

The Recorder

Inclusive, independent, indispensable.

FERC releases pipeline clearcutting pics

February 14, 2018

BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER



Pictured is the clearcut area along ACP mile marker 59 in West Virginia. (Photo courtesy FERC)

MONTEREY — The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission released photos last week of approved deforestation and related activity reports related to preconstruction of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Virginia and West Virginia.

The photos show clearcut areas in West Virginia, center line survey flag and access roads in Highland County, plus activities in Bath, Augusta and Buckingham counties.

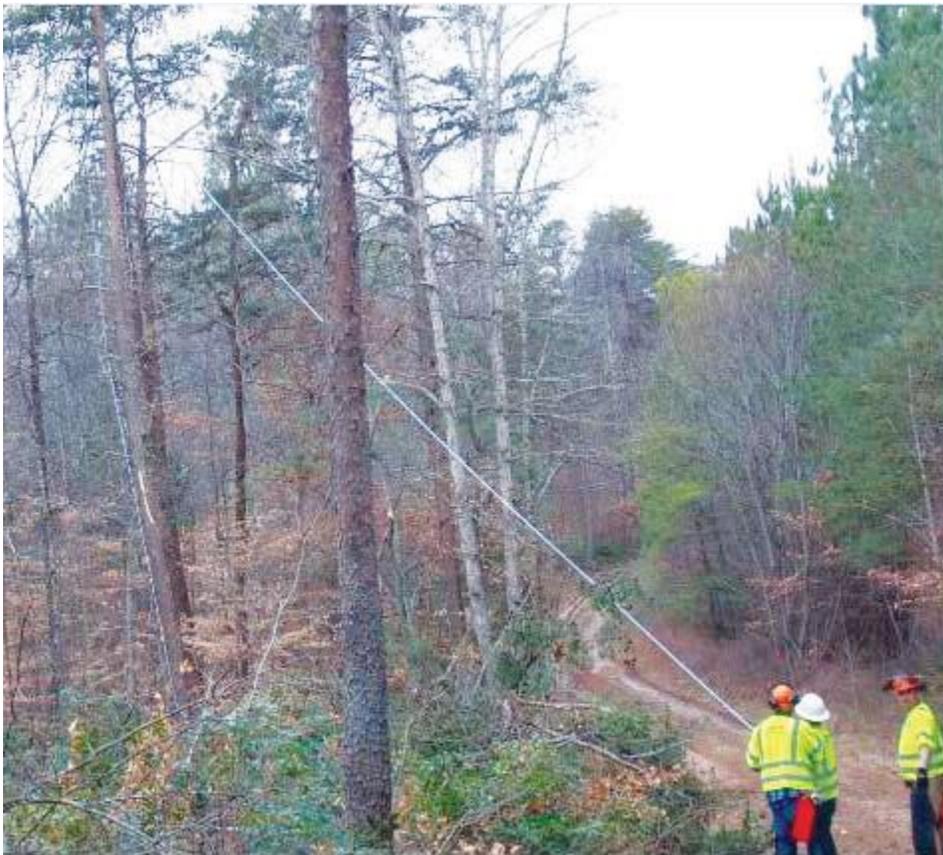
Describing the pictured subjects as “acceptable,” FERC compliance monitors coordinated with Dominion environmental inspectors to inspect and discuss areas of concern prior to construction, review areas potentially subject to variance requests, assist with the resolution of landowner complaints, and clarify interpretations of the project requirements, a FERC report stated.



An “approved access road” sign in Highland County bears the initials CCC.

Containment measures

A compliance manager directed the monitors who coordinated with FERC as well as with Dominion field management and support staff, the report said.



Workers cut trees in Buckingham County. (Photos courtesy FERC)

One of the photos showed pans and paper towels were used in a Bath and Augusta karst area to contain chainsaw gas and oil. Another photo showed plywood was used to prevent rutting by truck tires.

Dominion announced the clearcutting would begin in late January in West Virginia and Virginia, while activity in North Carolina would begin once that state grants approvals.

Dominion said the clearcutting will only be done on properties where agreements are in place with landowners, and they would be notified.

None of the work will be done in wetlands, near waterbodies or in other areas that require additional federal and state permits.



Pans were used in a Bath and Augusta karst area to contain chainsaw gas and oil.

The clearing will go on through March, Dominion said.

FERC earlier told Dominion contractors may only cross wetlands and water bodies on foot. Trees and vegetation may be felled at or above ground level, and must use methods that will not rut soils or damage root systems, and be felled in a way that avoids obstruction of flow, rutting, and sedimentation of wetlands and waterbodies. Felled trees and woody and other vegetation debris shall be left in place until further authorization for any earth-disturbing activities is granted.

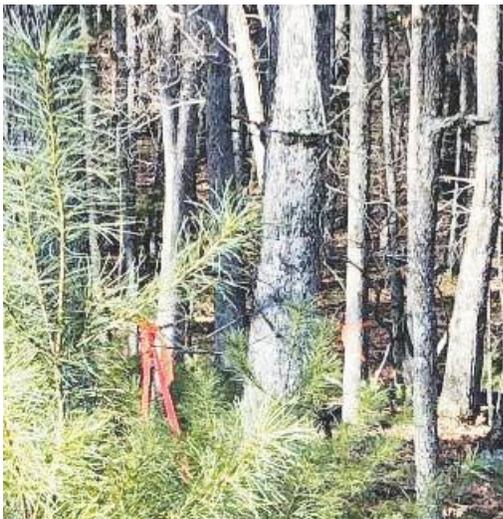


Plywood was used to prevent rutting by truck tires.

FERC specified only non-mechanized clearing is allowed and defined that as the use of equipment that can be operated and carried by hand, by an individual; and that using wheeled, tracked, or other similar types of ground-disturbing equipment is not authorized for clearing-related activity.

Included in a communication report summary was reference to activities in Highland.

A level 2 variance was granted to allow requested use of an existing commercial site as a temporary bridge yard for an office, meetings, training, and mobilization for tree felling activities.



Tape shows the centerline of the ACP route in Highland designated for clearcutting.

“Utilization will include a singlewide office trailer, vehicle parking (day and overnight), equipment storage containers with saws, bar oil, limited gas cans (less than 10), miscellaneous hand tools, and portable toilets,” it said.

“All containers housing lubricating fluids/fuels will be stored within containment on-site. This variance was requested because the contractor yard cannot currently be developed, and access to and parking on the right of way is limited,” the report stated.

Another report said a compliance monitor informed the lead environmental inspector that parking outside of the certificated area at road crossings will require a level 1 variance.

The monitor stated the variance request must meet certain criteria for public safety, and that no rutting of the road shoulder or tracking of mud onto the roadway would be allowed. The monitor informed the inspector the variance can be rescinded if parking becomes a safety issue or nuisance to the public.

Variances defined

FERC defined level 1 variances as requests within the approved workspace or of like use for site-specific, minor, performance-based changes to project specifications or mitigation measures that provide equal or better protection to environmental resources.

Level 2 variance requests involve project changes that would affect an area outside of the previously approved work area, but within the corridor previously surveyed for matters such as cultural resources, sensitive species, and sensitive resources.

Variance descriptions are summarized based on information provided by Dominion.

Originally proposed in 2014, the 600-mile, \$5.5 billion interstate project, if completed, would deliver 1.5 Bcf/d of gas from Dominion’s supply header in Harrison County, W.Va., to metering points in Virginia and North Carolina, including Williams Transcontinental and TransCanada Columbia Gas Transmission lines.