



ABRA Update #197 – September 13, 2018

Large Turnout Shows for Air Board Hearing on ACP Compressor Station

A crowd of over 150 persons attended a September 11 hearing in Buckingham, VA conducted by the Virginia State Air Control Board (SACB) to receive comments on the proposed compressor station for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). The facility, which would be the only compressor station currently proposed for the ACP in Virginia, has been under widespread criticism because of the egregious impact it would have on the Union Hill community that is proximate to the proposed site and the nearby Yogaville Ashram and retreat center. Of the 85 persons presenting comments at the hearing, more than 80% were in opposition to the project. Most of those speaking in favor of the ACP project were from outside the affected community.



Among those presenting comments at the Air Board hearing were Swami Dayananda (left) of Yogaville and Pastor Paul Wilson (right) of the Union Hill and Union Grove Churches.

The public hearing was part of a comment period on the proposed air emissions permit for the project that has recently been extended to September 21. Those concerned about the compressor station's impact on air quality in Virginia are urged to submit written comments to the Department of Environmental Quality. Details on how to submit comments and a link to the draft air permit are available [here](#).

The SACB is expected to vote on the compressor station air permit at its November 8-9 meeting.

Volunteer for ABRA's Pipeline CSI Program

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Submit a report to the Pipeline CSI

Report

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West Virginia DEP Invites Comments on Stream Crossing Permits

September 17 is the deadline for public input on proposed changes on the conditions under which stream crossings can be accomplished in West Virginia by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and Mountain Valley Pipeline. Currently, projects like the two pipelines would be required to complete stream crossings within 72 hours, a standard that was adopted to minimize impacts to water quality and aquatic life. The proposed changes would relax that standard.

Details on the revisions proposed by the state's Department of Environmental Protection and how to submit comments is available in an factsheet from the West Virginia Rivers Coalition (click [here](#)).

Governor Northam Announces Initiative to Target Pipeline Methane Leaks

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced on September 12 the formation of a special workgroup to “develop a framework for limiting methane leakage from natural gas infrastructure and landfills.” The announcement was part of an initiative to address climate change and ocean acidification. The [Governor's statement](#) says:

Natural gas has significant potential as a bridge fuel to help us reduce carbon pollution that drives climate change while we transition to solar, wind, and other clean energy sources. The relative climate benefits of natural gas compared to other fossil fuels are well documented, but we only realize those benefits if we prevent natural gas from leaking into the atmosphere before it is burned. For that reason, and due to inaction at the federal level, Virginia must take action to limit methane pollution within its borders.

The workgroup is to be composed of environmental, academic and business stakeholders and is to work with the state's Department of Environmental Quality to support the agency's “collection and evaluation of data to inform the regulatory process.”

Forest Service Proposes Relaxing Restrictions on Resource Extraction

Two rulemaking proposals published September 13 in the Federal Register would open national forests to increased energy and minerals extractions. The [first advanced notice of proposed rule-making](#), seeks to “expedite energy-related projects by streamlining internal processes related to environmental review and permitting. . . The intent of these potential changes would be to decrease permitting times by removing regulatory burdens that unnecessarily encumber energy production. These potential changes would promote domestic oil and gas production by allowing industry to begin production more quickly.”

The [second advanced notice of proposed rule-making](#) sets forth the following goals:

The goals of the regulatory revision are to expedite Forest Service review of certain proposed mineral operations authorized by the United States mining laws, and, where applicable, Forest Service approval of some of these proposals by clarifying the regulations, to increase consistency with the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) surface management regulations governing operations authorized by the United States mining laws to assist those who conduct these operations on lands managed by each agency, and to increase the Forest Service's nationwide consistency in regulating mineral operations authorized by the United States mining laws by clarifying its regulations .

Public comments on both proposed regulatory revisions must be received by October 15. Details on how to comment are contained in the respective Notices, which are linked above. After comments are evaluated, each proposal will be re-drafted and published as a proposed rule that will be available for further public comment.

Anti-Pipeline Sculpture to be Dedicated September 16

A special sculpture expressing the concerns of people about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline will be unveiled, installed and dedicated on Sunday, September 16, 1:30 to 3 pm, next to the Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Center, 1368 Rockfish Valley Highway in Nellysford, VA. The sculpture, titled The Defenders, was created by Mark Schwenk and Cheryl Langlais of Berkeley Springs, WV and is sponsored by the Climate Alliance of the Valley, Friends of Nelson and the Rockfish Valley Foundation. The public is invited to attend. For more information, click [here](#).

The Defenders is the first of 5 sites along the ACP route where sculptures will be installed with similar public events.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

‘As if we don’t exist:’ Opponents call on air board to reject pipeline compressor station permit

- Virginia Mercury – 9/12/18

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2018/09/12/as-if-we-dont-exist-opponents-call-on-air-board-to-reject-pipeline-compressor-station-permit/>

Environmental justice a major issue plaguing the proposed ACP facility.

