



ABRA Update #72 – March 23, 2016

“Energize, Equip and Empower,” Will Be Theme of April 23 ABRA Meeting

Mark your calendar! ABRA will hold an Alliance-wide meeting on Saturday, April 23 in Staunton, VA. The 10 am to 3 pm meeting will be similar to gatherings held in March and October last year, but with broader attendance and a wider-range of topics. The meeting will be open to representatives of ABRA members plus other invitees who have been working closely with the coalition over the past 20 months.

The meeting’s objective is to equip, empower and energize the many active participants working to defeat the pipelines proposed for the Allegheny-Blue Ridge region with improved information, messages and skills to carry on their efforts in 2016.

Featured will be presentations on new economic studies about the need for more natural gas pipelines to meet future energy needs and the impact of proposed pipelines (Atlantic Coast Pipeline and Mountain Valley Pipeline) on utility economics and rates. There will also be presentations and break-out groups on grass-roots efforts and several new tools that have been developed to assist concerned communities and landowners, such as geographic information systems (GIS) and water testing procedures.

Registration and additional information will be announced in next week’s Update.

Water Study Update – Underway, But Financial Help Still Needed

Two weeks ago ABRA Update ran an article announcing a new study to provide guidance on monitoring wells, springs and community water supplies that would be at risk due to pipeline construction. The study is now underway.

Downstream Strategies, a Morgantown, WV environmental consulting firm, will examine the potential implications of pipeline development on private and public water supplies and will provide recommendations for water quality and quantity monitoring for landowners and water providers. The report will address both the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline. It is expected to be available in April and will be made public.

Major sections of the study are:

- an overview of risks, potential impacts, and other water supply issues related to pipeline development;
- a description and evaluation of ACP and MVP water supply monitoring plans;
- recommendations for monitoring water sources for quality and quantity in relation to pipeline development; and
- a guide for consulting and laboratory services to conduct water monitoring.

Special funding for the study is being provided by support from ABRA members. So far, two-thirds of the needed \$10,630 has been raised from contributions by the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Highlanders for Responsible Development, and individual donations.

Further financial help is needed! Please consider making a contribution to support this important study. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Highlanders for Responsible Development – ABRA (with “Water Study” in the memo line), P.O. Box 685, Monterey, VA 24465.

FERC Sued for Clean Water Act Violation in Massachusetts Pipeline Case

A group of Massachusetts property owners that are impacted by a proposed natural gas pipeline issued on March 21 a notice of intent to sue the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission over the agency’s failure to properly enforce requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA). It marks the first time FERC’s routine practice of issuing certificates conditioned on an applicant’s future compliance with Section 401 of the CWA has been challenged in court. The plaintiff, Sandisfield Taxpayers Opposing the Pipeline (STOP), has issued a [press release](#) describing the suit.

Report Documents Citizen Concerns and Opposition to the ACP

A review and analysis by Key Log Economics of individual and form letters submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) shows a vast number of significant concerns about Dominion’s Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) from citizens in impacted areas—and overwhelming opposition to the pipeline. The review is a supplement to the recent economic analysis report of the impact of the ACP on Nelson, Buckingham, Augusta and Highland Counties., completed by Key-Log in February.

Among the review’s findings are:

- 99.4% of the comments about impacts to forests were negative
- 98.8% of the comments regarding impacts to property values, tourism and recreation were negative
- 96.1% of the comments mentioning safety were negative
- 99% of the comments on impacts to water were negative
- 98.9% of the comments regarding effects on cultural and historical sites were negative
- 99% of the comments mentioning health cited negative impacts

All 2858 individual and form letter comments submitted to FERC between October 20, 2014 and June 26, 2015 were reviewed and analyzed, including all comments received during FERC’s official “comment period.”

The percentages listed above reflect the number of individual and form letter comments that cited each respective issue. The percentages above do not include the 25,667 signatures on the 12 different petitions submitted to FERC during this period.

The report tracked locales from which the comments were submitted. 59.7% of the individual and form letter comments submitted were from citizens in counties that the ACP would cross, while 90% of signatures on petitions received by FERC were from states outside the ACP route. It shows that over 36% of the individual and form letter comments submitted (1037 out of 2858) were from Nelson County citizens.

Comments from those who took the time to write individual letters or submit form letters, whether from citizens directly affected or not, were strongly negative. The analysis also found that the vast majority of those who did hold positive views on the ACP’s effects on the general categories of the “economy” or “energy situation” were from counties or states that were not crossed by the ACP.

The comments analyzed were submitted to FERC as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as part of the agency's evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the project. This public input is a critical part of the overall analysis of the pipeline.

"Letters and comments submitted to FERC provide direct and clear information about the issues of concern to the people and communities [affected]..." the review states.

"The information in this Review is critical, as it indicates that the people more likely to support the project are those with limited exposure to the issues, due to their greater distance from the route. These people are more likely to rely on paid advertisements by the gas industry closer range recognize the substantial dangers of the ACP, and are in the majority."

