



ABRA Update #280 – June 11, 2020

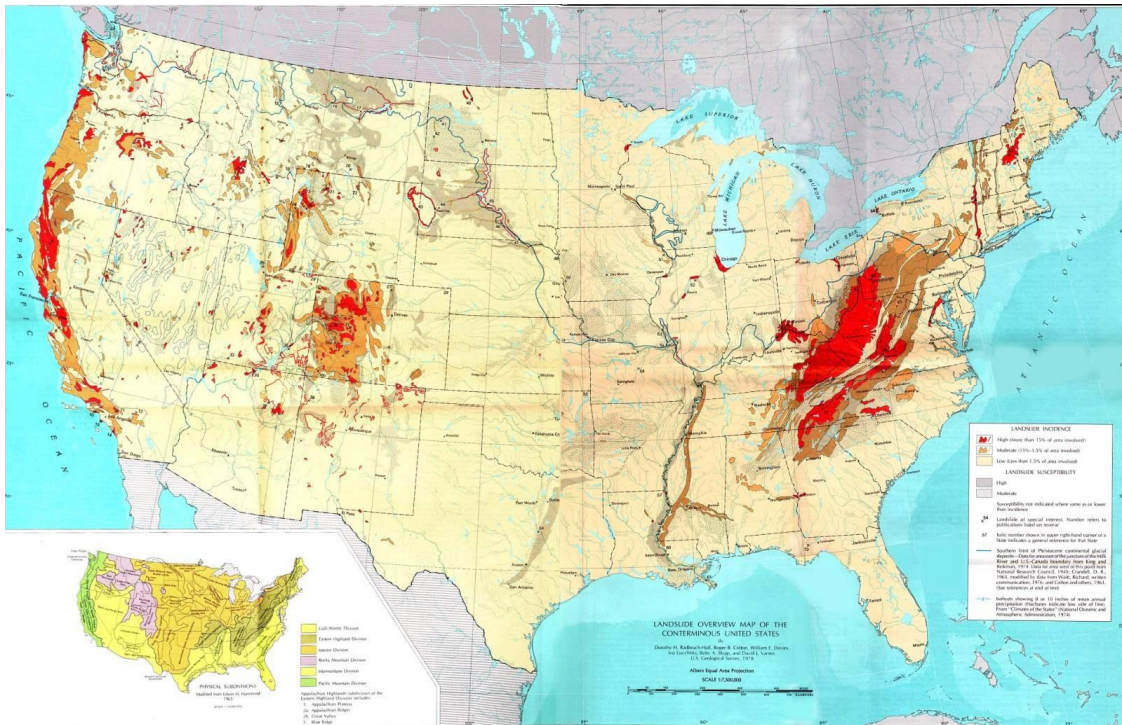
Issue Highlights . . .

- New Study Says Landslides Are a Serious Threat to the ACP
- Forest Service Announces Supplemental EIS Process for ACP
- Updated Information! Pipe Storage Duration
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New Study Says Landslides Are a Serious Threat to the ACP

The routes of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), as well as the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), pass through the most landslide-prone landscape in the United States, according to a new study released June 11 by the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA).

Landslides & the ACP examines the hazards accompanying landslides and pipeline construction and evaluates the issue as it specifically relates to the ACP. The study concludes that the “potential for landslides along the ACP route, and the threat they present to affected communities and water supplies due to sediment runoff and debris flows, were inadequately evaluated by the regulatory agencies responsible for issuing the project’s required permits.”



US Geological Survey (USGS) Map - frequency of, and susceptibility to, landslides. Red areas have the highest rates of landslide incidence (15%+ of area involved). Areas with dashes reflect high landslide susceptibility.

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Several examples of landslide resulting from earth disturbances caused by pipeline construction are included in the study. It also points out that landslides can occur long after there is an earth disturbance due to the fragile topography and unusually steep slopes of the central Appalachian Mountains in Virginia and West Virginia. The study cites a current study of landslide incidents that occurred in Nelson County, Virginia and western Albemarle County, Virginia as a result of Hurricane Camille in 1969. In the ensuing 50-years, there have been nearly 6,000 identifiable landslide incidents attributable to earth disturbances caused by Camille. In other words, once the terrain of these mountains is disturbed, there is a long-term impact on their stability.

