



ABRA Update #171 – March 9, 2018

Pipeline CSI Program Is Launched!



A near overflow crowd of 150 people gathered at the Staunton, VA Holiday Inn on March 3 to hear details about ABRA's new Pipeline Compliance Initiative (CSI). The program is designed to support citizen efforts to ensure strict application of environmental laws and regulations in the construction and operation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP).

CSI will focus first on the approximately 200-mile section of the proposed ACP route extending from Harrison County in West Virginia to Buckingham County in Virginia. The extreme earth disturbance required for construction of the ACP in this area of steep mountain sides, high-quality streams, and karst valleys presents an unacceptable risk to water resources.

Keep up with new developments by visiting and liking us on [Facebook](#).

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

The principal objectives of CSI are:

- To encourage and support citizen efforts to ensure strict application of environmental laws and regulations during pipeline construction across our steep mountains, karst valleys, high-quality surface waters, and vulnerable groundwater supplies.
- To successfully promote effective regulatory oversight of pipeline construction through collection and submission of evidence-grade information concerning noncompliance with, or failure of, required environmental protection practices.
- To evaluate, document, and communicate the performance limitations of required or available environmental protection practices during pipeline construction in extreme mountain landscape.

To become involved as a volunteer in the CSI program, complete an online form at:

<http://pipelineupdate.org/csi-help/>

To assist participating volunteers in the program to report incidents and information regarding the ACP a phone hotline and email address have been established:

Email: csi@abralliance.org

Hotline: [1-877-GO2ABRA](tel:1-877-GO2ABRA) (1-877-462-2272)

A special communication will be sent to the ABRA mailing list within the week providing further details the CSI program. Additional information is available on the [CSI website](#).

Lawsuit Filed to Halt Construction of the ACP

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) and Appalachian Mountain Advocates (Appalmad), on behalf of their client conservation and environmental groups, asked the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to halt construction by Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) developers until it decides whether the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) permit is valid. The [March 8 petition](#) explains the issue to be resolved:

The Natural Gas Act requires FERC to rule on rehearing requests within thirty days, but FERC indefinitely postponed a ruling on Petitioner's Rehearing Request for the ACP. In the meantime, pipeline construction has begun and will irreparably harm Petitioners' property and environmental interests. Can this Court issue a writ pursuant to the All Writs Act staying construction of the ACP to preserve the status quo and its prospective jurisdiction under the Natural Gas Act?

The client organizations associated with the lawsuits are Appalachian Voices, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Cowpasture River Preservation Association, Friends of Buckingham, Highlanders for Responsible Development, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, Shenandoah Valley Network, Sierra Club, Sound Rivers, Inc., Virginia Wilderness Committee, Wild Virginia and Winyah Rivers Foundation.

Tree-Felling for the ACP to Begin in National Forests, Expand Elsewhere

Permission for contractors of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) to begin felling trees within the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests was granted by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on March 2. ABRA was informed of the decision during the course of a meeting with USFS officials to discuss the ABRA CSI program. The USFS had issued a Special Use Permit for the ACP in late January, but trees could not be felled until an additional permission was approved. Tree removal and other ground-disturbing activities are not yet authorized.

On Monday, March 5, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [expanded its permission for tree felling in Virginia](#) to within the 50-foot setback from wetlands and waterbodies that had been set forth in FERC's original authorization for cutting trees, [issued on February 16](#), which required a 50-foot setback. The amended permission was granted by FERC in response to a request from Dominion Transmission, Inc., the managing partner for the ACP.

Stream Monitoring Webinars to Be Held March 13 and 27

A [Volunteer Pipeline Visual Assessment Program](#) has been developed by Trout Unlimited and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition to support and train volunteer citizen observers to identify, document and report pollution incidents associated with large-scale pipeline development. A series of free webinars have been scheduled for March 13 for Virginia residents and March 27 for West Virginians.

The webinars will instruct volunteers about erosion control best management practices used in pipeline development, specific examples of pollution to look for, and how to best document those problems. After the webinar, volunteer observers will be able to report pollution incidents to TU and WV Rivers. [To learn more, visit the program webpage.](#)

To participate in the program, please register for the webinar in the state in which you plan to monitor:

Virginia: Specific Webinar: Tuesday, March 13th — 7:00pm-8:30pm. [Register here.](#)

West Virginia: Specific Webinar: Tuesday, March 27th — 7:00pm-8:30pm. [Register here.](#)

For more information, please contact Jake Lemon, TU's Eastern Angler Science Coordinator, at jlemon@tu.org.

Landowners Affected by ACP and MVP Urged to Sign Letter to Governor

Landowners whose property is directly affected by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline or the Mountain Valley Pipeline are being urged to sign on to a letter to Virginia Governor Northam. The letter notes examples of serious harm to property and the environment from pipeline projects elsewhere in the country and urges the Governor to “take action to prevent similar harms in Virginia. We believe that impacts to water quality, including drinking water sources and the Chesapeake Bay watershed, will be significant and sustained. Therefore we entreat you to fulfill your pledge that the pipelines be “held to the highest environmental standards.”

The letter effort is being spearheaded by the Virginia Conservation Network and several ABRA members. To sign on to the letter, click [here](#). The deadline for being added to the letter is Sunday, March 11 at 10 pm.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

The only good byproduct of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline: Citizen activism in our region

- News Leader – 3/2/18

<https://www.newsleader.com/story/opinion/editorials/2018/03/02/only-good-byproduct-atlantic-coast-pipeline-citizen-activism-our-region/389561002/>

The project has given rise to a group of citizen activists who are not likely to stand down any time soon.

