the Southern Environmental Law Center, also an ABRA member, argued that:

1. Landowners and communities affected by the new route must have the same opportunity to review and comment on the project as others had for the original route.
2. The draft EIS can only be issued after surveys of national forest lands have been completed and approved by the Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
3. The Commission must not expedite the Atlantic application because the “public necessity” for its pipeline is an unresolved question of fact in this proceeding.
4. The Commission should not issue a draft EIS until it reaches a decision on the Atlantic Sunrise Expansion Project. (Components of the Atlantic Sunrise Project include modifications to the Transco Mainstem pipeline to allow the bi-directional flow and delivery of gas from the Marcellus shale region as far south as Alabama through and to the region that would be served by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. On March 9, 2016, the Commission announced that it would not issue a draft EIS for the Atlantic Sunrise Expansion Project until October 21, 2016.)

Virginia County Supervisors Voice Opposition and Concerns About GWNF-6

Two Virginia Boards of Supervisors this past week expressed opposition to the new proposed ACP route, GWNF-6. On April 12 the Bath County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to have a resolution prepared in opposition to the pipeline, which was recently re-routed into the county. Among those speaking at the Supervisors' meeting, Ryan Hodges, co-chair of Voices of Bath, a new ABRA member, said that the "pipeline would have no benefit to the county, just devastation. Reduced property values would affect the county's income." The Supervisors' vote is particularly significant given that Dominion is one of the largest employers and business tax payers in Bath County. The Supervisors expect to vote on the resolution at their May 10 meeting.

The August County Board of Supervisors filed a [letter](#) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on April 12 that voiced several concerns with the GWNF-6 route, particularly the adverse impact it would have on the Deerfield Valley community in the western side of the county. The letter argues that the Virginia Code section that permits natural gas companies to survey land without a property owner's permission "places an affirmative obligation on the part of Atlantic Coast Pipeline to find the most advantageous route. We are concerned that the most recent alternative route is not the most advantageous route." Concluding, the Supervisors' letter says that GWNF-6 "does not take into account other environmental impacts" and requests that FERC not grant approval for the GWNF-6 alternative route.

Energy Efficiency Can Play a Larger Role in Meeting Peak Demands

A critique of new studies on future electricity demands calls for a greater reliance on energy efficiency in responding to peak demand periods. The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) states in a current [article](#) on its website that "energy efficiency can save a lot more than what is assumed in a business-as-usual baseline." It cites the recently-released Seventh Regional Power Plan by ISO New England, an independent, non-profit regional transmission organization that "expects to meet nearly all of their resource needs with energy efficiency."

Virginia Newspaper Honored for Pipeline Coverage

The Virginia Press Association (VPA) bestowed on April 9 its highest award for journalistic integrity and community service in the non-daily category to *The Recorder*, the weekly newspaper serving Highland and Bath Counties. *The Recorder* was recognized for its continuing coverage of plans to route the Atlantic Coast Pipeline through the Virginia mountains. Of the entry, judge Meg McGuire wrote, "How could you not be impressed by The Recorder's faithful coverage of such an immense topic? As I read through the stories, I felt I was looking at one of those core drill samples of earth which, when pulled from the ground, reveal layers and layers of soil that each tell their own story." It is the 10th time that the paper has received the award, a record.

Strengthening of Gas Pipeline Safety Regulations Proposed

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has proposed a new rule that would significantly broaden the agency's regulatory scope with respect to natural gas pipelines. The PHMSA, an arm of the U.S. Department of Transportation, is responsible for safety regulations for pipelines transporting hazardous materials. Among the features of the 549-page proposed rule would create "Moderate Consequence Areas" as a new category for regulation and also requires that older pipelines that have not previously required testing be pressure tested. Learn more about the rule [here](#).

New Study Confirms Extent of Methane Leaks

A new [study](#) accepted for publication in *Environment Science and Technology* has documented the widespread methane leaks from oil and gas wells and storage facilities. The study, the largest sample size of any methane emissions study to date, utilized helicopters flying over more than 8,000 well pads in seven regions across the country using technology to capture images of methane and other pollutants. Storage facilities were a prominent source of the detected leaks. The study's authors said the results underscore the need to have stricter standards in place.

ABRA Members Comment on Problems with New ACP Route

A number of ABRA member organizations and affiliated individuals filed with FERC within the past week significant comments taking issue with the proposed alternative route for the ACP. Among those filings are the following (links to the comments are highlighted):

[Potomac Appalachian Trail Club – Southern Shenandoah Valley Chapter](#)

- GWNF-6 “is very problematic with regard to its passage through the GWNF. In addition to fragmenting habitat in the national forest, it would negatively affect five Special Biological Areas (SBAs), an Inventoried Roadless Area, two Concentrated Recreation Areas, a Recreational River Corridor, a Scenic Corridor, a Dispersed Recreation Area, several significant cultural resources, and a long list of trails, including both the Great Eastern Trail and the Appalachian Trail.”
- “According to the 2014 GWNF Management Plan, Special Biological Areas . . . are assemblages of plants and animals that occupy a small portion of the landscape, but contribute significantly to biological diversity. The Plan states that these areas are unsuitable for designation of new utility corridors.”
- “We are concerned that the pipeline, if constructed, would have a negative effect on the 90,000--acre Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area, proposed by Friends of Shenandoah Mountain and recommended for Congressional designation by the new GWNF management plan. PATC is a strong supporter of this proposal and does not want any commercial development of this sort to degrade the scenic gateway to this special area and the surrounding national forest lands.”