Landslides & the ACP explains that the route for the ACP was chosen before the sponsoring companies, Dominion Energy and Duke Energy, had conducted analyses of the impacts the project would have on the fragile Appalachian topography. In rushing to a judgment about a route for the pipeline before fully evaluating its stability risks, Dominion and Duke failed to follow industry guidelines for constructing pipelines in terrain with steep slopes.

The study concludes:

Regulators, legislators and other officials at the federal state and local levels who have had a role in making or influencing decisions on the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline are strongly urged to reexamine and correct those decisions that helped launch this project. It is not too late to avoid the catastrophe that the ACP will surely bring to the Appalachian Highlands should its construction proceed, and operations begin.

A copy of *Landslides and the ACP* is available by clicking [here](#).

Forest Service Announces Supplemental EIS Process for ACP

Development of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) was announced June 11 by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The Notice of Intent, published in the *Federal Register*, is in response to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals action of December 13, 2018 vacating the USFS's Record of Decision and Special use Permit issued for the ACP. While one of the reasons for the Court's action – whether the USFS had the authority to authorize the ACP to cross the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST) – is on appeal and awaiting a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, there were several other issues in question that the SEIS process will focus upon:

- Issues identified in the Court ruling including the potential for the proposal to cause adverse impacts to soil, water, and threatened and Endangered Species Act (ESA) Threatened and Endangered species and their habitat;
- The purpose and impact of the Forest Plan amendments on affected resources (soil, water, ESA Threatened and Endangered species, scenic integrity, ANST, and eligible recreation rivers) and consistency with the Planning Rule;
- The feasibility and practicality of having routes that are not on NFS lands; and,
- A re-evaluation and assessment of erosion, sedimentation, and water quality effects in relation to anticipated mitigation effectiveness.

The [USFS Federal Register Notice of Intent](#) states that a draft SEIS will be available in July 2020 and that a final SEIS is anticipated later in 2020. The Notice indicated that when the Draft SEIS is made available there will be information provided about how public comments can be made.

Updated Information!

The June 4 issue of *ABRA Update* (#279) featured the photos below of pipe storage yards for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline near Bealeton, VA (l) and Culpeper, VA (r). The photo caption said the pipe had been stored at the locations for over 18 months. We have since learned that the pipe has been stored in those yards for four years, well beyond the recommended time for it to be unprotected from the elements without compromising the integrity of its protective coating.



In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Pipeline projects draw criticism for ‘environmental racism’

- Bay Journal – 6/8/20

https://www.bayjournal.com/news/energy/pipeline-projects-draw-criticism-for-environmental-racism/article_99af061e-a98e-11ea-bcdf-33bf50122f39.html

Residents of minority neighborhoods say they bear the brunt of risks from natural gas infrastructure

COMMENTARY: Pipeline extension project is environmentally, financially risky

- The Free Lance-Star – 6/4/20

https://www.fredericksburg.com/opinion/commentary-pipeline-extension-project-is-environmentally-financially-risky/article_e031e1df-6c58-5113-b59c-5f0d1a551bc1.html

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Hadwin: Roanoke Gas has chance to opt out of MVP

- The Roanoke Times – 6/10/20

https://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/hadwin-roanoke-gas-has-chance-to-opt-out-of-mvp/article_300b69bc-3522-5eb8-a4d4-2029418b2100.html

If Roanoke Gas misses this chance, it will owe the MVP \$112 million over 20-years, regardless of how much of the reserved capacity is actually used. The gas company expects to be allowed to pass this cost on to its customers.

Ex-FERC, Hill official tapped as Va. Regulator

- E&E Energywire – 6/10/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Ex-FERC-Hill-official-tapped-as-Va.-regulator-EE-Energywire-6-10-20.pdf>

The previous director of FERC's office of government affairs, Hudson has held several top congressional legal position.

