



## ABRA Update #331 – April 20, 2022

### Issue Highlights . . .

- FERC approves change in stream crossings for MVP
- Job posting for new ABRA director position now available
- 2020 Census data shows population decreases in mountain areas
- *In the News* – page 2

## FERC approves change in stream crossings for MVP

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has granted a request from the Mountain Valley Pipeline to change its crossing method for some 180 bodies of water and wetlands. [FERC's April 8 Order](#) allows the project to bore under the bodies of water and wetlands instead of the open-cut method that the project's original certificate approved.

FERC Chairman Richard Glick and Commissioner Allison Clements issued a [joint statement about the vote](#), saying:

“We concur in today’s order. The only question before us today is whether to approve Mountain Valley’s limited request to amend its certificate, primarily to change its method of crossing numerous waterbodies. We agree that Mountain Valley has met its burden to show that the proposed amendments are consistent with the public interest.

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“Mountain Valley’s usage of trenchless waterbody crossings will result in fewer environmental impacts than the crossing method that the Commission approved under the original certificate, meaning that today’s order amending Mountain Valley’s certificate will almost certainly represent an improvement over the status quo.”

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“. . . if FWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) finds that the amendment would in fact jeopardize a listed species or a critical habitat, then no further construction would be appropriate and Mountain Valley likely would need to come back with another amendment.”

## Job posting for new ABRA director position now available

A job description for a new director to manage the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance is now available on the ABRA website. Lewis Freeman, the current Executive Director for ABRA and a co-founder of the organization, announced on March 31 his plans to retire from the position in June. For a copy of the job posting, click [here](#).

Persons interested in the position or those with recommendations of persons that might be considered are urged to contact ABRA Chair Allen Johnson by April 30 at [allen@eight-rivers.org](mailto:allen@eight-rivers.org). *ABRA Update* readers are also encouraged to distribute the job posting to their respective networks of person who might be interested or know of possible candidates.

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## 2020 Census data shows population decreases in mountain areas

Detailed results of the 2020 U.S. Census reveal population shifts that could have longer-term impacts on politics and public policy. Overall, Virginia's population grew from 2010 to 2020 by nearly 7.9%, to 8.6 million. In the mountainous areas of Virginia, there was growth in Augusta County (5%) and Rockingham County (9.8%) but population decreases in Nelson (1.6%), Alleghany (6.3%), Highland (3.8%) and Bath (11%). [A review of Virginia's census results by Cardinal News on April 20](#) revealed there is a noticeable shift underway of population away from some Northern Virginia counties.

West Virginia's population decreased from 2010 to 2020 by 3.2%, but the mountainous counties' population decreased at a greater rate: Pocahontas by 9.7%, Greenbrier by 7.1%, Randolph by 5% and Pendleton by 20.2%.

For more on the 2020 U.S. Census results by state, click [here](#).

### *In the News:*

## Regional Issues

### **Federal regulators issue key approval for Mountain Valley Pipeline, but project faces fresh legal scrutiny**

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 4/12/22

[https://www.wvgazettemail.com/news/energy\\_and\\_environment/federal-regulators-issue-key-approval-for-mountain-valley-pipeline-but-project-faces-fresh-legal-scrutiny/article\\_15cbb508-3b80-5864-b638-8ef70447ea28.html](https://www.wvgazettemail.com/news/energy_and_environment/federal-regulators-issue-key-approval-for-mountain-valley-pipeline-but-project-faces-fresh-legal-scrutiny/article_15cbb508-3b80-5864-b638-8ef70447ea28.html)

Federal regulators have signed off on Mountain Valley Pipeline developers' plans to change their method for crossing 183 waterbodies and wetlands. But recent federal court proceedings indicate key gaps in the pipeline's path to completion likely won't be filled anytime soon.

Related:

- <https://appvoices.org/2022/04/11/ferc-amendment/>

### **Marshall: Chickahominy Power plant is dead. Is the Mountain Valley Pipeline next?**

- The Roanoke Times – 4/8/22

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Chickahominy-Power-plant-is-dead.-Is-the-Mountain-Valley-Pipeline-next-Roanoke-Times-4-8-2022.pdf>

If activists maintain their momentum, and legislators continue to do the right thing, the MVP may not - and most definitely should not – be built.

