

The Recorder

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Let it go, Dominion

August 16, 2018

Need we point out the hypocrisy? Oh, let's do.

Read today's story on the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline carefully. What you find is that Dominion Energy has proposed ways to get its gas from the Marcellus shale down to South Carolina and out to Hampton Roads *without* crossing the ecologically sensitive Appalachian terrain, or the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Simply put, chopped-up pieces of the gas pipeline would do the job, admittedly at a lower volume of fossil fuel than advertised.

Dominion told the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Monday that natural gas from the supply header project in West Virginia can be re-delivered by a portion of the planned ACP to its Long Run delivery point, into Columbia Gas Transmission at Randolph County, W.Va. The Long Run interconnection "thus would provide a substantial, viable, competitive supply option for existing Columbia Transmission shippers, even if other portions of ACP were not constructed," Dominion said.

And, from its ACP infrastructure in Buckingham County, it would connect with the Transco pipeline to ship the gas down to North Carolina and out to eastern Virginia, the company said, noting those markets desperately need more gas. We have a hunch gas might go to a second export point there, after the Cove Point, Md., project is completed. Don't you?

Dominion explained that "independent" of ACP's proposed pipeline upstream from Buckingham County, which includes the areas affected by the court order vacating its permits, ACP could receive plenty of gas from Transco on the ACP main line. The Hampton Roads lateral, would not provide the full benefit to Dominion's system, the company says, but that portion of the ACP "would serve to redeliver gas to Hampton Roads and eastern North Carolina markets, where interstate pipeline capacity is either already fully subscribed, or nonexistent."

Well, then.

More than a few energy experts must be rolling their eyes. This is a way to deliver gas they've pointed to for years, in asserting the ACP is unnecessary. Two of the four members of FERC agree.

Dominion has worked tremendously hard to convince federal regulators and state agencies —and we regular citizens — that bringing its pipe through this part of Appalachia is the *only* way to serve all these customers clamoring for more gas.

In its application for a FERC certificate for the ACP, the corporate energy giant outlined numerous alternatives it said it reviewed, and then rejected because they were not as cost-effective and did more harm to the environment than ACP's proposed route.

Now, Dominion argues, since its incidental take statement from the U.S. Forest Service, and the permit to cross the Blue Ridge Parkway from the National Park Service have been tossed out by the court, the company should be allowed to continue building “useful component(s)” of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

If Dominion could quickly — literally, in two days — propose another way to get gas to these markets, why insist it could not be done any other way than through our precious mountains in Bath and Highland?

That specious argument just died on the table.

Dominion might not get all the gas it wants on its own line, but it just admitted it can get a fair amount of it to those in need without wreaking havoc here. And FERC gave its nod for the supply header project this week, so if the federal regulators also agree to let the company work on the “useful” portions of the ACP, Dominion is still poised to make money, and keep shareholders happy.

Ergo, there's no reason for Dominion to keep fighting for the entire ACP, especially the sections through these mountains.

FERC has already put a stop on construction; the Fourth Circuit clearly understands the regulatory reviews have been inadequate, as citizens here have argued, *ad nauseam*.

The whole of the ACP project should fade into these smaller projects, colocated with existing lines. It makes much more sense, given that political, public, and legal pressure continues to mount and isn't going to stop.

It's time for Dominion to cut its losses.