



## ABRA Update #257 – December 19, 2019

### Dominion Fails to Convince Congress to Address AT Crossing Issue

Efforts by Dominion Energy to convince Congress to approve having the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) cross the Appalachian National Scenic Trail have not yielded results. For most of the past year Dominion has been seeking to have a rider added to other legislation that would, in effect, overturn the decision of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals that vacated the permit for the ACP issued by the U.S. Forest Service. Within the past week, two prominent bills that were believed to be possible vehicles for the Dominion amendment – the National Defense Authorization Act and the continuing resolution funding the Federal Government – passed without language addressing the AT issue. For now, the issue remains pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, which is scheduled to hear arguments on an appeal of the Fourth Circuit decision on the case (*U.S. Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation Association, et. al.*) on February 24. A decision on the case is anticipated to be announced in June.

### Methane: A Growing Problem

Leaking methane from natural gas pipelines and other related infrastructure is a much more serious problem than had been previously recognized, according to new studies released in the past week. ABRA and its members have long argued that the Atlantic Coast Pipeline presented an environmental and safety hazard to the communities through which it would pass due, among other reasons, because of possible methane leaks.

A study published December 16 in the publication *Environmental Research Letters*, concludes that methane leaks from natural gas infrastructure are so great that they effectively cancel out any climate benefits realized from replacing coal with natural gas as a fuel for generating electricity. For more on the study and a link to it, click [here](#).

The problem of methane leakage was strongly underscored by two recent *New York Times* stories. [A December 12 interactive story](#) revealed the results of infrared photography of natural gas facilities in Texas that show the considerable extent of methane leaks. [A December 16 Times story](#) detailed the findings of a recent study, using satellite surveillance of methane leaks, which observed that a 2018 fracking site accident in Belmont County, OH was “one of the largest methane leaks ever recorded in the United States,” releasing more methane than the reported annual emissions of the oil and gas industries of countries like Norway and France.”

Volunteer for ABRA's  
Pipeline CSI Program

**Volunteer**

Submit a report to  
the Pipeline CSI

**Report**

Stay informed, like us  
on Facebook.



Support ABRA  
financially

**GiveNow**

## ***ABRA Update Will Take A Break***

The next issue of *ABRA Update* will be Thursday, January 9. But, you can stay abreast of pipeline developments by following us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/abralliance/>), where relevant news items are posted most every day. Should there be critical developments that need to be brought to your attention, we'll be in touch with special alerts.

Until January 9, *Happy Holidays!*

## ***In the News:***

### **Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline**

#### **Gas glut compounds Atlantic Coast Pipeline woes**

- The Recorder – 12/19/19

[https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Gas-glut-compounds-Atlantic-Coast-Pipeline-woes-Recorder\\_20191219.pdf](https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Gas-glut-compounds-Atlantic-Coast-Pipeline-woes-Recorder_20191219.pdf)

#### **Dominion still sees U.S. Atlantic Coast natgas pipe online in 2022 despite Morgan Stanley's doubts**

- Reuters – 12/16/19

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-dominion-atlantic-coast-natgas/dominion-still-sees-us-atlantic-coast-natgas-pipe-online-in-2022-despite-morgan-stanleys-doubts-idUSKBN1YK22Y>

Morgan Stanley said in a report that “Atlantic Coast will likely not be completed given the Fourth Circuit’s likely (in the bank’s view) rejection, for the third time, of a newly issued Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement that we expect to come by the first quarter of 2020.”

#### **ACP’s Supreme Court Petition Draws Widespread Support as Stakeholders Await Ruling**

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 12/12/19

<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/120460-acps-supreme-court-petition-draws-widespread-support-as-stakeholders-await-ruling>

Nothing surprising here...

#### **Wilson: Forest Service wants to reduce public input**

- The Roanoke Times – 12/18/19

[https://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/wilson-forest-service-wants-to-reduce-public-input/article\\_3ad5f675-2ef9-5c61-9dcb-05809abddfe1.html](https://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/wilson-forest-service-wants-to-reduce-public-input/article_3ad5f675-2ef9-5c61-9dcb-05809abddfe1.html)

The bottom line is that we need more public participation in U.S.F.S. projects, not less.