### **Youngkin administration says it aims to speed up environmental permitting**

- Virginia Mercury – 4/14/22

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/04/14/youngkin-administration-says-it-aims-to-speed-up-environmental-permitting>

Department of Environmental Quality Director Mike Rolband also outlined plans for the development of a public online platform that would track the progress of all pending DEQ permits.

## Billions of dollars at stake as huge gold mine moves ahead with South Carolina expansion

- The State – 4/17/22

<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/environment/article260401482.html>

## Youngkin administration sets stricter runoff rules for solar farms

- Virginia Mercury – 4/18/22

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/04/18/youngkin-administration-sets-stricter-runoff-rules-for-solar-farms/>

## Virginia SCC staff questions Dominion Energy's offshore wind cost assumptions

- Utility Dive – 4/12/22

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/virginia-scc-staff-questions-dominion-energys-offshore-wind-cost-assumptio/621959/>

Too little accountability for Dominion and too much potential downside for captive ratepayers. What to do if costs spiral (or are not correctly accounted for now)?

## NC has great potential for offshore wind development, experts say, and a gust of direct benefits could follow

- WUNC – 4/11/22

<https://www.wunc.org/news/2022-04-11/nc-has-great-potential-for-offshore-wind-development-experts-say-and-a-gust-of-direct-benefits-could-follow>

Studies, state officials, private businesses and environmental groups all agree that the industry has the potential to bring several gigawatts of renewable energy, billions of dollars and hundreds of jobs to the state. But some say North Carolina is not moving fast enough to reap these benefits.

## Gill lice detected for first time in Virginia trout

- Virginia Mercury – 4/19/22

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/04/19/gill-lice-detected-for-first-time-in-virginia-trout>

'Not a statewide emergency,' wildlife officials say.

## Big Picture:

### Biden Takes 'Critical First Step' to Fix Landmark Environmental Law Gutted by Trump

- Common Dreams – 4/19/22

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2022/04/19/biden-takes-critical-first-step-fix-landmark-environmental-law-gutted-trump>

"The Biden administration cannot stop here," said one advocate, calling on the White House "to ensure we tap NEPA's full potential to address the unprecedented environmental challenges we face now."

### FERC issues Equity Action Plan

- FERC – 4/15/22

<https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/ferc-issues-equity-action-plan>

## Senate GOP questions Biden oil and gas pipeline review

- E&E News – 4/20/22

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Senate-GOP-questions-Biden-oil-and-gas-pipeline-EE-News-4-20-22.pdf>

Congressional Republicans are protesting that the Biden administration's review of a fast-track permitting process will slow development of oil and gas pipelines

## Supreme Court won't touch vacated permit for already-built Spire STL pipeline

- Reuters – 4/19/22

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/supreme-court-wont-touch-vacated-permit-already-built-spire-stl-pipeline-2022-04-19/>

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday let stand a ruling that vacated federal regulators' approval of Spire Inc's natural gas pipeline to the St. Louis area, even though the pipeline had already been operating for two years.

## The US has more clean energy projects planned than the grid can handle

- Canary Media – 4/20/22

<https://www.canarymedia.com/articles/transmission/the-us-has-more-clean-energy-projects-planned-than-the-grid-can-handle>

Without major policy reforms and grid upgrades, much of the 1.4-terawatt queue of solar, wind and battery projects may never get built, two new reports find.

## Fighting future fires

- US Forest Service – 4/13/22

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/fighting-future-fires>

Climate change means more fires, bigger fires, and more conditions that promote fires, even in places they have not historically been a problem. Fuel and forest management must adapt.

## To fight climate change, and now Russia, too, Zurich turns off natural gas

- NPR – 4/20/22

<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/20/1092429073/to-fight-climate-change-and-now-russia-too-zurich-turns-off-natural-gas>

Zurich's experience may offer lessons to other cities around the world that are encouraging residents to switch away from natural gas appliances but are not, so far, shutting down the infrastructure that delivers it.

## Pumped storage is having a moment. Will it shift renewables?

- E&E Energywire – 4/15/22

<https://www.eenews.net/articles/pumped-storage-is-having-a-moment-will-it-shift-renewables/>

## The race to roll out 'super-sized' wind turbines is on

- CNBC – 4/13/22

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/13/green-energy-the-race-to-roll-out-super-sized-wind-turbines-is-on.html>

Huge turbines are being designed at a time when countries around the world are laying out plans to expand wind energy capacity.