Visitor to Bath County tours property in pipeline path

- The Recorder – 9/13/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Visitor-to-Bath-County-tours-property-in-pipeline-path-Recorder_20180913.pdf

Hey environmentalists, maybe he’s just not that into you

- Virginia Mercury – 9/11/18

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2018/09/11/hey-environmentalists-maybe-hes-just-not-that-into-you/>

Northam’s actions, or lack thereof, on the pipelines, speak louder than his words of social inclusion and environmental stewardship.

Dominion’s 600-mile gas pipeline heading in direction of South Carolina

- The Post and Courier – 9/10/18

https://www.postandcourier.com/news/dominion-s--mile-gas-pipeline-could-cut-through-sc/article_2c5639ea-a57e-11e8-b77a-2fe052b8c53a.html

Always in search of another captive customer, Dominion looks south for a another outlet for its domestically-unnecessary gas.

Federal Court Pulls Natural Gas Pipeline Permits

- The Heartland Institute – 9/13/18

<https://www.heartland.org/news-opinion/news/federal-court-pulls-natural-gas-pipeline-permits>

Conservative think-tank decries use of the law to thwart destructive, unnecessary energy projects. Who’d a think?

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Hurricane could devastate Virginia pipeline project that is already struggling with changing weather

- The Washington Post – 9/11/18

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/hurricane-could-devastate-virginia-pipeline-project-that-is-already-struggling-with-changing-weather/2018/09/11/572d0ef8-b5cf-11e8-94eb-3bd52dfeg17b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b15804b1fbb7

The situation places a spotlight on the unusually demanding environment being crossed by the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines, as well as the stress being put on state regulators to keep up after years of budget cuts. It's a recipe for disaster...from this storm or another one.

Related:

- https://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/construction-halted-on-mountain-valley-pipeline-as-storm-approaches/article_9a322b79-e81b-5929-9b8b-dcc9a2a86459.html

Libertarians join battle over pipelines, property rights

- E&E News: Law – 9/13/18

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060096869>

The Niskanen Center's brief argues that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's approval process for gas pipelines routinely violates landowners' constitutional rights.

Gas pipeline gets rare rebuke from North Carolina local government

- Energy News Network – 9/13/18

<https://energynews.us/2018/09/13/southeast/gas-pipeline-gets-rare-rebuke-from-north-carolina-local-government/>

Though the conservative, rural county has no regulatory authority over the pipeline, its action could signal trouble ahead for the project. Let's hope so!

Virginians unite in rally opposing fracked gas pipelines

- Augusta Free Press – 9/8/18

<https://augustafreepress.com/virginians-unite-in-rally-opposing-fracked-gas-pipelines/>

The rally was part of a global effort, with hundreds of actions, and eight in Virginia, taking place under the banner of Rise for Climate to highlight increasing climate impacts and the need for immediate, real climate leadership.

Carbon cap debate focuses on uncertainty for utility customers

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 9/5/18

https://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/general-assembly/carbon-cap-debate-focuses-on-uncertainty-for-utility-customers/article_b2565a5f-499c-5f4f-bbcc-59c4fb45798d.html

An estimated price tag of ~1% for residential users...and how much for the new gas-powered "peaker" plants? This should be a no-brainer.

Big Picture:

Forest Service proposes expedited energy permitting

- E&E News – 9/12/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Forest-Service-proposes-expedited-energy-permitting-EE-News_20180912.pdf

Interim Forest Service Chief cites "potential to decrease the burden on industry" in order to support the current administration's Energy Dominance fetish.

Ex-GOP FERC chair on coal bailout: 'This too shall pass'

- Utility Dive – 9/7/18

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/ex-gop-ferc-chair-on-coal-bailout-this-too-shall-pass/531856/>

The specter of a coal bailout has cast a pall over Washington energy policy this year. Wood, who was in D.C. this week to speak at an energy markets conference, said the question is "distracting from the real issues of the day."

Electricity generation drives need for natural gas demand response

- Utility Dive – 9/5/18

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/electricity-generation-drives-need-for-natural-gas-demand-response/531589/>

A handful of utilities are using natural gas demand response to balance their deliveries, and a pair of reports suggest greater potential

Lawmakers call for halt to pipeline construction in light of gas explosion

- Daily Local News – 9/11/18

https://www.dailylocal.com/news/local/lawmakers-call-for-halt-to-pipeline-construction-in-light-of/article_72f113be-b548-11e8-8867-330c7bbc941d.html

Pipeline had been in operation for **1 week**.

Related:

- <http://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/115721-etp-natural-gas-pipeline-in-pennsylvania-explodes-prompting-evacuations>

Clean energy versus gas

- PV Magazine – 9/13/18

<https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2018/09/13/clean-energy-versus-gas/>

Solar and energy storage, either on their own or as part of clean energy portfolios, are showing that they can compete with natural gas in the United States. But will regulators wake up to this reality before half a trillion dollars worth of future stranded assets are built?