



ABRA Update #143 – August 17, 2017

Comments to Virginia DEQ on Water Quality Due Tuesday, August 22

The deadline for public comments to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality regarding whether the Atlantic Coast Pipeline or the Mountain Valley Pipeline should receive water quality certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act is next Tuesday, August 22.

All persons concerned about the water quality impacts of the ACP and MVP are strongly urged to file written comments on the draft certification documents.

Written comments for the [ACP draft certification document](#) should be sent by email to: comment-acp@deq.virginia.gov; or by mail to: DEQ, P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, VA 23218. For those wishing to comment on the [MVP draft certification document](#), written comments should be sent by email to: comment-mvp@deq.virginia.gov; and by mail to: DEQ, P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, VA 23218.

Legislators Call on DEQ to Protect Water, Fix Review Process

Four state legislators from western Virginia in the past few days are the latest to join with a bipartisan caucus calling on Gov. Terry McAuliffe and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to slow down, correct its process and ensure that water resources are protected from the impacts of the two major gas pipelines proposed through the region.

State Senators Emmett Hanger (R-Mount Solon) and Creigh Deeds (D-Hot Springs) and Delegates Dickie Bell (R-Staunton) and Sam Rasoul (D-Roanoke) teamed up on [a strong letter to DEQ Director David Paylor](#) and Virginia's State Water Control Board, asking to slow down the review process for the proposed Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines, and to use the state's full authority to protect their constituents' water. The legislators noted that "Both pipelines pose some of the most significant threats to Virginia's water quality and aquatic environment in decades." ABRA's press release, which includes a link to the letter, is available [here](#).

Hands Across the Appalachian Trail on August 19

A special event to highlight the danger to the Appalachian Trail from proposed natural gas pipelines will be held this coming Saturday, August 19, from 10:30 am to 12 noon at the Humpback Rocks Visitor Center, located at Milepost 5.8 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, just south of Afton, VA. It is being sponsored by ABRA members Appalachian Voices, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter and Friends of Nelson. Further details are available [here](#).

Please support ABRA's important work by clicking [here](#).

Executive Order Issued to Streamline Pipeline Environmental Reviews

President Trump issued on [August 15 an Executive Order](#) to streamline the approval process for infrastructure projects, including pipelines. The order, entitled “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure,” establishes as a goal that the “processing of environmental reviews and authorization decisions for new major infrastructure projects should be reduced to not more than an average of approximately 2 years.” A [Fact Sheet released with the Executive Order](#) highlighted oil and natural gas pipeline projects as an important beneficiary of the streamlining move. From an initial review of the Executive Order it would appear the new procedures will have an impact on the timetables for future infrastructure projects, but not necessarily on projects that are currently underway in the regulatory review process, such as the Atlantic Coast Pipeline or the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

State, county await pipeline showdown

- The Recorder – 8/17/17

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/State_county_await_pipeline_showdown-Recorder_20170817.pdf

Expert analyses filed with the Virginia State Corporation Commission Aug. 11 suggest Dominion customers would pay between \$1.6-\$2.3 billion in unneeded costs if Dominion Energy builds the proposed pipeline, the Southern Environmental Law Center said in a news release.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League Declares DEQ Acting in Violation of State Water Quality Standards

- Blue Virginia – 8/15/17

<http://bluevirginia.us/2017/08/blue-ridge-environmental-defense-league-declares-deq-acting-in-violation-of-state-water-quality-standards>

Related:

- <http://www.whsv.com/content/news/Anti-pipeline-activist-group-seeks-legal-intervention-440831733.html>

Pipeline can't help but bring mayhem to Virginia's environment

- News Leader – 8/15/17

<http://www.newsleader.com/story/opinion/columnists/2017/08/15/pipeline-cant-help-but-bring-mayhem-virginias-environment/569997001/>

Farmers must get a permit for their cows to cross a stream. Shouldn't Dominion be held to the same standard?

