



ABRA Update #234 – June 20, 2019

Mountain Valley Pipeline Proposes Land Swap to Cross Appalachian Trail

EQM Midstream Partners (EQM), principal owner of the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) project, has proposed a land swap with the federal government to allow the MVP to cross the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (Trail). The proposal was revealed in [a June 17 filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission \(SEC\)](#). The proposal was made to the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture (which includes the U.S. Forest Service) under an existing provision of federal law permitting such land swaps in certain instances. The proposal would:

grant the Federal Government full ownership of private lands that are crossed by and would benefit the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (Trail), including certain private land located adjacent to the Jefferson National Forest. In exchange, the applicable federal agencies would grant the MVP Joint Venture an easement and right-of-way to cross the Trail using MVP Joint Venture's previously planned underground crossing method at Mountain Valley Pipeline's (MVP) existing crossing location that was approved in 2017 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The Land Exchange Proposal is subject to the approval of the respective agencies and will be reviewed by such agencies under land exchange procedures.

In the same filing with the SEC, EQM also announced that it “now expects a mid-2020 full in-service date for the MVP project at an overall project cost of \$4.8 – 5.0 billion, excluding allowance for funds used during construction. EQM is expected to fund approximately \$2.4 billion of the overall project cost.”

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC (ACP, LCC) is also faced with its project crossing the Appalachian Trail and has been prevented from doing so by a decision of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which the company has indicated it will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. It has until next Tuesday, June 25, to file that appeal.

Pipeline Safety Hearing Highlights Regulatory Shortcomings

“A major, overarching problem with the federal pipeline safety program is that it takes the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) too long to finalize Congressional mandates.” So stated Congressman Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Chairman of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee at a June 19 hearing before the group's Energy Subcommittee to address “Legislative Solutions to Make Our Nation's Pipelines Safer.”

<p>Volunteer for ABRA's Pipeline CSI Program</p> <p><u>Volunteer</u></p>	<p>Submit a report to the Pipeline CSI</p> <p><u>Report</u></p>	<p>Stay informed, like us on Facebook.</p> 	<p>Support ABRA financially</p> <p><u>GiveNow</u></p>
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The hearing focused on two legislative proposals:

- Discussion Draft: The Safer Pipelines Act of 2019
- HR. 2139: The Leonel Rondon Pipeline Safety Act

During the hearing, Republicans on the committee complained that they were not consulted in the development of the Discussion Draft. Testimony was presented by witnesses from three industry associations and the Pipeline Safety Trust, a public interest pipeline safety organization. A common theme that dominated much of the discussion during the hearing was the inaction of PHMSA to implement legislative improvements previously enacted by Congress. Congressman Pallone noted:

There are still outstanding rulemakings that were required in the 2011 and 2016 reauthorizations that PHMSA has failed to finish. This is unacceptable. At our oversight hearing in May, we heard that the biggest cause for delay is the prescriptive cost-benefit analysis required by the 1996 reauthorization. The discussion draft removes this duplicative requirement, while still ensuring PHMSA rules are subject to the same economic analysis that every other major rule receives.

As [reported in last week's ABRA Update](#), there has been an ongoing effort by ABRA activists to bring to PHMSA's attention the concerns many have about the instability of the chosen route of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Numerous attempts to engage the agency in addressing these concerns have, so far, not succeeded.

New Studies Warn of Rising Methane Levels in Atmosphere

Two new studies have been released in recent weeks that warn of the increasing dangers of rising methane levels in the atmosphere and express concern that the circumstance undermine the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate. This information is relevant for all who are concerned about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline and Mountain Valley Pipeline since over 90% of natural gas transmitted by pipelines is methane, and methane leaks from natural gas pipelines is serious threat. A [study published last year by the journal Science](#) estimates the annual leakage rate of methane from the production and transmission of oil and natural gas to be 2.3%, a quantity large enough to fuel 10 million homes.

An [April 2019 article published in the journal Global Biogeochemical Cycles](#) concludes:

The rise in atmospheric methane (CH₄), which began in 2007, accelerated in the past 4 years. The growth has been worldwide, especially in the tropics and northern midlatitudes. With the rise has come a shift in the carbon isotope ratio of the methane. The causes of the rise are not fully understood, and may include increased emissions and perhaps a decline in the destruction of methane in the air. Methane's increase since 2007 was not expected in future greenhouse gas scenarios compliant with the targets of the Paris Agreement, and if the increase continues at the same rates it may become very difficult to meet the Paris goals. There is now urgent need to reduce methane emissions, especially from the fossil fuel industry


A [June 7 article published in Science, "Rising Methane: A New Climate Challenge,"](#) that discusses the potential causes and consequences of our planet's out-of-control methane, echoes the observations of the April article. It notes:

In 2007, the amount of methane in the atmosphere (CH₄) began to rise after a 7-year period of near-zero growth. Recent research shows that a second step change occurred in 2014. From 2014 to at least the end of 2018, the amount of CH₄ in the atmosphere increased at nearly double the rate observed since 2007.

An implicit message in these studies: don't perpetuate the expanded use of natural gas by building more pipelines!

Dem Senators Press FERC on Energy Storage Requirements

Thirteen Democrat U.S. Senators wrote the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) this week urging that agency to keep working to ensure that electric utility grid operators fully integrate energy storage options into their markets. The [June 18 letter](#) was spearheaded by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).



PUBLIC MEETING

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REGIONAL SPEAKERS

Dr. Mary Finley-Brook, Associate Professor
Geography & Environmental Studies at University of Richmond
speaking on "Dirty BIG Secrets: The Real Impacts
of Fossil Fuel Development"

Anne Carter Witt, Geohazards Specialist
at Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy,
speaking on "Landslides Associated with
Hurricane Camille : 1969"

AND...

