



## **ABRA Update #20 – March 17, 2015**

### **Forest Service Issues Permit to Survey George Washington National Forest for Proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline**

The George Washington National Forest released the following announcement Tuesday morning at 9 am:

**(March 17, 2015) Roanoke, Va** – The Forest Service is issuing a temporary special use permit to survey a 12.6-mile segment of the George Washington National Forest for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Highland and Augusta counties, VA. Surveys for wetlands, water, soil, and suitable habitat for sensitive species, including federally listed threatened and endangered plants and animals will be conducted within the next year. Surveys will also record cultural resources and invasive species.

“The information gathered from these surveys is needed for federal agencies to make informed decisions on whether or not to allow construction and operation of the proposed natural gas pipeline, and if allowed, to avoid, or reduce the impacts to sensitive resources,” explains Forest Supervisor Tom Speaks.

Many of the 7,400 comments we received on the survey permit related to concerns about the construction and operation of the proposed pipeline, rather than the surveys. “It is important to remember that allowing these survey activities does not mean we are allowing the construction of a pipeline,” reminds Speaks. We have not received additional requests for surveying National Forest System lands for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), as the lead federal agency, is currently holding public meetings and soliciting comments on the construction of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. FERC will conduct an in-depth environmental analysis on private and public lands, with many opportunities for public comments.

### **ABRA Members Urge Extension of ACP Scoping Period; More Requests Needed**

Several member organizations of the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance have written the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) asking that the scoping period for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline be extended by at least 60 days. The FERC notice of February 27 called for a 60 day period, ending April 28, for written comments plus 10 public forums at which agency staff hear directly from the public. The ABRA organizations that have filed requests for an extension of the period include the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), Highlanders for Responsible Development, Shenandoah Valley Network, Augusta County Alliance, Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, Friends of Nelson County and others. Since the FERC notice was released Dominion has unveiled several other possible alternative routes that the company has told the agency it is considering.

The scoping meetings began last week North Carolina and continue in Virginia this week in Farmville (Tuesday), Lovington (Wednesday), and conclude next week in Elkins, WV (Monday, March 23) and Bridgeport, WV (Tuesday, March 24). Complete details are contained in the FERC notice: [http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file\\_list.asp?accession\\_num=20150227-3043](http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20150227-3043). However,

it is not too late for other ABRA members to request an extended comment period. Requests should be directed to FERC Secretary Kimberly Bose (whose contact information is in the agency scoping notice linked above).

SELC's Greg Buppert has suggested the following points be made in requests for a comment extension:

1. The scoping notice depicts numerous alternative routes that Dominion did not discuss during its January open house meetings. The public needs sufficient time to assess the impacts of these alternatives.
2. Dominion has applied for survey access to the George Washington National Forest and the Monongahela National Forest, but the U.S. Forest Service hasn't authorized surveys on either forest yet. The Forest Service's decision will likely impact the route of the pipeline.
3. GIS shapefiles about the alternative routes described in scoping notice are not available to the public.
4. Dominion continues to send out survey notices to landowners along new routes. Landowners along these newly announced routes need time to educate themselves about the project and its impacts to their property.
5. Dominion's authority to survey private property for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is the subject of numerous cases pending in Virginia Circuit Court and several others in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia. Resolution of these cases will likely impact the route of the pipeline.

### **North Carolina Senators file comments on Atlantic Coast Pipeline**

North Carolina's two U.S. Senators, Thom Tillis and Richard Burr, wrote the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on March 2, noting that demand for natural gas-fired electric power in North Carolina grew 450% between 2008 and 2013. However, the Senators stopped short of a blanket endorsement of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, instead asking FERC to "conduct a robust and transparent public process that considers all perspectives and data.

See: [http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file\\_list.asp?accession\\_num=20150316-0050](http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20150316-0050)

### **In the News . . . (\* - noteworthy articles)**

#### **Pennsylvania DEP forming task force to look at natural gas pipeline issues**

– NorthcentralPA.com, 3/11/15

[http://www.northcentralpa.com/feeditem/2015-03-11\\_budget-hearing-dep-forming-task-force-look-natural-gas-pipeline-issues](http://www.northcentralpa.com/feeditem/2015-03-11_budget-hearing-dep-forming-task-force-look-natural-gas-pipeline-issues)

