



ABRA Update #290 – August 27, 2020

Issue Highlights . . .

- New Publication Schedule for ABRA Update
- MVP Asks FERC for Two More Years to Construct Pipeline
- “Reimagine Appalachia” Seeks a New Economy and Environment for Region
- *In the News* – page 3

New Publication Schedule for ABRA Update

ABRA Update is moving its publication schedule from weekly to every-other-week. There is still much to report about on issues affecting the central Allegheny Highlands area (the Allegheny-Blue Ridge region), including the Mountain Valley Pipeline, restoration activities on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, ABRA’s new Conservation Hub program. While it is not necessary to report to you weekly, when there are fast breaking developments, we’ll send you alerts. Plus, you can (and should) stay abreast of relevant news by liking our Facebook page, which has new postings daily (<https://www.facebook.com/abralliance/>).

Forthcoming issues of *Update* will be September 10 & 24, October 8 & 22 and November 5 & 19.

MVP Asks FERC for Two More Years to Construct Pipeline

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) has asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for an extension of time of “an additional two years, or until October 13, 2022, to complete construction of the Project and place the Project facilities into service.” FERC issued on [August 27 an official notice of a comment period](#) for the public to have input on the MVP request, the deadline for which is Friday, September 11 (more information below)..

The MVP request, [made in an August 25 letter](#), contends:

- The need for the MVP by potential customers still exists.
- FERC has already approved the Southgate Project to extend the MVP into North Carolina.
- The recent cancellation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) makes it “vitaly important for this Project to be completed and placed in service as soon as possible to meet the demand for national gas in these regions.”
- “Unforeseen litigation and permitting delays outside of Mountain Valley’s control” have prevented the pipeline from being in service by October 13, 2020 (when the current certificate for the project expires).
- The “Project is approximately 92% complete.”

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MVPs request, while not surprising, raises several questions, among them:

- 1) Given natural gas market realities in 2020, how can the need for the MVP still be as justified as it was when the project's certificate was granted in 2017? After all, as noted in the [August 13 issue of ABRA Update](#), the CEO of EQT Corporation, potentially the largest shipper of gas on the MVP should the project be completed, there is now – without the MVP being operational – there is an excess of pipeline capacity over production coming from the Marcellus Basin and that production is going to continue to decline, thus widening the gap of excess pipeline capacity over production.
- 2) How can the project be called 92% complete when by the company's own admission only half of the MVP route has been fully restored, with the fully restored percentage in Virginia, which is one-third of the route, being only 15%?
- 3) If 92% of the MVP route is actually complete, why would it take two years to complete the remaining 8% of the project?
- 4) Given that North Carolina has denied a Section 401 water certificate for the Southgate Project, what assurance can MVP demonstrate that the project (which is one of the cited reasons for the certificate extension request to FERC) will even be built?

ABRA members and those active in the coalition are strongly urged to file comments with FERC by 5 pm, Friday, September 11 in opposition to the extension of the certificate for the MVP. Regarding filing comments, the FERC Notice states:

The Commission strongly encourages electronic filings of comments, protests and interventions in lieu of paper using the “e-File” link at <http://www.ferc.gov>. Persons unable to file electronically may mail similar pleadings to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426. Hand delivered submissions in docketed proceedings should be delivered to Health and Human Services, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

Comment Date: 5:00 pm Eastern Time on September 11, 2020

“Reimagine Appalachia” Seeks a New Economy and Environment for Region

In recent months, a new coalition has been created that seeks to find common ground and build “a 21st century economy that’s good for workers, communities, and the environment” in Appalachia, particularly that part of the broader region that encompasses the Ohio River Valley in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky. Among the 60 groups that are listed as endorsing Reimagine Appalachia are ABRA members West Virginia Rivers Coalition and Appalachian Voices.

The goals set forth in a blueprint document of Reimagine Appalachia include working toward restoring damaged lands and waters in the region. For more about the coalition, visit its website by clicking [here](#).

In the News:

Atlantic Coast Pipeline/Mountain Valley Pipeline

Mountain Valley pipeline asks FERC for 2-year delay

- E&E Energywire – 8/26/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Mountain-Valley-pipeline-asks-FERC-for-2-year-delay-EE-Energywire-8-26-20.pdf>

Mountain Valley Pipeline LLC said while the need for the natural gas project has only increased since it was proposed in 2015, "unforeseen litigation and permitting delays" have pushed back completion of the roughly 300-mile pipeline from West Virginia through Virginia.

