

The Recorder

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Senator addresses feds about pipeline project

Editor's note: The following letter was submitted to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission secretary Kimberly Bose on March 13, by Sen. Creigh Deeds. Dear Secretary Bose,

I represent the 25th District in the Senate of Virginia, which includes the Counties of Bath, Highland, and Nelson. Each of those jurisdictions has been under consideration for possible location of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. I have written to FERC on a number of occasions at different states of this process.

Many constituents, property-owners, and their neighbors have reached out to FERC directly to share their concerns, and I have followed closely these communications. I only wish to relay a handful of points based on all of the correspondence shared with my office.

First, the residents of these localities who will be impacted by the pipeline remain concerned about the impact on water supply. Given the unique geographical features of the region, the presence of springs, and the uncertain impact on wells, it is unclear what steps will be in place to mitigate temporary and or permanent harm to drinking water supplies during the construction of the pipeline and in the event of a rupture or leak.

Second, evidence has been shared with me regarding the plummeting property values in the region. Our rural counties often are desperate for economic growth and avenues to keep people within the community. While much has been said about the potential for jobs during the construction phase, we cannot ignore the possible negative impacts on tourism, which is vital to this part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Nor can we discount the impact lower property values have on the tax base and ultimately on the revenues available for schools and public safety in these communities. People travel to these areas to enjoy the natural resources, including a number of state and federal parklands. The localities cannot afford to lose these visitors.

Finally, I have shared with Dominion Resources on a number of occasions my concerns about the under-utilization of existing easements. If FERC determines that the additional natural gas that would be transported by this pipeline is indeed necessary and in the public interest (and I am certain

FERC has received reports suggesting otherwise), I hope that the impact on private property can be minimized through a more rigorous effort to co-locate the pipeline within existing rights of way.

While my constituents have relayed all of this information to you in much more personal and eloquent ways, as a legislator who represents the region, I urge you to carefully consider these concerns throughout the decision-making process. I appreciate your diligence.

- Sen. Creigh Deeds, Warm Springs, Va.