Doing the Math: Dominion's and FERC's Own Numbers Tell Us the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is a Budget Buster

- Blue Virginia - 8/11/17

<http://bluevirginia.us/2017/08/math-dominions-fercs-numbers-tell-us-atlantic-coast-pipeline-budget-buster>

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

WV DEP ignored water quality in MVP permit, court filing argues

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 8/16/17

<http://www.wvgazette.com/news/20170816/wv-dep-ignored-water-quality-in-mvp-permit-court-filing-argues>

DEP officials approved a water quality certification for the MVP project despite not having fully reviewed its potential to degrade streams, failing to consider the water pollution effects from construction in areas upland from streams and not responding to an avalanche of public comments questioning the pipeline, the groups say.

Pittsylvania County cites federal law in pipeline zoning issues

- Work It, SOVA – 8/15/17

http://www.godanriver.com/work_it_sova/news/pittsylvania-county-cites-federal-law-in-pipeline-zoning-issues/article_6178dad8-8216-11e7-9939-c7e5494b9564.html

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League — a regional, community-based, nonprofit organization — hand delivered a formal complaint to county administration Monday afternoon about failure to enforce local zoning ordinances.

Related:

- http://www.chathamstartribune.com/news/article_aa8ec43c-8282-11e7-8ff8-17d4687379a5.html

Mountain Valley slams sweeping eminent domain lawsuit

- E&E News – 8/14/17

https://www.abralliance.org/wp_content/uploads/2017/08/Mountain_Valley_slams_sweeping_eminent_domain_lawsuit-EE-News_20170814.pdf

The company criticized the suit for making dramatic claims against pipeline builders and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

DEQ director hears residents' fears about pipeline impacts to wells, springs and pristine streams

- The Roanoke Times – 8/10/17

http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/giles_county/deq-director-hears-residents-fears-about-pipeline-impacts-to-wells/article_35867e51-89e1-5aa4-9879-511022bd438f.html

Paylor defended DEQ's approach, noting that the agency was "going far beyond what has been done in the past and what is legally required."

Related:

- <http://www.wvva.com/story/36135604/2017/08/Tuesday/giles-county-residents-grill-virginia-deq-director-about-mountain-valley-pipeline>

Big Picture:

Trump to reverse Obama-era order aimed at planning for climate change

- The Washington Post – 8/15/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/08/15/trump-to-reverse-obama-era-order-aimed-at-planning-for-climate-change/?utm_term=.25bc17b9fc45

In addition to speeding federal decision, the executive order does away with requirements, put in place by President Obama, that required the government to consider climate change when making decisions.

Related:

<https://psmag.com/environment/trumps-actions-on-a-recently-drafted-climate-change-report-are-troubled-and-opaque>

Interim FERC Chairman: Coal and Nuclear 'Need to Be Properly Compensated'

- GreenTech Media – 8/17/17

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/interim-ferc-chairman-coal-and-nuclear-need-to-be-properly-compensated>

Neil Chatterjee says baseload generation needs to be recognized as an essential part of the fuel mix. How will FERC tackle this issue?

Notes from Underground: Pipeline Wars – Back where we started, only worse

- Government Accountability Project – 8/16/17

<https://www.whistleblower.org/blog/014716-notes-underground-pipeline-wars-%E2%80%93-back-where-we-started-only-worse>

The threat this administration poses to our social, economic, environmental, and physical wellbeing is as hard to estimate as it is to contemplate.

Interior Department poised to approve Arctic oil-drilling island

- Washington Examiner – 8/17/17

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/interior-department-poised-to-approve-arctic-oil-drilling-island/article/2631869>

Building an artificial island off the coast of Alaska to tap Arctic oil to have little environmental impact, says Interior Dept. How that is possible is anyone's guess.

The History of the Leaked Climate Report

- NationSwell – 8/16/17

<http://nationswell.com/history-climate-report/>

The leaked version of the 2017 report, which was first published by the New York Times, repeats similar warnings of increased greenhouse gas emissions as earlier assessments