The of individual comments to FERC by Key-Log Economics was commissioned by Friends of Nelson, Augusta County Alliance, Conservation Partners, LLP, Southern Environmental Law Center, Yogaville Environmental Solutions, Friends of Buckingham, and Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

The full Key-Log economic study is on the ABRA [website](#). A 2-minute [video](#) regarding the comment analysis is also available

Response to Columbia Gas Complaint About "Misleading" Press

Last week's ABRA Update (March 17, #71, In the News) included an [op-ed](#) by a Columbia Gas spokesman, Robert Innes, in which he complained about unfair characterization of the Peters Mountain project. Rick Webb, Chair of the ABRA Environmental Resources Committee, offers the following observation about the editorial:

"Examination of the Columbia Gas of Virginia pipeline project over Peters Mountain in Giles County is informative with respect to both careless pipeline construction practices and regulatory system failure. It was thus surprising to see the recent op-ed piece by company spokesman, Robert Innes, who objects to a widely circulated "misleading" photo of the project. Why would he want to draw more attention to this particular project, which reflects so poorly on both Columbia Gas and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality?"

"This is the same project that was associated with diesel fuel contamination of a public water system last summer. This is the same project where runoff from the construction corridor continues to discharge into a sinkhole. And this is the same project for which DEQ did no inspections during construction, for which DEQ did not review erosion and sediment control and stormwater management plans prior to or during construction, and for which DEQ granted two variances (1000 feet and 2000 feet) to the 500-ft open-trench-limitation minimum standard. See [Dereliction of Duty](#) for more information, including the photo in question."

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Augusta judge rules in favor of pipeline surveys

- The Daily Progress – 3/21/16

http://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/augusta-judge-rules-in-favor-of-pipeline-surveys/article_d4dca1e6-efc1-11e5-97c6-9ba34db42do4.html

Judge says ACP has met all requirements to gain access to properties

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Zoecklein: Gamesmanship, MVP and FERC

- Roanoke Times – 3/17/16

http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/zoecklein-gamesmanship-mvp-and-ferc/article_6071a9ad-9ed5-5f95-8ef9-be5711266d70.html

Big Picture:

Does FERC's Denial of Authority to Construct Jordan Cove Signal a More Rigorous Test for Future LNG Projects?

- Lexology – 3/21/16

<http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=df8e6bff-b47c-4398-94ca-ea3fd67ca1b>

Only if there is no buyer on the hook

Related:

http://theworldlink.com/news/opinion/local/ferc-leaves-jordan-cove-among-the-undead/article_baa69865-56f4-5521-85a7-2cda5a4d370d.html

Temper excitement about Jordan Cove...the official reason WHY FERC denied it has nothing to do with "us"!

TransCanada Scoops Up Columbia Pipeline for \$13B

- TheStreet.com – 3/18/16

<http://realmoney.thestreet.com/articles/03/18/2016/transcanada-scoops-columbia-pipeline-13b>

Now a CANADIAN firm will profit from exporting the US's natural gas to overseas markets!

Related:

<http://grist.org/climate-energy/after-keystone-failure-transcanada-comes-up-with-another-pipeline-scheme-in-the-u-s/>

Grist notes spill and contamination from Celanese Pipeline – part of Columbia...CPG

Pipeline lawsuit called 'aggressive,' precedent-setting

- The Recorder – 3/19/16

<http://www.recorder.com/News/Local/Pipeline-lawsuit-called--aggressive---precedent-setting-945879>

Tennessee Gas Pipeline claims power of eminent domain from FERC-approved project supersedes state's constitution; Article governing sale or conveyance of publicly-held open space or conservation land

WRITE ON: A surprising gas-filled week — Dimock, pipelines and FERC

- Finger Lakes Times – 3/18/16

http://www.fltimes.com/opinion/michael_fitzgerald/write-on-a-surprising-gas-filled-week-dimock-pipelines-and/article_ffd3a86c-ed06-11e5-b1f1-47636f373397.html

Just a little wrap-up to remind everybody just how much has happened in the last few weeks.

Related:

http://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/dimock-families-win-m-in-frack-pollution-suit/article_2e8ec3f9-83b0-5b33-a563-a7498b6762e2.html

Technology upends the utility business model

- Commonwealth magazine – 3/21/16

<http://commonwealthmagazine.org/environment/technology-upends-the-utility-business-model/>

Part 2 of 3 – changing technologies require updated policies and business structures

An obstacle on the way to zero carbon: natural gas

- E&E Publishing – 3/21/16

<http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060034301>

Replacing fossil fuels for electrical generation may be the EASY part!

Oil and natural gas boom causes methane emissions to increase

- EurekAlert! – 3/15/16

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-03/kift-oano031516.php

New Market for U.S. Shale Gas Opens in Europe

- Wall Street Journal – 3/21/16

http://www.wsj.com/article_email/new-market-for-u-s-shale-gas-opens-in-europe-1458588920-lMyQjAxMTI2MzIwMjcyNjIwWj

First tanker of ethane arrives in Norway, two weeks after leaving US

U.S. proposes new safety rules for natural gas pipelines

- StateImpact-PA – 3/18/16

<https://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2016/03/18/u-s-to-expand-safety-rules-for-natural-gas-pipelines/>

Safety and location awareness are key provisions of the proposed measures