[Friends of the Central Shenandoah](#)

- “When confronted with the U.S. Forest Service’s denial of the preferred route, ACP developers returned to a route that they had previously rejected as unsuitable. The terrain and abundance of karst topography in the proposed new route makes this an especially unsuitable location for building a large natural gas pipeline.”
- “Far too many pipelines have been proposed to take away capacity from the Marcellus production zone and transport it to the natural gas transmission system. FERC’s staff is aware of this.”
- “Dominion Resources is forcing the customers of its subsidiary, Dominion Virginia Power, to subsidize the ACP without their consent. This occurs by passing through the higher gas transport fees for moving gas via the ACP compared to the existing pipeline using the automatic fuel adjustment feature on DVP customer bills.”

[Augusta County Alliance](#)

- “The newly proposed route now crosses through areas of karst, particularly in Bath County, that are even more unique and vulnerable. Unfortunately, because some of this route was not on the alternative portions examined and rejected by Dominion in its original filing, there is no baseline in order to thoroughly investigate the new karst resources and the potential pipeline impacts. Government agencies are being pushed to locate and document those resources but because of pressure from Dominion to truncate the application timeline, full documentation and comparison with the other earlier and/or rejected routes will not be possible unless the EIS timeline is substantially expanded. We feel that the EIS must be extended and a new scoping period opened. Further, the best option would be to do a full comparative EIS with all the pipelines affecting this western region.”
- “Because this new route affects a large number of new landowners, a new scoping period should be opened and, at the very least, the EIS should be extended for a year. A better solution, however, given the multiple and continuous changes to the ACP route (at least a dozen significant changes and many more minor changes in Augusta County alone) and the Mountain Valley Pipeline route, is a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement examining the cumulative effects of all the natural gas pipelines in the region.”

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Friends of Nelson steps up to protect water quality in Nelson County

- Augusta Free Press – 4/12/16

<http://augustafreepress.com/friends-nelson-steps-protect-water-quality-nelson-county/>

Copycat letters flow into FERC

- The Recorder – 4/14/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Copy_Cat_Letters_Flow_Into_FERC-Recorder_4-14-16.pdf

Pipeline is “nightmare” for valley

- The Recorder – 4/14/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/pipeline_is_nightmare_for_valley-recorder_4-14-16.pdf

Board to oppose pipelines

- The Recorder – 4/14/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Board_to_oppose_pipeline-Recorder_4-14-16.pdf

Pipeline route protests intensify

- The Recorder – 4/14/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/pipeline_route_protests_intensify-recorder_4-14-16.pdf

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Why Does Dominion Power Support EPA's Clean Power Plan?

- The Energy Collective – 4/11/16

<http://www.theenergycollective.com/ivy-main/2375748/why-does-dominion-power-support-epas-clean-power-plan>

Because it's making a killing off of it and will continue to do so under a business-as-usual situation in the General Assembly

Dominion's power play

- The Washington Post – 4/8/16

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dominions-power-play/2016/04/08/74f742f2-fa9f-11e5-9140-e61d062438bb_story.html

DEQ head's relationship with Dominion still raising questions

Big Picture:

Here Come Natural Gas Price Increases

- Union of Concerned Scientists – 4/12/16

<http://blog.ucsusa.org/mike-jacobs/natural-gas-price-increases>

What happened to our cheap, clean, and plentiful "bridge fuel"?

The New York Primary Will Be a Big Fracking Deal

- Mother Jones – 4/8/16

<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/04/new-york-primary-fracking-clinton-sanders>

NY primary may have an outsized effect on US energy policy in coming years

Op-Ed: Pipeline rules would have dramatic impact on industry

- Pittsburg Business Times – 4/8/16

<http://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/blog/energy/2016/04/op-ed-pipeline-rules-would-have-dramatic-impact-on.html>

Reducing Natural Gas Overreliance Risks in Massachusetts through Renewable Energy

- Union of Concerned Scientists – 4/7/16

http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/reducing-natural-gas-overreliance-risks-in-massachusetts-through-renewable-energy-0685#.Vw6TPvkrKJA

New report shows benefits of avoiding over-reliance on gas and diversifying power sources in Massachusetts

91 Mass. lawmakers object to ratepayers paying for gas pipeline

- Worcester Telegram & Gazette – 4/12/16

<http://www.telegram.com/article/20160411/NEWS/160410860>

Industry wants ratepayers to cover costs of pipeline(s) because they "have determined the risk is not worth the reward,".

Elizabeth Warren: No spring tree-cutting for Berkshire County gas pipeline

- MassLive.com – 4/12/16

http://www.masslive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/elizabeth_warren_no_spring_tre.html

SoCalGas Announces Framework to Safely Bring Aliso Canyon Storage Facility Back Online in Compliance with Newly Issued Regulations

- PR Newswire – 4/7/16

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/socalgas-announces-framework-to-safely-bring-aliso-canyon-storage-facility-back-online-in-compliance-with-newly-issued-regulations-300248123.html>

Storage facility critical to power supplies in southern California...great effort being made to get it back in service