Related:

- <https://www.naturalgasintel.com/mvp-asks-ferc-for-extension-slams-opposition-groups-over-impacts-of-stalled-construction/>

Hurst bill aims to block pipeline worker surge in Southwest Virginia

- Virginia Mercury – 8/24/20

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/hurst-bill-aims-to-block-pipeline-worker-surge-in-southwest-virginia/>

The bill, introduced by Delegate Chris Hurst, D-Montgomery, could make it more difficult for the now-stalled Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) to complete construction.

USFS needs advisory committee members

- The Recorder – 8/27/20

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/USFS-needs-advisory-committee-members-Recorder_20200827.pdf

The U.S. Forest Service needs people to serve on the Virginia Resource Advisory Committee for the George Washington and Jefferson national forests.

Other Regional Issues

'Evolution in people's thinking': Solar arrives in W.Va.

- E&E Energywire – 8/27/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Solar-arrives-in-West-Virginia-EE-Energywire-8-27-20.pdf>

"In terms of the politics, three, four or five years ago, this bill would never have passed," said Evan Hansen, a Democratic member of the West Virginia House of Delegates.

VA's Overly-Lucrative Monopoly Business Model Wears Thin

- Natural Resources Defense Council – 8/24/20

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/walton-shepherd/vas-overly-lucrative-electric-utility-model-wearing-thin>

(Not a) quick trip down memory lane, but useful to remember and for context.

SELC op-ed: Great American Outdoors Act is monumental for the South

- Southern Environmental Law Center – 8/24/20

<https://www.southernenvironment.org/news-and-press/news-feed/selc-op-ed-great-american-outdoors-act-is-monumental-for-the-south>

Bill commits billions to overdue national park maintenance and re-focuses oil and gas revenues to protect and improve federal land for recreation and conservation.

Big Picture:

U.S. Flood Strategy Shifts to ‘Unavoidable’ Relocation of Entire Neighborhoods

- The New York Times – 8/26/20

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/26/climate/flooding-relocation-managed-retreat.html>

For years, even as seas rose and flooding worsened nationwide, policymakers stuck to the belief that relocating entire communities away from vulnerable areas was simply too extreme to consider. Now, however, that is rapidly changing amid acceptance that rebuilding over and over after successive floods makes little sense.

FERC's capacity markets limit clean energy and cost billions; it's time for Congress to act

- Utility Dive – 8/27/20

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/fercs-capacity-markets-limit-clean-energy-and-cost-billions-its-time-for/584130/>

Ridding the power sector of carbon will require investing billions in new infrastructure. But money alone won't get a clean generation fleet up and running. Broad federal and state government cooperation is required. That's not happening now.

FERC Commissioner McNamee to Step Down

- JD Supra – 8/26/20

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/ferc-commissioner-mcnamee-to-step-down-98552/>

FERC Commissioner Bernard McNamee has announced that he will officially relinquish his position on September 4, 2020.

How Trump's assault on bird law could backfire on industry

- E&E Energywire – 8/25/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/How-Trump's-assault-on-bird-law-could-backfire-on-industry-EE-Energywire-8-25-20.pdf>

A Delaware-sized oil and gas development in the Western state is hurtling toward a record of decision by the Trump administration, but it is located in a superhighway for migrating birds, making it one of several bird-related battlefronts for the Trump administration's energy dominance agenda.

Louisiana governor's goal: net zero greenhouse gases by 2050

- Associated Press – 8/19/20

<https://apnews.com/a214630999f06da3daf65ce30fd86649>

It will be interesting to see how they do this while maintaining a massive petrochemical industry.

No, Renewables Did Not Cause California's Blackouts

- Cleantecnica – 8/27/20

<https://cleantecnica.com/2020/08/27/no-renewables-did-not-cause-californias-blackouts/>

The remedy, California Independent System Operator CEO Steve Berberich told reporters, is “an overbuild of renewables and a fairly extensive deployment of batteries.” In other words, the state needs more clean power, not less.