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Wild Virginia expects Dominion bill on the horizon

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CHARLOTTESVILLE – They’re on the lookout.

A conservation group urges public opposition to new federal legislation Dominion Energy is expected to have introduced soon permitting construction of the planned Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

They want residents to email Congress before the legislation is proposed.

The appeal closely follows Dominion CEO Tom Farrell’s statement that the investor-owned utility would pursue means outside of the justice system if that route fails “to get the job done.”

Dominion is expected to file for a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court later this spring.

“The proposed route for Dominion’s 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline has been a mess from the beginning,” said David Sligh, Wild Virginia conservation director in a statement broadcast via email. “It carves through family farms, steep mountain ridges, and public water supplies, and it is slated to cross the Appalachian Trail on U.S. Forest Service land, a move that federal judges say is not legal. Rather than reconsider their poorly planned project, Dominion is asking the U.S. Congress to change laws to make way for its unneeded gas pipeline.

“We are calling on you to contact your senators and representative in Congress today and ask them to oppose legislation that makes way for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline,” Sligh said.

“Dominion is in trouble. It’s been five years since the company announced that it would build a high-pressure gas pipeline from West Virginia, across the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, into North Carolina. Today, the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline is broadly unpopular, 50 percent over budget, now a shocking more than \$7.5 billion, and two years behind schedule,” he continued. “In December 2018, a federal court in Richmond said that Dominion’s plan to cross the Appalachian Trail was not legal, and it overturned the U.S. Forest Service’s

approval of the crossing. Dominion has already tried to sneak a bill through Congress to change the law and allow our precious federal resources to be harmed. The company won't stop in its efforts to get senators and representatives to change the law and undo the court's ruling.

"We will oppose Dominion's efforts and call on you to do the same, now," Sligh said.

"The Appalachian Trail crossing is one of seven permits that federal courts have overturned or put on hold, all because of Dominion's careless route selection and rushed permitting. And it's increasingly clear that the pipeline is not needed to meet electricity and gas demand. Worse, electricity customers in Virginia and North Carolina would be on the hook to pay for the costly new pipeline. "Tell your senators and your representative in Congress that you oppose legislation that would change the rules to make way for Dominion's unneeded and destructive pipeline. Thank you for taking action to protect the mountain streams, family farms, private property, water supplies, and Appalachian Trail that we all cherish," Sligh said.

"We don't know of any specific bills or attachments right now, but are keeping a lookout in case they pop up," Sligh told The Recorder. "We'll let folks know, but in the meantime, we want to show senators and house members that lots of people are interested and watching."

Related legislation was believed to have been introduced last fall, but the outcome was unclear. Sen. Tim Kaine's office said he was opposed.

Lawmakers can be reached through their websites, Sligh noted:

- Sen. Mark Warner — www.warner.senate.gov;
- Sen. Tim Kaine — www.kaine.senate.gov; and
- Representative Ben Cline — cline.house.gov.