

# The Recorder

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## Dominion sticks to proposed ACP route

BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER



*Bill Bratton told the marchers what to expect on Little Mountain. (Recorder photo by John Bruce)*

**BOLAR** – Carrying banners, a resolute band of Atlantic Coast Pipeline protest marchers boldly set out across Bath County last weekend.

About two dozen people, mostly from Charlottesville and Nelson County, gathered on Bill and Sandy Bratton’s farm Saturday at the foot of Little Mountain to embark on a 16-day, 150-mile protest march called “Walking the Line” against the proposed pipeline.

March organizer Lee White of the citizen group, Cville Rising, said the march of peaceful resistance would cover roughly 10 miles a day on the way to the Union Hill community, the site of a proposed compressor station in Buckingham County.

Their concerns persist over Dominion’s determination to route the proposed pipeline through environmentally sensitive mountains and valleys vulnerable to water and air pollution, karst damage and permanent ridgetop deforestation.



*Extreme ridge excavation would be required on Bath County's Little Mountain where the center-line flagging here is barely visible. This photo was submitted to Department of Environmental Quality director David Paylor when he visited Bath and Highland June 6. (Photo courtesy Gary Robinson)*

The route would cross karst-laden Little Valley, Valley Center, Jackson River Valley, and visually mar the ridges of the two Little Mountains in Bath and Highland counties, and Back Creek Mountain.

Dominion refuted a claim there was a new route in Valley Center.

“Nothing has changed” since early May, spokesman Aaron Ruby told The Recorder last week.

He has repeatedly rebutted claims that 38 miles of Virginia and West Virginia mountaintops would be removed.

A final environmental impact statement on the ACP is expected next month.



*From left, Jennye Johnson of Zion Crossroads, Pam Mendosa of Nelson, and Deborah Kushner of Nelson prepared for the march. (Recorder photo by John Bruce)*

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations do not specify restrictions on permanent ridgetop deforestation, FERC spokeswoman Tamara Young-Allen told The Recorder. “Only after receiving a project-specific certificate of public convenience and necessity from (FERC) may a sponsor cut trees, if necessary, to construct its project. These activities would be subject to the erosion control and stabilization

measures prescribed in the final EIS, the (FERC) order, and any supplements included in the project's implementation plan. FERC staff is unaware of any restrictions applied by other federal agencies regarding tree clearing,” Allen said.

More than a hint of frustration pervaded the air back on the Bratton farm.



*Stace Carter of Cville Rising, right, interviewed Bill and Lynn Limpert. (Recorder photo by John Bruce)*

“We don’t need this,” protest marcher Pam Mendosa of Nelson said, summing up feelings about the proposed pipeline. “I’m doing this for my children and grandchildren.”

“I’m here to support the marchers,” said Harold King of Burnsville, chair of the Bath County Local Emergency Planning Committee. Describing himself as “heavily opposed,” he hopes he and other opponents can delay the project until it is no longer economically feasible.

Despite the Department of Environmental Quality director’s assurance to the contrary, the head of another citizen group wonders if there will be a sufficiently thorough check on trout streams like the Jackson River.

The marchers crossed the Jackson Saturday on their way to Bill and Lynn Limpert’s property in Little Valley, where pipeline construction would remove old-growth forest including a 16-foot circumference sugar maple.

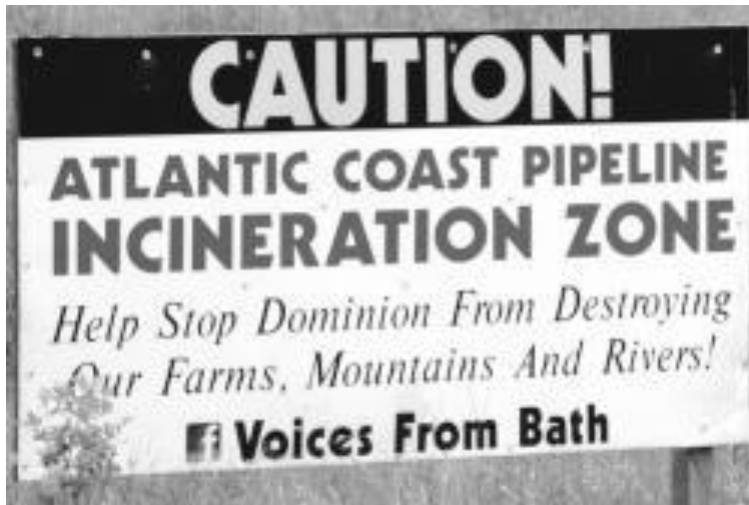


*A contingent of Hiking the Line protest marchers made its way to the meeting point on the Bratton farm. (Recorder photos by John Bruce)*

“FERC thinks it’s OK,” Limpert said.

