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Alliance calls proposed pipeline construction flawed

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CSI identified 25 locations with large rocks loose in the trench, directly underneath the pipe. (Photo courtesy Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance)

Editor's note: The following article is from the Oct. 18 newsletter of Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance about its compliance surveillance initiative and the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

ABRA's CSI program has provided more evidence to federal regulators of unsafe and non-compliant construction practices of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

On July 25, the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration wrote Dominion Energy Transmission Inc. (DETI), which is managing the construction of the ACP, concerning trench widths that did not appear to meet specifications and the presence of bedrock and loose boulders in pipeline trenches.

The locations were within the first miles of the project in West Virginia.

DETI responded on Aug. 21, denying that the conditions cited by PHMSA inspectors existed.

This prompted ABRA to examine the reported incidents based upon photographic evidence acquired by ABRA/ CSI Pipeline Air Force photo surveillance flights.

In an Oct. 16 letter to PHMSA, Dan Shaffer, ABRA's geospatial consultant, brought to the agency's attention photographs that contradict DETI's contention.

Shaffer explained, "CSI has identified 25 locations along the route that seem to show large rocks loose in the trench, directly underneath the pipe, incorporated with backfill, or protruding into the trench in close proximity to the pipe … We are concerned that these conditions place the Atlantic Coast Pipeline at a significant risk of damage during hydrostatic testing, increased rates of corrosion due to damaged epoxy coating, or rupture due to landslides or even small slips."

Concluding, Shaffer said, "Our photographic evidence suggests that such conditions are common practice on this project. We feel that these locations warrant additional investigation to ensure that the project is being constructed in a safe manner."