



ABRA Update #289 – August 20, 2020

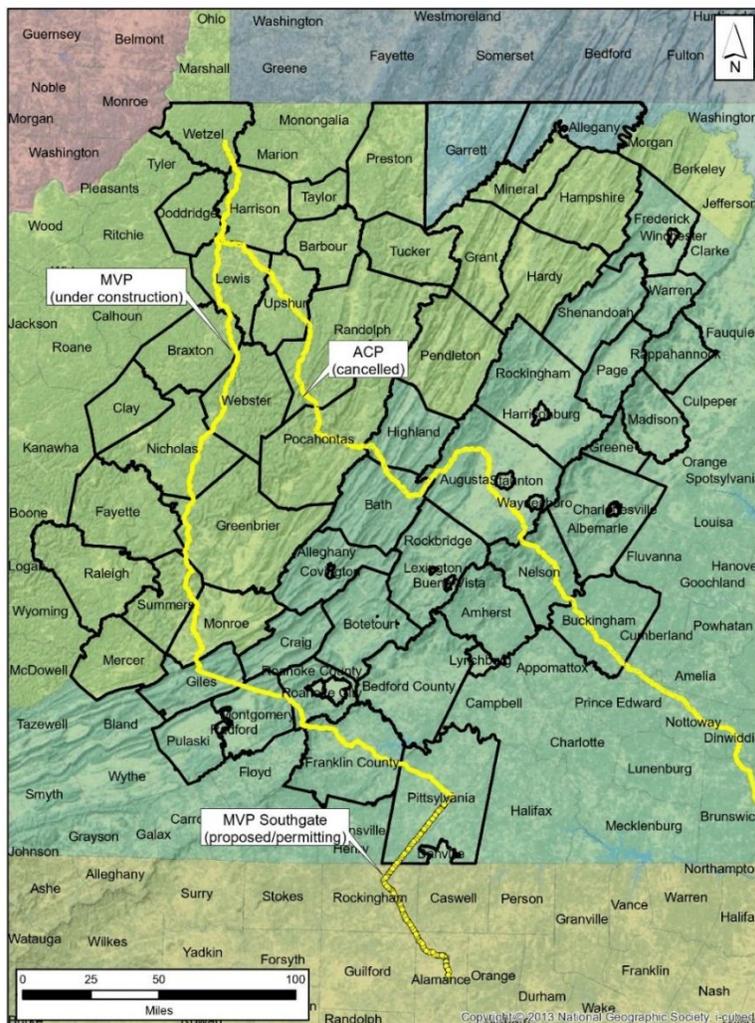
Issue Highlights . . .

- A new ABRA program: **The Conservation Hub**
- *In the News* – page 3

A new ABRA program: **The Conservation Hub**

The Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA) is pleased to announce an exciting new program: *The Conservation Hub*. ABRA’s Conservation Hub program promotes responsible resource management by providing data-focused tools that enhance a project’s transparency, strengthen its accountability to regulatory agencies and facilitate public participation in its evaluation process. The Hub is a regional information and mapping portal, tailored to specific projects in the central Appalachian region of Virginia and West Virginia encompassing 52 counties (26 in VA and 26 in WV, see map below), but also an information resource on the natural resources and character of the region.

Projects beyond the region will be considered on a case by case basis.



Conservation Hub Study Area

The Conservation Hub is an outgrowth of the mapping system developed for ABRA's Construction Surveillance Initiative (CSI), a program that was created to monitor construction activity of the now-cancelled Atlantic Coast Pipeline. (Note: The CSI program will continue until restoration of the ACP route has been completed.)

Among the lessons learned from ABRA's fight against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project were the limitations that regulatory agencies often have in conducting in-depth analysis of a project's impacts, particularly those projects that would have cumulative impacts. Also, the complexity of many projects creates challenges for members of the public wishing to comment and participate as stakeholders in decision-making processes. ABRA believes the Hub program can help address these and other shortcomings of the permitting and regulatory processes that govern projects by making it possible to:

- (1) Effectively examine project plans and proposals in appropriate geographic, environmental, and regulatory context,
- (2) Maintain oversight of implementation compliance and performance by overlaying approved plans (erosion and sediment control, slope management, stream crossing, etc.) with georeferenced aerial photography of actual construction, and
- (3) Track regulatory system efficacy by mapping noncompliance and agency enforcement actions.

Trial Hub projects are underway

ABRA is already providing assistance in assessing some initial projects as part of the Hub program. In each case, the purpose is to enable the ABRA member conservation group interested in the project to better evaluate its impact. These initial projects on which ABRA is providing assessment assistance include:

- **Greenbriar Southeast** – A proposed project involving timber harvesting in a portion of the Monongahela National Forest located in Pocahontas County, WV.
- **Rocky Forge Wind Farm** – A proposed ridge-top wind farm in Botetourt County, VA.
- **Corridor H** – A highway project in northern West Virginia.
- **Shenandoah Rail Trail Partnership** – Public, private, and non-profit groups in Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties, Virginia are considering converting an unused railroad into a 38.5-mile pedestrian and bike trail.

For more about the Hub program, including the aforementioned trial projects, visit the Hub link appearing at the top of the ABRA website homepage at <https://www.abralliance.org/>.

Future projects will be chosen in consultation with ABRA's Conservation Hub Advisory Committee. ABRA member organizations, allied conservation groups and others are invited to propose projects for which they believe the Hub could be helpful in enhancing their evaluation.

