

The Recorder

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More pipeline questions posed

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MONTEREY — With a draft Environmental Impact Statement release expected in a matter of days, the federal agency responsible for regulating the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline is asking more tough questions about the project.

Federal regulators are taking Dominion to task over resident Richard Laska's questions about compressor stations and the proposed high-pressure, large-diameter pipeline.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission last week posed Laska's inquiry to Dominion and asked for an in-depth response.

FERC also asked for business details on exactly how local distribution companies would use the methane gas and how much land would be needed for the ACP and the proposed supply header project.

Laska alleged the ACP would be over-built. He drew the conclusion based on three sources, including the Energy Information Agency, and two websites, www.NaturalGas.org and www.hindawi.com, which provide a typical range between compressor stations of between 40 to 100 miles apart.

"As a result of this information, Mr. Laska concludes that the ACP Project (would be) over-built because the distance between the two proposed compressor stations is in excess of 200 miles," FERC said.

FERC directed Dominion to:

- Respond to Laska's allegations regarding the distance between the compressor stations along the pipeline by discussing how its hydraulics dictated the location and distance of the compression facilities;
- Confirm Dominion has taken into account the changes in elevation along the pipeline route; and
- Discuss the information from the websites quoted by Laska.

The agency told Dominion to provide information for both the total 599.7-mile ACP, as well as the 95.7-mile

George Washington National Forest 6 alternative route that would cross southwestern Highland and northern Bath counties.

First, Dominion must provide the number of land parcels and acres making up the permanent and temporary rights of way necessary for the construction and operation of the pipeline, plus the number and percentage of the land parcels and acres within or collocated with existing rights of way. Then, Dominion needs to release the number and percentage of the land parcels and acres for which it has easements.

Dominion's application states the ACP will transport natural gas to electric generation and local distribution companies (LDCs) in Virginia and North Carolina, which would use the gas to support existing and proposed power generation facilities, FERC pointed out.

The application "states that approximately 79.2 percent of the natural gas transported by ACP would be used as fuel to generate electricity," FERC said, directing the company to identify the existing and proposed power generation facilities that would be served. "Further, identify whether each facility is existing or proposed, and the anticipated in service date if the facility is proposed," the agency said.

FERC told the company to state whether LDCs in West Virginia and western Virginia sought service from the ACP prior to, or after, the open season. Open season is the period in which the pipeline is booked for capacity.

The agency further told Dominion to provide all correspondence between ACP and LDCs in West Virginia and western Virginia about providing service in those areas.

Similarly, FERC asked Dominion to provide, for the 37.5-mile supply header pipeline, the number of land parcels and acres making up the permanent and temporary right of way necessary for construction and operation. The agency also asked for the number and percentage of the land parcels and acres within or collocated with existing rights of way and number and percentage of the land parcels and acres for which Dominion has easements.

In his FERC filing, Laska wondered whether Dominion intends to operate the pipeline at low capacity, had invented a new technology for moving natural gas, or had some motive to leave a compressor station out of the plan.

A letter to The Recorder from Laska in September noted, "We are left with the sinking feeling that, if the pipeline is permitted, any site along the entire pipeline could be the future location of a huge compressor station. Any site whatsoever."

The Recorder asked Dominion about Laska's question at the time. Adding a compressor station would require the company to begin another application to FERC. Dominion spokesman Aaron Ruby in September said, "Pressure loss over distance determines the spacing of compressor stations along a pipeline system. The greater the pressure loss, the closer together compressor stations will be located. Pipelines come in many different sizes and designs, each of which will

allow for more or less pressure loss over certain distances. The main design factors that would determine the amount of pressure loss are diameter, operating pressure, and the internal surface of the pipe.

“Larger diameters, higher operating pressures and smoother, internally-coated pipes will generally have lower pressure loss over distance. Those design specifications allow for greater distances between compressor stations, which is the case for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline,” Ruby had explained.