#### **Bipartisan bill in Virginia chips away at electric utility's excess profits**

- The Roanoke Times – 12/16/19

[https://www.roanoke.com/news/politics/bipartisan-bill-in-virginia-chips-away-at-electric-utility-s/article\\_720fe4d9-ba3e-505e-9249-bb1db685c5e6.html](https://www.roanoke.com/news/politics/bipartisan-bill-in-virginia-chips-away-at-electric-utility-s/article_720fe4d9-ba3e-505e-9249-bb1db685c5e6.html)

Called the “Fair Energy Bills Act,” the measure would reinstate the authority of the State Corporation Commission to review electricity base rates and set profit levels for Dominion and the state’s other major electric utility, Appalachian Power.

#### **Dominion seeks permits to build new power plant in Chesterfield**

- Chesterfield Observer – 12/13/19

<https://www.chesterfieldobserver.com/articles/dominion-seeks-permits-to-build-new-power-plant-in-chesterfield/>

Didn't they *just* cancel 1.5GW of gas peaker capacity that was deemed unnecessary?

## Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

### Judge approves \$2.15 million settlement of lawsuit against Mountain Valley Pipeline

- The Roanoke Times – 12/12/19

[https://www.roanoke.com/business/judge-approves-million-settlement-of-lawsuit-against-mountain-valley-pipeline/article\\_21f6a275-c34d-5f67-b547-8b4267ed6c09.html](https://www.roanoke.com/business/judge-approves-million-settlement-of-lawsuit-against-mountain-valley-pipeline/article_21f6a275-c34d-5f67-b547-8b4267ed6c09.html)

Pipeline opponents called the agreement too lenient, saying that the \$2.15 million fine amounts to just 0.038% of the project's total cost of \$5.5 billion.

### Beth Kreydatus column: Virginia needs a more transparent regulatory system for fossil fuel investments

- The Roanoke Times – 12/15/19

[https://www.richmond.com/opinion/columnists/beth-kreydatus-column-virginia-needs-a-more-transparent-regulatory-system/article\\_bb2of3df-of69-593e-8f8f-ad1c9efc28c4.html](https://www.richmond.com/opinion/columnists/beth-kreydatus-column-virginia-needs-a-more-transparent-regulatory-system/article_bb2of3df-of69-593e-8f8f-ad1c9efc28c4.html)

Because vulnerable populations and ecosystems are still being railroaded by Virginia's state agencies and their corporate masters.

### Study: Natural Gas Led To Economic Benefits And Premature Deaths In Region

- WOSU Public Media – 12/12/19

<https://radio.wosu.org/post/study-natural-gas-led-economic-benefits-and-premature-deaths-region#stream/0>

Spoiler alert! The overall costs to society relating from fracking were greater than the benefits that the fuel and jobs created.

## Big Picture:

### Investment Bankers Are Now Waging the War on Coal

- The Atlantic – 12/17/19

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/goldman-sachs-fighting-climate-change-un/603760/>

As UN climate negotiations faltered, bankers on Wall Street brought good news for the climate. What's even happening?

Related:

- <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/goldman-sachs-announces-it-will-stop-financing-arctic-oil>

### Fossil fuel plants get a boost from Trump-appointed regulators

- Washington Examiner – 12/19/19

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/daily-on-energy-presented-by-renew-biodiesel-fossil-fuel-plants-get-a-boost-from-trump-appointed-regulators>

The changes, backed by FERC's two Republicans, are designed to raise payments to non-subsidized sources of energy — primarily coal and gas plants — to combat state policies that subsidize carbon-free renewables and nuclear power.

### What Climate Change Tells Us about Being Human

- Scientific American – 12/18/19

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/what-climate-change-tells-us-about-being-human/>

In explaining its decision, Goldman Sachs cited environmental concerns, though one must imagine that lending risk played a major part. Still...a good thing for all of us.

### The Energy 202: Clean energy loses big in year-end spending bill

- Washington Post – 12/18/19

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-energy-202/2019/12/18/the-energy-202-clean-energy-loses-big-in-year-end-spending-bill/5df91f44602ff125ce5b5c76/>

Related:

- <https://www.electrek.co/2019/12/19/egeb-green-energy-us-spending-bill-lawrence-kansas-atlantic-city-electric/>

**House green bank bill aims to leverage \$35B in government funding into \$1T in private investment**

- Utility Dive – 12/16/19

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/house-green-bank-bill-aims-to-leverage-35b-in-government-funding-into-1t/569121/>

The bank is meant to mobilize up to \$1 trillion in private investment over a decade, enabling the creation of more green banks in the country and supporting efforts of existing state and local green banks.

**All The Good (Under-the-Radar) News About Renewable Energy**

- Clean Technica – 12/15/19

<https://cleantechnica.com/2019/12/15/all-the-good-under-the-radar-news-about-renewable-energy/>