For more information, questions or to recommend a possible Hub project, contact:
 Dan Shaffer, ABRA Geospatial Consultant (dshaffer@abralliance.org),
 Lew Freeman, ABRA Executive Director (lewfreeman@gmail.com), or
 Ben Cunningham, ABRA Field Director (ben@blueridgegeographics.com)

<p><i>Volunteer for ABRA's Pipeline CSI Program</i></p> <p><u>Volunteer</u></p>	<p><i>Submit a report to the Pipeline CSI</i></p> <p><u>Report</u></p>	<p><i>Stay informed, like us on Facebook.</i></p> 	<p><i>Support ABRA financially</i></p> <p><u>GiveNow</u></p>
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In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

A look at the Atlantic Coast Pipeline easement process that left Nelson landowners \$15 million richer

- The News & Advance - 8/15/20

https://newsadvance.com/news/local/a-look-at-the-atlantic-coast-pipeline-easement-process-that-left-nelson-landowners-15-million/article_10c961b7-bfcd-5c5a-b069-8647ba0a563b.html

Interesting title. Unless they were enthusiastic about selling to begin with, I doubt most Nelsonians feel a whole lot “richer” after this debacle.

SCC: Dominion overcharged customers by \$502M in 2017-19

- Virginia Business – 8/18/20

<https://www.virginiabusiness.com/article/scc-report-dominion-overcharged-customers-by-502m-in-2017-19/>

And that’s *after* some fancy accounting over fossil fuel power plant closures got them to an “under-earning year” in 2019.

Dominion’s past-due power bills from pandemic hit \$116 million

- Daily Press – 8/16/20

<https://www.dailypress.com/business/consumer/dp-nw-dominion-past-due-bills-20200816-ffssoadotvdfi52nxjak5qdq-story.html>

Dominion overcharged its ratepayers more than \$500 Million in 2017 and 2018. Maybe forgiving the \$116 million in unpaid bills that have accumulated during the pandemic would be a good way to start making that right with Virginians.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Mountain Valley pledges up to \$19.5 million to conserve land along Appalachian Trail

- The Roanoke Times – 8/17/20

https://roanoke.com/news/local/mountain-valley-pledges-up-to-19-5-million-to-conserve-land-along-appalachian-trail/article_3bc114c2-d07c-5947-8886-off3d106e17f.html

The company that plans to burrow a natural gas pipeline under the Appalachian Trail is pledging up to \$19.5 million to conserve land in other spots along the footpath’s route through Virginia and West Virginia.

Related:

- <https://appalachiantrail.org/news/voluntary-stewardship-agreement-to-advance-at-conservation>

Opponents to MVP Southgate see conservation victory with DEQ permit denial

- Rockingham Now – 8/14/20

https://greensboro.com/rockingham_now/news/opponents-to-mvp-southgate-see-conservation-victory-with-deq-permit-denial/article_29834dba-de8f-11ea-9b9b-5fcd32757857.html

The N.C. Division of Water Resources earlier this week put a halt, at least temporarily, to planned construction by denying MVP Southgate a water permit, known as a 401 certification.

MVP Southgate natgas pipe startup seen in 2021 despite N.Carolina permit denial

- Reuters – 8/12/20

<https://www.reuters.com/article/equitrans-mountain-valley-southgate/mvp-southgate-natgas-pipe-startup-seen-in-2021-despite-ncarolina-permit-denial-idUSL1N2FEORo>

The North Carolina rejection caused some analysts to question whether Equitrans will be able to finish Southgate by the end of 2021, if ever.

Big Picture:

World's largest offshore rig operator files for bankruptcy

- E&E Energywire – 8/20/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Worlds-largest-offshore-rig-operator-files-for-bankruptcy-EE-Energywire-8-20-20.pdf>

Valaris follows Noble Corp. and Diamond Offshore Drilling Inc. in filing for bankruptcy this year as the price of crude swung to historic lows during the coronavirus pandemic.

FERC-agencies fight stalls major gas export project

- E&E News – 8/19/20

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1063712013>

A federal dispute over endangered species has stalled an embattled \$10 billion liquefied natural gas project in Oregon, raising questions about the future of the West Coast's first LNG export hub.

Pipeline infrastructure planning in the era of Black Lives Matter

- Utility Dive – 8/18/20

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/pipeline-infrastructure-planning-in-the-era-of-black-lives-matter/583186/>

Energy companies planning to undertake capital-intensive infrastructure projects should consider the implications of the BLM movement and tailor their planning and development to reflect the outgrowths of the current times.

Natural Gas Production from Seven Key Plays to Slide to 79.2 Bcf/d in September, EIA Says

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 8/18/20

<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/natural-gas-production-from-seven-key-plays-to-slide-to-79-2-bcf-d-in-september-eia-says/>

Why Warren Buffett is betting on energy pipelines even as climate fears, and renewables, are rising

- CNBC – 8/19/20

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/19/why-warren-buffett-is-betting-on-pipelines-even-as-climate-fears-rise.html>

Related:

- <https://www.energyandpolicy.org/warren-buffett-global-warming-dominion-energy-purchase/>

California Reveals That the Transition to Renewable Energy Isn't So Simple

- Slate – 8/19/20

<https://slate.com/technology/2020/08/california-blackouts-wind-solar-renewable-energy-grid.html>

Propelling the transition: Green hydrogen could be the final piece in a zero-emissions future

- Utility Dive – 8/17/20

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/propelling-the-transition-green-hydrogen-could-be-the-final-piece-in-a-zero/581025/>

Hydrogen can replace fossil fuels to address GHGs in generation and non-power production uses, if it is green hydrogen made with zero-GHG electricity.