“I question whether the DEQ will actually require critical site-specific details before the formal review

process begins,” said Rick Webb, coordinator of Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, which is suing the DEQ for unlawfully issuing certification. “Although DEQ recently asked for and received a range of information about the project, it does not appear that Dominion has submitted the site-specific plan sheets. DEQ cannot properly issue a draft permit and initiate a public comment period before that critical information is available and the DEQ has had time to review it.



*Eye-catching signs on U.S. 220 in northern Bath greeted protest marchers.*

“To be complete and sufficiently informative, the pipeline developers must provide plans that include the information addressed in the Cowpasture River and Jackson River Preservation Associations’ recent email to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality director David Paylor, where they identify the need for site-specific plan view

and cross-section diagrams of corridor and access road construction, showing the extent of excavation, the disposition of spoil, and the locations and specifications for erosion and runoff control and slope stabilization structures,” Webb said.

Paylor vigorously disputed reports DEQ was backing down from detailed waterway review. He insisted during his June 6 visit to Bath and Highland that the agency “will cover every stream crossing for those things that we’re responsible for.”

But the information necessary for that to happen has not been delivered, Webb said. “So far, as far as I know, this level of information has been only been provided for one-tenth of a mile of the ACP route in Virginia, nowhere else in Virginia. It was provide in response to Forest Service requests, and the one-tenth mile is on the National Forest. At that location, Dominion proposed to prevent erosion and slope failure by installing heavy steel-wire mesh, something akin to chainlink fence, flat on the mountainside and held in place with 8- to 15-foot steel nails in six-inch holes drilled into the bedrock and filled with epoxy.

“It’s hard to believe they proposed to go to such extremes while at the same time describing a minimal environmental footprint,” Webb continued. “I suppose that’s what Dominion spokesmen mean by ‘above and beyond?’ Detailed horizontal and cross-sectional diagrams are particularly important for areas where extensive mountainside and ridgeline excavation will be required. Dominion spokespersons have been remarkably dissembling on the extreme excavation issue. Dominion proposes to use TECCO steel wire mesh on a steep mountainside above Townsend Draft, a native trout stream north of Route 84 east of the West Virginia line in Highland County. Dominon proposes to use this stuff in an approximately 60- by 80-foot area at the bottom of the slope above Lick Draft, a tributary of Townsend Draft. We don’t know where else they propose to use it.”

Little Valley is a karst-rich box canyon, residents say, that would suffer water pollution and would be inescapable in a pipeline emergency.

“The Little Valley area, like much of the proposed ACP route through the mountains, presents extreme challenges for pipeline construction due to steep slopes, high-excavation requirements,

erodible and slip-prone soil cover, and interconnected karst ground water systems,” Webb reported in early June on a web page titled “Little Valley: High- Hazard Pipeline Construction.”

FERC’s draft environmental impact statement “did not include site-specific plans for erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, steep-slope stabilization, stream-crossings, or ground water recharge area protection,” Webb said.

“FERC did not meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act to substantively address environmental issues associated with the proposed project and to provide an opportunity for informed public and agency review and comment.

“DEQ announced in April 2017 that it would conduct a stream-by-stream review prior to issuing a Water Quality Certification for the ACP. We now know that the Virginia DEQ instead plans to narrowly limit its review to aspects of the project that are not covered by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting for stream and wetlands crossings,” Webb said.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will probably authorize the project under a general blanket permit without actual analysis of individual stream crossings or the cumulative effects of multiple stream crossings. To date, it seems that neither DEQ nor the (Army Corps) have received complete applications from Dominion, and it has not been confirmed that Dominion will be required to submit site-specific construction and environmental mitigation plans with the level of detail needed for meaningful review by the regulatory agencies and the public.

“The 125-foot-wide construction corridor and 75-foot-wide permanent right of way would require ridge removal on segments of the proposed ACP in western Virginia and eastern West Virginia including both of the Little Mountains in Bath and Highland. Dominion officials have asserted that ridge removal will not be required, that ‘the contours of the ridgelines will remain exactly as they always have been,’ and that any excess material will be limited to what is displaced by the volume of the pipe itself,” Webb wrote.

“This is contradicted by multiple descriptions of the project, including in documents provided with Dominion’s recent application to the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for a water quality certification, in which schematics depict a 125-foot or wider construction corridor. As described in the application, ‘The surface of (ridges) may need to be temporarily lowered to create a level construction right of way. Excavation of the trench will begin from the leveled work area.’ The application further indicates that the pipeline trench itself will be 30 feet wide, and that a permanent 75-foot-wide right of way is required,” Webb said.

For “Walking the Line” protest march information, access <http://cvillerising.com/>.

For Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Commission information, visit <http://pipelineupdate.org/>.

Access <https://atlanticcoastpipeline.com/> for pipeline route maps, vendor-supplier information and more.