Pipeline may run through megasite to deliver gas from Chatham to localities in North Carolina

- Danville Register & Bee – 6/8/20

https://www.godanriver.com/business/pipeline-may-run-through-megasite-to-deliver-gas-from-chatham-to-localities-in-north-carolina/article_51d27514-ab98-5740-b056-a62d383ee178.html

A Powerful Petrochemical Lobbying Group Advanced Anti-Protest Legislation in the Midst of the Pandemic

- The Intercept – 6/7/20

<https://theintercept.com/2020/06/07/pipeline-petrochemical-lobbying-group-anti-protest-law>

The ultimate goal is to prevent people from protesting with fines and penalties. They (the fossil fuel industry) also want to make sure they enact revenge on people who protest anyway, using legislators to provide that service for them.

Big Picture:

A Green New Deal architect explains how the protests and climate crisis are connected

- MIT Technology Review – 6/11/20

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/06/11/1003162/a-green-new-deal-architect-explains-how-the-protests-and-climate-crisis-are-connected/>

"...climate change is not just a technical problem. It's not just an issue of emissions. It's an issue of the systems that have allowed an industry that essentially poisons people to continue, and to do so even as it further and further imperils our survival, both as a nation and as a globe. It comes down to issues of race and class and place.

Related:

- <https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Fossil-fuel-fight-sidelines-aid-for-hard-hit-communities-EE-News-6-10-20.pdf>

FERC Instant Final Rule Offers 'Landowner Protections' From Tolling Orders

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 6/10/20

<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/122260-ferc-instant-final-rule-offers-landowner-protections-from-tolling-orders>

The independent energy regulator issued a rule yesterday that would stop companies from beginning construction on FERC-approved infrastructure projects until the commission dealt with landowner objections.

- <https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FERC-issues-rule-to-address-landowner-complaints-EE-Energywire-6-10-20.pdf>

EPA Water Rule Won't Speed Up New Oil, Gas Pipeline Projects

- Bloomberg Law – 6/8/20

<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/epa-water-rule-wont-speed-up-new-oil-gas-pipeline-construction>

A new EPA water rule to curtail state vetoes won't necessarily ease the path for new oil and gas interstate pipeline projects, energy analysts and lawyers say. It may just speed up denials.

Related:

- <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1063345757>

Trump's latest environmental rollback threatens minority communities, experts warn

- The Hill – 6/7/20

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/501444-trumps-latest-environmental-rollback-threatens-minority-communities>

“Trump’s actions put a spotlight on black lives don’t matter.”

Advocates point to a growing body of research that details the impacts of polluting infrastructure that is often found in or near black, Latino, and Native American communities.

Related:

- <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1063324751>

Trump administration moves forward with plan to end wild bird protections

- PBS – 6/5/20

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-administration-moves-forward-with-plan-to-end-wild-bird-protections>

The Trump administration moved forward Friday with plans to scale back a century-old law protecting most American wild bird species despite warnings that billions of birds could die as a result.

Wood Mackenzie: Battery storage will turn Europe’s gas peakers into stranded assets by 2030

- IEEFA – 6/9/20

<https://ieefa.org/wood-mackenzie-battery-storage-will-turn-europes-gas-peakers-into-stranded-assets-by-2030>

Peaker plants in the US likely won’t be far behind.

Renewables Provide 100% New US Electricity Capacity In April, Oil Companies Shedding Jobs, Investment Community Remains Oblivious

- CleanTechnica – 6/9/20

<https://cleantechnica.com/2020/06/09/renewables-provide-all-new-us-electricity-capacity-in-april-oil-companies-shedding-jobs-but-investment-community-remains-oblivious/>

I believe Upton Sinclair said it best... “It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!” And so, the world’s biggest banks still have their buckets in the oil wells. Thus, your pensions or retirement savings likely do as well.

The U.S. can get to 90% clean electricity in just 15 years

- Fast Company – 6/9/20

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90513361/the-u-s-can-get-to-90-clean-electricity-in-just-15-years>

Renewables have become so cheap that they’re beginning to beat the cost of continuing to run existing coal-fired power plants. But while the economics mean that utilities will naturally shift to renewables, it will still take federal policy to make it happen as quickly as is necessary for climate change.