PIPELINE CSI UPDATES

**LEGAL NEWS
& STATUS REPORTS**

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SUNDAY, JUNE 30TH
DOORS OPEN 6PM | MEETING 6:30PM

NELSON CENTER
8445 THOMAS NELSON HIGHWAY
LOVINGSTON, VA

AND HEY!
Come see us each Saturday morning
at the Nelson County Farmer's Market!
Talk to knowledgeable volunteers about the
proposed pipeline, sign a petition, and enter
for a chance to win a NO PIPELINE Prize Package!

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

After pipeline feud, Virginia nonprofit aims to reunite community with solar

- Energy News Network – 6/20/19

<https://energynews.us/2019/06/20/southeast/after-pipeline-feud-virginia-nonprofit-aims-to-reunite-community-with-solar/>

Union Hill community aims to heal rifts brought about by Dominion’s compressor station by transitioning to renewable energy and creating local knowledge and jobs in the process.

Opposition to pipeline continues

- Rocky Mount Telegram – 6/20/19

<http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/News/2019/06/20/Opposition-to-pipeline-continues.htm>

The demand for natural gas has dramatically changed since the project’s inception and much of the project’s original justification has evaporated — especially in light of increased affordability of renewable energy options.

ACP Would Cost NC \$20 Billion, a Cruel Hoax — News Release from Energy Justice NC Coalition

- NCWARN Press Release – 6/17/19

<https://www.ncwarn.org/2019/06/fracked-gas-pipeline-would-cost>

Analysis also shows the top selling point for Atlantic Coast Pipeline – gas for new industry – is a “cruel hoax” played on Cooper’s constituents.

Which Would You Prefer: Pipelines or Trucks?

- Bacon’s Rebellion – 6/19/19

<https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/which-would-you-prefer-pipelines-or-trucks>

Some of the best reading is in the comments on this one.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Mountain Valley Pipeline will take longer and cost more to complete, company says

- The Roanoke Times – 6/17/19

https://www.roanoke.com/business/mountain-valley-pipeline-will-take-longer-and-cost-more-to/article_2e870edd-1492-57dc-b6ed-a940e237d857.html

The plan involves a proposed land swap in which the U.S. Dept of the Interior would allow the company to keep its current crossing of the Appalachian Trail — at the top of Peters Mountain along the WV-Va line — in exchange for a piece of private property that Mountain Valley owns adjacent to the Jefferson National Forest.

Delays raise new questions for the Mountain Valley Pipeline

- The Roanoke Times – 6/15/19

https://www.roanoke.com/business/delays-raise-new-questions-for-the-mountain-valley-pipeline/article_ddab9718-dcba-5c03-a44b-8c191b70a140.html

Corrosion, degrading coatings, stressed pipe welds...the list goes on. But answers are few and far between.

House Votes to Block Trump from Using Clean Energy Funds to Back Fossil Fuels Project

- Inside Climate News – 6/19/19

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/17062019/plastics-hub-appalachia-federal-doe-clean-energy-loan-guarantee-taxpayer-funded-congress-amendment>

The Energy Department is weighing loan guarantees for a storage facility that would hold natural gas liquids for a proposed plastics manufacturing hub in Appalachia.

Big Picture:

E.P.A. Finalizes Its Plan to Replace Obama-Era Climate Rules

- The New York Times – 6/19/19

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/climate/epa-coal-emissions.html?emc=rss&partner=rss>

The move largely gives states the authority to decide how far to scale back emissions, or not to do it all, and significantly reduces the federal government's role in setting standards.

Pipeline project developers press FERC for project decisions

- S&P Global – 6/18/19

<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/061819-pipeline-project-developers-press-ferc-for-project-decisions>

June 14 has come and gone, and supporters of several interstate natural gas pipeline projects that had asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve their projects by that date are still waiting.

Climate Solutions Caucus meets — but only 4 members show up

- E&E News – 6/20/19

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Solutions-Caucus-meets-%E2%80%94-but-only-4-members-show-up-EE-News-6-20-19.pdf>

After losing a third of its Republican members in the 2018 midterms, including former coChairman Carlos Curbelo of Florida, the caucus has been slow to launch in the new year.

United States Spend Ten Times More On Fossil Fuel Subsidies Than Education

- Forbes – 6/15/19

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesellsmoor/2019/06/15/united-states-spend-ten-times-more-on-fossil-fuel-subsidies-than-education/>

No wonder half the country still thinks “Drill, Baby, drill!” is a good plan. On the other side...

Renewable Energy Is Now The Cheapest Option - Even Without Subsidies

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesellsmoor/2019/06/15/renewable-energy-is-now-the-cheapest-option-even-without-subsidies/#5a610de15a6b>

84% of fracking studies show the industry harms human health

- Environmental Health news – 6/20/19

<https://www.ehn.org/84-of-fracking-studies-show-the-industry-harms-human-health-2638917368.html>

A review by doctors and scientists of more than 1,700 studies concludes that the industry poses a threat to air, water, climate, and human health.

Scientists amazed as Canadian permafrost thaws 70 years early

- Reuters – 6/18/19

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-change-permafrost/scientists-amazed-as-canadian-permafrost-thaws-70-years-early-idUSKCN1TJ1XN>

Scientists are concerned about the stability of permafrost because of the risk that rapid thawing could release vast quantities of heat-trapping gases, unleashing a feedback loop that would in turn fuel even faster temperature rises.

New York to Approve One of the World's Most Ambitious Climate Plans

- The New York Times – 6/18/19

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/18/nyregion/greenhouse-gases-ny.html>

The state would pledge to eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with all its electricity coming from carbon-free sources.