



ABRA Update #296 – November 19, 2020

Issue Highlights . . .

- ABRA, SELC Honored by Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
- **Your Help Is Needed! ABRA's New Initiatives Will Require New Funding.**
- New Study Highlights How Big Banks Support the Unneeded MVP
- U.S. Senate Committee Approves New FERC Commissioners
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ABRA, SELC Honored by Rockbridge Area Conservation Council

ABRA and Southern Environmental Law Center were each honored for their role in fighting the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) at the November 8 Board of Directors meeting of the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC).

SELC received the Relentless Warriors Award in recognition for its “dedicated pursuit of justice and tireless work, using the power of the law to challenge the construction of the ACP.” ABRA was honored with the David and Goliath Award “for building a coalition of organizations that succeeded against all odds in compelling Dominion Energy and Duke Energy to abandon the ACP.” ABRA’s Board of Directors and staff extend our gratitude to RACC for this recognition.

Your Help Is Needed! ABRA's New Initiatives Will Require New Funding.

ABRA’s 2021 activities will involve monitoring the restoration of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline route, which is expected to extend into 2022, and helping in the continuing fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline. However, the bulk of ABRA’s 2021 work will be with the new Conservation Hub program, described in the *ABRA Update* issues of [August 20](#) and [November 5](#), which will require additional funding. ABRA member organizations and individuals active in the coalition are urged to help assure the success of these initiatives with your contributions of financial support.

Tax-exempt donations may be made to ABRA, as follows:

By check: **Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance, PO Box 95, Monterey, VA 24465**

By PayPal: Click [here](#). (Note: PayPal contributions are subject to a handling fee, paid by ABRA, thus reducing the amount of the contribution that is received.)

New Study Highlights How Big Banks Support the Unneeded MVP

A new study from Oil Change International (OCI) reveals that several major U.S. banks have substantially increased their investment in the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

[“New Money Behind the Mountain Valley Pipeline.”](#) released by on November 12, states:

Six U.S. “main street” banks – banks that are leading providers of personal banking services in the United States – rank among the top eight financiers. These included Bank of America, Wells Fargo, PNC, SunTrust, Bank of the West (through parent company BNP Paribas) and U.S. Bank.

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The study, an update of a [May 2017 study that OCI did](#), notes that the projected cost of the MVP is now nearly double the original \$3.5 billion cost estimate of the project. This makes the 300-mile MVP the highest per-mile cost of any gas pipeline in the country.

U.S. Senate Committee Approves New FERC Commissioners

Two nominees for vacancies on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) were approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The two nominees, Mark Christie and Allison Clements, had been nominated by President Trump in July.

Mr. Christie, who has been chairman of the Virginia State Corporation Commission for the past 16 years, was nominated to fill the seat of now-departed Commissioner Bernard McNamee, a Republican member. Allison Clements, who is with the Energy Foundation and formerly was an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, was appointed to fill the seat vacated last summer by Cheryl LaFleur, a Democrat.

The committee-approved nominees must now receive a vote of confirmation from the entire U.S. Senate. While approval is anticipated, the Senate has only 15 days of scheduled session remaining. It is not clear when the nominations will come to the Senate floor for a vote.

FERC has been operating with only three members, which is the required quorum. President Trump on November 5 replaced Neil Chatterjee as FERC Chairman with Commissioner Neil Danley, who was appointed to the Commission in March of this year after serving as FERC General Counsel. While Commissioners are appointed to specific terms, the Chairman serves as an appointee of the President. It is anticipated that President-elect Biden will appoint a new Chairman after he takes office on January 20. Sitting Commissioner Richard Glick is reported to be likely named.

In the News:

Regional Issues

Appeals court declines latest request to stop work on the Mountain Valley Pipeline

- The Roanoke Times – 11/18/20

https://roanoke.com/news/local/appeals-court-declines-latest-request-to-stop-work-on-the-mountain-valley-pipeline/article_7ae7248a-29f1-11eb-b927-3723d25bboda.html

A federal appeals court let stand a finding that construction would not jeopardize endangered species.

Mining has a lasting impact

- The Farmville Herald – 11/11/20

<https://www.farmvilleherald.com/2020/11/mining-has-a-lasting-impact>

Related: (hint...just Google “gold mining impacts news” ...wow!)

- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201026-why-its-getting-harder-to-mine-gold>

Virginia Natural Gas infrastructure expansion to be scaled back amid plant financing troubles

- Virginia Mercury – 11/17/20

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/11/17/virginia-natural-gas-infrastructure-expansion-to-be-scaled-back-amid-plant-financing-troubles/>

Fourth Circuit Stays MVP's New Stream-Crossing Permits Pending Appeal in Latest Setback

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 11/10/20
<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/fourth-circuit-stays-mvps-new-stream-crossing-permits-pending-appeal-in-latest-setback/>

Related:

- <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/11/12/mountain-valley-pipeline-faces-another-legal-roadblock-what-does-that-mean-for-the-long-embattled-project/>

Judge orders tree-sitters down after more than 2 years

- The Roanoke Times – 11/12/20
https://roanoke.com/business/local/judge-orders-tree-sitters-down-after-more-than-2-years/article_3a53db1a-250b-11eb-8b06-4bf4a91a32cc.html#tracking-source=home-top-story
Cancellation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project and a judge's order to shut down the Dakota Access Pipeline injected activists with fresh enthusiasm, but these legal victories are far from being the pipeline's swan song.

Virginia: Protect pipeline communities from COVID-19

- Natural resources Defense Council – 11/17/20
<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/amy-mall/va-act-now-protect-pipeline-communities-covid-19>
Southwest Virginia is currently experiencing a dramatic spike in new cases. The Chief Operating Officer of the region's health care system said, "To put everything bluntly, we could easily run out of resources for our patients." MVP wants to "...fully mobilize and get upwards of 4,000 people right way (sic)...." Their Erosion and Sediment Control program has resulted in over 600 violations and counting. What could possibly go wrong?

Big Picture:

Biden Plans to Move Fast With a 'Climate Administration.' Here's How.

- The New York Times – 11/17/20
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/climate/biden-climate-change.html>
President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr's aggressive approach to climate change includes undoing years of President Trump's regulatory rollbacks at agencies like the E.P.A.

Committee sends Trump FERC picks to Senate floor

- E&E News – 11/18/20
<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trump-FERC-nominees-moved-ahead-EE-News-20201118.pdf>
- Related:
- <https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Senate-panel-eyes-FERC-picks-in-crowded-lame-duck-EE-News-11-9-20.pdf>

Meet the environmental law expert leading Biden's EPA team

- E&E Greenwire – 11/19/20
https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Meet-the-environmental-law-expert-leading-Bidens-EPA-team-EE-Greenwire_20201119.pdf
Known for his environmental justice expertise, Patrice Simms has been a top Justice Department attorney, law professor and career EPA lawyer who has been unafraid to battle in court to fight pollution and protect the environment.

Biden's energy agenda hinges on FERC, red states

- E&E News – 11/16/20
<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1063718533>
The last time President-elect Joe Biden was in the White House, many of the Obama administration's clean energy policies he championed were derailed by a Republican Senate majority and lawsuits by a swath of red-state governors. But the nation's energy map appears to be changing faster than the political one, opening avenues to speed up the shift toward carbon-free power.

The 'market' won't save us from climate disaster. We must rethink our system.

- The Guardian – 11/19/20
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/19/climate-crisis-markets-economic-system>
Expecting the free market to fix global warming is like trying to pound nails with a saw

Oceana Finds Plastic Entangling, Choking 1,800 Marine Animals in U.S. Waters

- Oceana – 11/19/20

<https://usa.oceana.org/press-releases/oceana-finds-plastic-entangling-choking-1800-marine-animals-us-waters>

Oceana found evidence of nearly 1,800 animals from 40 different species swallowing or becoming entangled in plastic since 2009. Of those, a staggering 88% were species listed as endangered or threatened with extinction under the Endangered Species Act.

Why 2021 Will Be A Banner Year For Renewable Energy In The U.S.

- OilPrice.com – 11/18/20

<https://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/Why-2021-Will-Be-A-Banner-Year-For-Renewable-Energy-In-The-US.html>

Essentially...lower risk...cheaper financing than fossil fuels. 'Bout time!

Why Seagrass Could Be the Ocean's Secret Weapon Against Climate Change

- Smithsonian Magazine – 12/2020

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/seagrass-ocean-secret-weapon-climate-change-180976235/>

Beautiful and inspiring. And, buried inside... "...new U.N. report estimates that seagrasses may perform up to 18 percent of the ocean's carbon sequestration, even though they cover only about 0.1 percent of the ocean floor."