#### **PennEast claims demand for gas pipeline** – NJ.com, 3/11/15

[http://www.nj.com/hunterdon-county-democrat/index.ssf/2015/03/penneast\\_claims\\_demand\\_for\\_gas\\_pipeline.html](http://www.nj.com/hunterdon-county-democrat/index.ssf/2015/03/penneast_claims_demand_for_gas_pipeline.html)

#### **Modelling gas pipeline ruptures** – TCE Today, 3/11/15

<http://www.tcetoday.com/latest%20news/2015/march/modelling-gas-pipeline-ruptures.aspx#.VQWiaeHrNfi>

#### **Court blocks company from removing trees along new pipeline route**

– Princeton Packet, 3/12/15

[http://www.centraljersey.com/articles/2015/03/12/the\\_princeton\\_packet/news/doc5501cfc86025e574803963.txt](http://www.centraljersey.com/articles/2015/03/12/the_princeton_packet/news/doc5501cfc86025e574803963.txt)

#### **Pipelines, safety and modern life** – Lynchburg News & Advance, 3/12/15

[http://www.newsadvance.com/opinion/editorials/pipelines-safety-and-modern-life/article\\_454b5b54-c825-11e4-af22-6710ae7ade26.html](http://www.newsadvance.com/opinion/editorials/pipelines-safety-and-modern-life/article_454b5b54-c825-11e4-af22-6710ae7ade26.html)

**Sierra Club criticizes Dominion for motion on document** – Virginian-Pilot, 3/13/15  
<http://hamptonroads.com/2015/03/sierra-club-criticiz-es-dominion-power-motion-hold-back-papers>

**Sierra Club coalition aims to check Dominion Power** – Virginian-Pilot, 3/13/15  
<http://hamptonroads.com/2015/03/sierra-club-criticizes-dominion-power-motion-hold-back-papers>

**\*Lower for longer: A new normal for U.S. natural gas prices** – Morningstar, 3/13/15  
<http://news.morningstar.com/articlenet/article.aspx?id=688773>

**Forest Service extends comment period for MTV surveying** – Roanoke Times, 3/13/15  
[http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/forest-service-extends-comment-period-tied-to-pipeline-surveying/article\\_b3dof402-cba5-535e-afdc-38ad2d012d76.html](http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/forest-service-extends-comment-period-tied-to-pipeline-surveying/article_b3dof402-cba5-535e-afdc-38ad2d012d76.html)

**\*State denies Dominion's request to withhold records** – Virginian- Pilot, 3/14/15  
<http://hamptonroads.com/2015/03/va-regulators-deny-dominions-waiver-request>

**\*The big picture on the pipeline** – Roanoke Times, 3/15/15  
[http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/editorials/our-view-the-big-picture-on-the-pipeline/article\\_f0070461-46fe-5af7-94b3-aa7c40f03eaa.html](http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/editorials/our-view-the-big-picture-on-the-pipeline/article_f0070461-46fe-5af7-94b3-aa7c40f03eaa.html)

**Dominion promises vanish into thin air** – Virginian-Pilot, 3/15/15  
<http://hamptonroads.com/2015/03/dominions-promises-vanish-thin-air>

**The safety aspect of very large pipelines** – Frack Check WV, 3/15/15  
[http://www.frackcheckwv.net/2015/03/15/consider-the-very-large-pipelines-planned-for-wv/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+frackcheckwv+%28Frack+Check+WV+%29](http://www.frackcheckwv.net/2015/03/15/consider-the-very-large-pipelines-planned-for-wv/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+frackcheckwv+%28Frack+Check+WV+%29)

**\*Augusta and Nelson Co. residents release ad countering pipeline**  
– NBC29, Charlottesville, 3/15/15  
<http://www.nbc29.com/story/28524293/augusta-and-nelson-co-residents-release-ad-countering-pipeline>

**\*Campaign aimed at altering Virginia route of natural gas pipeline**  
– Ashville Citizens-Times, 3/16/15  
<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2015/03/15/campaign-aimed-altering-virginia-route-natural-gas-pipeline/24811823/>

**\*SORRELLS and REA: Dominion's Pipeline Proposal is All Pain, No Gain for Virginia**  
– Richmond Times-Dispatch, 3/16/15  
[http://www.richmond.com/opinion/their-opinion/guest-columnists/article\\_ea51e334-83d7-5b4c-8876-718602e12b56.html](http://www.richmond.com/opinion/their-opinion/guest-columnists/article_ea51e334-83d7-5b4c-8876-718602e12b56.html)