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Pipeline company revisits karst

BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER

MONTEREY — Dominion will be updating its karst report to federal regulators, a company spokesman told The Recorder Tuesday.

Landowner Jeanette Robinson of Bolar told the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission the company inaccurately identified karst features in her area and ignored expert recommendations in efforts to meet FERC's directive for its proposed 600-mile-long Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Robinson told the federal agency that Dominion's contractor, GeoConcepts Engineering Inc., submitted an inaccurate karst survey report last month for Augusta, Bath and Highland counties in Virginia, and Pocahontas and Randolph counties in West Virginia.

According to Dominion spokesman Aaron Ruby, the company's report was based on information that was available at the time, and some of the data was unavailable because permission was not granted.

"The karst report we submitted to FERC was based on the data and methods described in the report," Ruby said. "As noted in the report, Lidar data was used and field surveys were conducted where available."

Lidar is a surveying method used to make high-resolution maps, with applications in geodesy, geomatics, archaeology, geography, geology, geomorphology, seismology, forestry, atmospheric physics and laser guidance.

"Lidar data was not available for the area referenced in the letter, and we were also unable to perform field surveys in some areas because we did not have permission from landowners. Lidar data for this area is now available and is currently under review," Ruby said. "Once we've completed our analysis and performed field surveys on the remaining properties, we will update the report with this additional data."

Robinson told FERC she is concerned that GeoConcepts did not accurately map karst features within the half-mile karst review area in the study corridor. “Please compare (the) geologic map ... included in GeoConcepts’ study with Map of Little Valley Sinkholes and Springs completed 8-31-16, and submitted by me on September 12, 2016 ... Accurate mapping is essential to adequately evaluate impacts on springs and wells used by numerous residents of Little Valley,” she wrote.

“I respectfully request that FERC review the two karst studies relating to Little Valley which I also submitted on September 12, 2016 namely, ‘Hydrogeologic Setting of Little Valley at Bolar, Bath County, Virginia,’ prepared by William K. Jones, Hydrologist, dated April 11, 2016; and, ‘Assessments of Four Karst Systems In Highland- Bath Counties, Virginia Along the GWNF-6 Route of the Proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline,’ prepared by Richard A. (Rick) Lambert dated June 2, 2016,” Robinson wrote.