Trees begin to fall, making way for pipeline through Nelson County

- Martinsville Bulletin – 3/7/18

http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/news/trees-begin-to-fall-making-way-for-pipeline-through-nelson/article_0e4e1bab-c4da-514a-8e2a-2c5bb2053fia.html

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline took another step toward construction Tuesday, when crews began cutting down trees in Nelson County to make way for the interstate natural gas project.

Initiative closely follows pipeline projects

- The Recorder – 3/7/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Initiative_closely_follows_pipeline_projects-Recorder_20180308.pdf

Objectives of the Pipeline Compliance Survey Initiative are to encourage citizens to make sure law is being enforced and provide regulatory agencies with pertinent information.

Documents reveal immense outreach on Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- AP News – 3/8/18

<https://www.apnews.com/bb9e146130c94891a25e00332f5c3fbb/Documents-reveal-immense-outreach-on-Atlantic-Coast-Pipeline>

Critics say Dominion is buying support on the cheap to outflank opponents of the project, which would carry fracked natural gas from West Virginia into Virginia, North Carolina, and potentially further south at a cost that's swelling to as much as \$6.5 billion.

As Atlantic Coast Pipeline moves to construction, groups urge Northam to act

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 3/4/18

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/as-atlantic-coast-pipeline-moves-to-construction-groups-urge-northam/article_1a96b64f-f3c1-5aeb-9b4d-4fada25f6f5e.html

The groups want Northam to push the state Department of Environmental Quality, which has been excoriated for how it has handled the water quality review of the pipelines, to conduct an individual review of the hundreds of spots where the pipelines will cross waterways.

The giant company that could: How Dominion turned scorn into a big payday

- Washington Post – 3/8/18

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/2018/02/28/14773b9e-1730-11e8-8b08-027a6ccb38eb_story.html?utm_term=.98586f035cff

The South's Pipe Dreams

- U.S. News & World Report – 3/8/18

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-03-08/pipe-dreams-how-natural-gas-will-conquer-the-south>

Appalachia's buried treasure in natural gas means pipelines, and the controversy that comes with them, are headed south.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Judge allows Mountain Valley Pipeline work to proceed on private property

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 3/5/18

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/judge-allows-mountain-valley-pipeline-work-to-proceed-on-private/article_c352fd47-2e15-59c9-9459-ebee94260015.html

MVP asks West Virginia judge to order protesters out of trees along pipeline route

- Roanoke Times – 3/6/18

http://www.roanoke.com/business/mvp-asks-west-virginia-judge-to-order-protesters-out-of/article_1b61869f-83c3-55ee-816a-ce27287048a4.html

Since Feb. 26, two self-described pipeline resisters have been sitting on wooden platforms in trees near the spot where the pipeline would cross the Appalachian Trail in the Jefferson National Forest, just across the state line from Giles County.

Related:

- http://www.roanoke.com/business/judge-issues-restraining-order-against-pipeline-protesters-sitting-in-trees/article_7293fe77-7be9-5a63-88ec-faef81a2dcbc.html

Boones Mill residents weigh in on pipeline

- The Franklin News-Post – 3/2/18

http://www.thefranklinnews.com/news/boones-mill-residents-weigh-in-on-pipeline/article_337e8650-1e56-11e8-99a9-7f66ca3201aa.html

Big Picture:

Trump official said scientists went ‘outside their wheelhouse’ by writing climate change ‘dramatically’ shrunk Montana glaciers

- The Washington Post – 3/7/18

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/07/trump-official-said-scientists-went-outside-their-wheelhouse-by-writing-climate-change-dramatically-shrunk-montana-glaciers/?utm_term=.fd4f78f47904

A U.S. Geological Survey study documenting how climate change has “dramatically reduced” glaciers in Montana came under fire from high-level Interior Department government officials in May.

Oil, Gas Industry Urges Trump to Consider Exemptions to Proposed Steel Tariff

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 3/7/18

<http://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/113608-oil-gas-industry-urges-trump-to-consider-exemptions-to-proposed-steel-tariff>

Shutdown averted for Sabal Trail pipeline

- E&E News – 3/8/18

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060075779>

Yesterday's decision is a major blow to environmentalists whose legal challenge to Sabal Trail was set to make history by shutting down a major gas pipeline for climate concerns.

PUC orders emergency shutdown of key natural gas pipeline

- Pittsburg Business Times – 3/7/18

<https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/news/2018/03/07/puc-orders-emergency-shutdown-of-key-natural-gas.html>

Operations were suspended following reports of sinkholes in a township in Chester County near the construction of the Mariner East 2 pipeline, which recently was cleared for continued building after state action.

Cove Point Becomes 2nd U.S. Liquefied Natural Gas Export Terminal

- Forbes – 3/6/18

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/judeclemente/2018/03/06/cove-point-becomes-2nd-u-s-liquefied-natural-gas-export-terminal/#54b76d4073e7>

After a series of delays, Dominion Energy shipped out its first LNG cargo from \$4 billion Cove Point export terminal in Maryland.

Environmental groups urge DRBC to prohibit tree clearing for PennEast pipeline

- Bucks County Courier Times – 3/5/18

<http://www.buckscountycouriertimes.com/news/20180305/environmental-groups-urge-drbc-to-prohibit-tree-clearing-for-penneast-pipeline>

With the controversial project caught in a legal gray area, groups are urging regulators to prevent what they argue is premature tree felling.

Have We Gotten Too Optimistic About The Future Of Renewable Energy?

- ChemInfo – 3/2018

<https://www.chem.info/news/2018/03/have-we-gotten-too-optimistic-about-future-renewable-energy>

A variety of models predict the role renewables will play in 2050, but some may be over-optimistic, and should be used with caution, say researchers.

Do Current Climate Change Models Contain an Epic Error?

- Earth Island Journal – 3/8/18

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/do_current_climate_change_models_contain_an_epic_error/

Bit technical but interesting...and NOT certain yet.