



ABRA Update #127 – April 27, 2017

ACP Would Trigger Extensive Mountaintop Removal

A new Fact Sheet highlights the serious problem of ridgetop removal that would be necessary should the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) be built as planned. The document was released April 27 by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Appalachian Mountain Advocates (Appalmad), Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition (DPMC), Friends of Nelson and ABRA.

Among highlights from the [Fact Sheet](#):

- Documents show that—in a massive undertaking—between 10 and 60 feet of the tops of mountain ridges would be “reduced” along 38 miles of the proposed pipeline route in West Virginia and Virginia. For perspective, the height equivalent of a five-story building would be erased in places from fully forested and ancient mountains.
- The choice to build along ridgelines is part of Dominion’s preferred and deliberate design. Working on these ridgelines will require creating a wide and flat surface to allow Dominion’s earth-moving vehicles and deep-trenching machines to operate and maneuver. The federal government’s report on the environmental impacts of the pipeline declares that “narrow ridgetops [will] require widening and flattening in order to provide workspace in the temporary right-of-way.” This bland statement belies the truth: mountains will need to be decapitated for Dominion to build this pipeline.
- Dominion proposes to “restore all areas as close as practicable to their preconstruction contours.” What is practicable in this extreme case? Engineers studied a two-mile-long ridgeline. After Dominion finishes re-applying the massive amounts of damaged rock and earth to the ridgeline—known as “backfilling”—these experts concluded that 130,000 cubic yards of excess spoil would remain. In other words, the overburden from building the pipeline on just two miles of ridgeline would fill a football field nearly 80 feet deep.

The issue of mountaintop removal associated with the ACP was first highlighted in a [March 10 ABRA Update article](#) and was prominently featured in comments filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for the ACP’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement by [Appalmad](#) and [DPMC](#). It was also included in DEIS comments filed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which observed:

Multiple aspects of Project construction and operation will create risks of increased sedimentation to waterbodies across a wide swath of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia and neighboring states. . . Following construction, the risk of erosion and sedimentation from the previously-active construction sites, particularly from the denuded and disturbed segments on steep slopes, will continue throughout the Project’s operational periods. (emphasis added)

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Readers of ABRA Update are strongly urged to share this Fact Sheet with others, particularly their local officials and legislative representatives, state and federal. ABRA is sending the Fact Sheet to state legislators and congressional delegations from Virginia and West Virginia. However, it wouldn't hurt at all if these legislators received multiple copies.

U.S. Chamber Blames High Electricity Rates on Pipeline Shortages

“The lack of pipeline infrastructure in the northeast has resulted in some of the highest electricity rates in the nation for families and business—and it will only get worse,” according to a [new report](#) released this week by the U.S. Chamber. The report claims that in the absence of new natural gas transmission infrastructure serving New England, there would be:

- The loss of nearly 78,400 jobs by 2020
- The displacement of more than \$4.4 billion in labor income
- The destruction of nearly \$7.6 billion in GDP

The Chamber study also included an impact analysis on two states that reside outside the Northeast, but which would also stand to be adversely impacted in economic terms if prohibitions were placed on pipeline development in the Northeast.

- Ohio: 2,100 jobs lost & \$295 million in lost state GDP
- West Virginia: 2,500 jobs lost & \$159 million in lost state GDP

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Pipeline foes feel fear, burning rage

- The Recorder – 4/27/17

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pipeline_foes_feel_fear_burning_rage-Recorder_20170427.pdf

Related:

<http://www.newsplex.com/content/news/Nelson-landowner-starts-Burn-Your-Easement-Challenge-420189953.html>

How county pipeline case in Va. Supreme Court could shape eminent domain law

- The News Leader – 4/26/17

<http://www.newsleader.com/story/news/local/2017/04/26/how-county-pipeline-case-va-supreme-court-could-shape-eminent-domain-law/306658001/>

Case could be very important in resolving important issues surrounding Virginia's eminent domain law.

