

Thomas W. Sturgill opposes the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is really a spur disguised as a pipeline: The main goal of the project in my opinion is to pipe natural gas to the port of Newport News, Virginia where it will be liquefied and sold internationally. Dominion Resources, Inc. is a vertically integrated energy corporation. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline uses the special treatments it receives overtly for operating as a public utility with a monopoly, and extends them covertly to increase profits in its non-utility businesses. With the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, it poses as a sheep, whereas it is a wolf. Natural gas will be liquefied and exported from the port of Newport News for much higher prices than ever could be obtained in the United States. Dominion Resources would own source, pipeline, and export in addition to providing this fossil fuel to its power plants. Customers may pay for the export operations as surcharges to their bills, even as export drives up the price of this fuel for its plants to provide electricity.

Natural gas is not an answer to climate change: Neither coal nor natural gas is the answer to slow climate change. Natural gas is proposed as a replacement to coal because it is cheaper than coal. Natural gas poses risks that coal does not. The natural gas comes from wells that employ the process of hydraulic fracturing. Hydraulic fracturing both uses up clean water resources, and it contaminates underground water systems that were formerly clean. Coal with different negatives is transported on existing railways, not requiring pipelines like the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Deposits of steam coal can be mined in Montana without the horrific destruction caused by mountain top removal and strip mining that have already devastated Appalachia. (Please review the website, iluvmountains.org). Plants using new technology for coal, like Dominion's 'Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center' (translates to, coal-burning power plant) are much cleaner. Processes under development to capture carbon dioxide are as applicable to coal as natural gas.

Methane is a heat-trapping molecule, as is carbon dioxide: Methane is many times more potent as a heat-trapping gas than carbon dioxide. Methane is odorless, colorless, and is volatile. A leak in California has caused more damage in terms of climate change than the oil platform disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Mining for coal releases some methane, but not at the levels of risk posed by hydraulic fracturing and expansion of natural gas. Does anyone doubt that in aggregate we have right now more leaks of methane than in California?

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline would scar pristine mountains for the stockholders profits for Dominion Resources, Inc. and for profits of a few owners of private land willing to sell out a right of way: Why place at risk the economy of scenic Highland and Bath Counties? Indeed, why a "gold rush" of multiple pipelines proposed through the Allegheny Mountains to double down on another fossil fuel? Specifically, why risk our water aquifers and underground rivers by building the Atlantic Coast Pipeline through our region with so much karst? An earthquake near Charlottesville caused millions of dollars worth of damages to the Washington Monument, and may hit a pipeline.

Nuclear power plants are a better option than coal or natural gas, trading off some risks: Risks from nuclear power plants cannot be avoided, because the plants will continue to store spent fuel that will be radioactive for years and years. Why not make certain these nuclear plants are safe, that they highest technology, and have the highest capacity by investing in research and training in nuclear engineering? Nuclear plants provide base energy just as well as plants burning fossil fuels. FERC should educate the public on the advantages of nuclear power, and not advocate for the fossil fuel industries.