

### Mountain Valley pipeline asks FERC for 2-year delay

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Pieces of the Mountain Valley pipeline awaiting installation in Newport, Va. The project's developer yesterday requested that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission grant a two-year extension to complete the project. Pamela King/E&E News

Developers of the Mountain Valley pipeline asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission yesterday for an additional two years to complete construction of the project and place it into service.

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 ([Energywire](#), July 31).

The [letter](#) from the developers to FERC said opposition groups that have worked to delay needed permits have "stated their intention to continue litigating these permits in the hopes of delaying or cancelling the Project, regardless of the merits."

"By their actions, these groups lengthen the time Mountain Valley relies on temporary erosion control devices and forestall the environmental benefits and protections associated with final restoration, to the detriment of landowners and the environment," the letter said.

The request for two more years, or until October 2022, to complete construction shows the impact of legal challenges on the project, which a spokesperson told E&E News last month would go into service early next year and was more than 90% done ([\*Energywire\*](#), July 8).

Natalie Cox, a spokesperson for developer EQM Midstream Partners, LP, said Mountain Valley remains committed to bringing the project into service.

Cox said work on the pipeline is 92% complete, and the line's three compressor stations are fully built. The two-year extension requested yesterday, she said, would lengthen the certificate of public convenience and necessity first issued by FERC in 2017. Such certificates are required for major natural gas and electricity infrastructure projects and reflect FERC's decision that a project is needed to serve the public.

"While the MVP team expects remaining regulatory issues to be resolved soon, and we continue to target an early 2021 in-service date, we requested a two-year extension of the certificate out of an abundance of caution and for reasons stated in the request," Cox said in an emailed statement.

In the letter, Mountain Valley said it expects to receive multiple pending permits by the end of this year, in addition to a new biological opinion and incidental take statement from the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"As it has in the past, Mountain Valley will continue Project activities to the extent permitted," the letter said.

David Sligh, conservation director at Wild Virginia, said because the project is so delayed, it's no longer the same project it was at its start. He said Mountain Valley should be required to do an analysis about whether the project was ever needed and whether the costs, "environmentally and otherwise," are in the public interest.

"Even if you place some credence in FERC's conclusion three years ago, those conclusions are way out of date and the environmental impact statement is way out of date," Sligh said, adding that Mountain Valley should at least do a supplemental environmental impact statement.

Gillian Giannetti, an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement that "Mountain Valley barely squeaked through FERC the first time and has been a financially volatile and environmentally destructive project ever since, racking up millions in penalties already."

However, Alex Oehler, interim president and CEO of the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, said the pipeline's capacity is fully subscribed, and homeowners and businesses are relying on the project's completion to meet their energy needs.

"This infrastructure would have been serving customers long ago if not for opponents' efforts to use the courts to stop work on it," Oehler said in a statement.