Related:

http://www.roanoke.com/business/news/virginia-supreme-court-hears-pipeline-cases/article_48e3a3a9-5d94-502e-8c91-e269a9e9fe8a.html

Research: Atlantic Coast Pipeline would require 'extensive' mountaintop removal

- WSET ABC13 – 4/27/17

<http://wset.com/news/local/research-atlantic-coast-pipeline-would-require-extensive-mountaintop-removal>

Research shows the company plans to partially remove entire mountaintops along 38 miles of Appalachian ridgelines as part of the construction.

Forest Service's 'Independent' Report on Atlantic Coast Pipeline Written by Pipeline Company Contractor

- DeSmog – 4/25/17

<https://www.desmogblog.com/2017/04/25/forest-service-independent-report-atlantic-coast-pipeline-contractor-dominion>

Forest Service taking fire for the contractor it hired to report on proposed drilling. Supervisor claims (correctly) that contractors with relevant expertise that have not worked on pipelines (or are not now) are difficult to find.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Appalachian Power Chief Looks Toward Renewable Energy

- US News & World Report – 4/23/17

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/west-virginia/articles/2017-04-23/appalachian-power-chief-looks-toward-renewable-energy>

"...West Virginia may not require us to be clean, but our customers are," ... "and we have to be mindful of what our customers want." Well, ok. But holding one's breath is not advised!

Consumer advocates argue in Virginia Supreme Court against law that froze Dominion's rates

- The Richmond Times-Dispatch – 4/21/17

http://www.richmond.com/ap/state/consumer-advocates-argue-in-supreme-court-against-law-that-froze/article_01982fc1-d1e0-5e4e-bf25-a9dcff5379de.html

Fight over rate freeze law shifting to debate over campaign finance. It's getting ugly out here.

Big Picture:

The Trump White House is at war with itself about climate change

- The Washington Post – 4/26/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/04/26/trump-said-he-would-cancel-paris-climate-deal-now-the-white-house-is-having-second-thoughts/?utm_term=.9279da395e07

Battle lines being drawn within the administration. Outcome will have long-term, global implications.

Trump Might Not Believe In The Risks Of Climate Change - But Investors Do And They Are Taking Action

- Forbes – 4/27/17

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikescott/2017/04/27/trump-might-not-believe-in-the-risks-of-climate-change-but-investors-do-and-they-are-taking-action/#697e88baa13b>

The president SAYS he understands money. This should be a sobering consideration for him. Ultimately, action will follow the money, whether Trump believes in Climate Change or not.

The PennEast Pipeline: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Briefing

- OilChange International – 4/2017

<http://priceofoil.org/2017/04/26/the-penneast-pipeline-greenhouse-gas-emissions-briefing/>

OilChange International finds that the PennEast Pipeline would lead to annual emissions of 49 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. This would be like adding 14 coal plants or 10 million passenger vehicles.

Northeast needs more gas pipelines, says new report

- State Impact PA – 4/25/17

<https://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2017/04/25/northeast-needs-more-gas-pipelines-says-new-report/>

US Chamber of Commerce report states that if no new pipelines are built, it could cost the region over 78,000 jobs and \$7.6 billion in GDP by the year 2020.

Premature pipeline partying

- Earthworks – 4/24/17

https://www.earthworksaction.org/earthblog/detail/premature_pipeline_partying#.WQIfAdLyuUk

Gas pipeline industry celebrating new “boom” in eastern production. But opposition to pipeline expansion continues and is growing.

Biggest U.S. Companies Setting More Renewable-Energy Targets

- Bloomberg – 4/25/17

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-25/biggest-u-s-companies-setting-more-renewable-energy-targets>

Related:

<http://3blmedia.com/News/REPORT-Fortune-500-Companies-Accelerating-Renewable-Energy-Energy-Efficiency-Efforts>