

The Recorder

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Pipeline astroturfing continues

I urge FERC to approve the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (FERC Docket #CP15-554) in order to provide a clean, reliable American fuel source to meet growing energy demands.

Please reject efforts to halt this project. The demand for this project already exists and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement made clear this project can be built without any significant cumulative impacts.

Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

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The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission keeps receiving an identical message to approve the proposed pipeline. Hundreds of letters like this have been sent to the agency in a form of “astroturfing.”

MONTEREY – In a practice known as astroturfing, mail generated to influence approval of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline pours into

the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission every business day.

FERC has received more than 500 identical messages since May 31 calling for rejection of efforts to halt the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

The dictionary defines astroturfing as an “organized activity that is intended to create a false impression of a widespread, spontaneously arising, grassroots movement in support of or in opposition to something.” The term was first coined in 1985 by then-U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen when he said, “A fellow from Texas can tell the difference between grass roots and AstroTurf ... this is generated mail.” Bentsen was describing a “mountain of cards and letters” sent to his office to promote insurance industry interests.

In April 2015, The Recorder reported about the Consumer Energy Alliance’s astroturfing. The nonprofit agency, branding itself the voice of the energy consumer, submitted more than 20,000 comments to FERC “urging swift approval of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.”

SourceWatch called CEA a nonprofit front group for the fossil-fuel industry. According to Salon.com, CEA is part of a sophisticated public affairs strategy designed to manipulate the political system with messaging favorable to the energy sector.

— John Bruce