



## ABRA Update #298 – December 17, 2020

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### ABRA End of the Year Report for 2020

**WE WON!** Those two words best summarize the 2020 accomplishments of the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance. Our coalition's 6+ year effort to stop the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was an achievement for which the dozens of member organizations and thousands of volunteers working within the ABRA umbrella can proudly claim credit. The ABRA Board and staff generously thank all of you for your astounding efforts.

However, ABRA's work is not done. As set forth in the [October 23 issue of ABRA Update](#), the coalition will continue to exist to promote and protect the environmental integrity of the Central Appalachian Highlands. In that spirit, we are pursuing the following initiatives:

1. Develop and implement the Conservation Hub, a program designed to enhance the capabilities of environmental, conservation and citizen groups to better assess the impacts of projects in the greater Central Appalachian Highlands region, facilitate public participation and to help assure that the overall environmental integrity of the region is maintained. For more on the Conservation Hub, click [here](#).
2. Work to assure that there is a responsible and thorough restoration of the land disturbance that occurred along the ACP route and a satisfactory resolution of outstanding easements on private property.
3. Assist allies who are fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline, another unneeded pipeline project that is ill-suited to being built through the Appalachian Mountains.
4. The overall mission of ABRA is to protect and promote the environmental integrity of the Central Appalachian Highlands. We will continue to be vigilant for and become engaged when necessary in countering public policies or private development proposals that could negatively impact the ecology of this unique area of the Central Allegheny Highlands.

[ABRA's Board of Directors](#) will review early in 2021 our current initiatives and make plans for the coalition's future. A survey of a cross-section of ABRA members (organizations and individuals within those organizations) will be conducted in early January to elicit views on which programs, activities and services provided by ABRA they consider to be the most important. All of those on the ABRA mailing list are invited also to provide input for this planning process. Please forward your views to [lew@abralliance.org](mailto:lew@abralliance.org) by January 5.

Finally, as ABRA begins a new year, funding to assure the successful pursuit of the aforementioned initiatives has become decidedly more challenging. In addition to the financial support we have received from several foundations, contributions from ABRA organizations and involved individuals have been a vital for our past successes. More than ever, we need renewed support and urge all of you who value the work that ABRA has been and will be doing to make an end-of-the-year donation. To do so, click [here](#). We thank you in advance.

### **HOLIDAY GREETINGS!**

The next issue of *ABRA Update* will be January 7, 2020

## Talk About Being Out of Touch with the News!

[The November 19 “Presidents Update” blog](#) by the President and CEO of the Hampton Roads Chamber Commerce, Bryan Stephens, celebrates the “recent common-sense ruling from the Supreme Court of the United States” in permitting the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to cross underneath the Appalachian Trail. Mr. Stephens goes on to tout the economic advantages that will be enjoyed by the Hampton Roads region when the ACP is operational. He concludes with the fowling plea to his reads: “Spread the Word.”

Perhaps Mr. Stephens should be added to the *ABRA Update* mailing list.

## ACP Restoration Plans Still Somewhere on the Drawing Board

The restoration plans for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, [requested on October 27](#) by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and due by December 26, are still – as of this writing – somewhere in the works. Plans for what to do about the unfinished Supply Header Project, a proposed natural gas pipeline in West Virginia (33.6 miles) and Pennsylvania (3.9 miles) that would have connected existing natural gas pipelines in Ohio and Pennsylvania with the ACP, [were filed with FERC on November 20](#).

FERC’s October 27 request specifically included the following request to be included in the ACP plan regarding concerns of affected landowners:

Discussion of the status of Atlantic’s/DETI’s consultation with landowners on matters pertaining to project disposition and restoration activities on their property, as applicable, including: a. preferences regarding treatment of pipeline segments that have already been installed (i.e., pipeline to be left in place or removed); b. preferences for removal of felled trees that have not been cleared; and c. preferences on how disturbed areas would be restored, depending on their land use type (e.g., forest, agricultural, etc.).

The Southern Environmental Law Center and many of those who submitted comments to FERC on the DETI July 10 request urged that the issue of landowner easements be included in the restoration plan.

ABRA has been in touch with responsible FERC staff regarding how the agency will proceed once the plan is submitted. In a communication to ABRA earlier this week, we were informed that FERC has not yet decided whether public comments will be permitted on the submitted restoration plan, nor has it been determined whether a final decision on the plan will be made by staff or by the Commissioners.

*ABRA Update* readers will be sent a special alert when the ACP restoration plan is filed with a link to the document.

## *In the News:* Regional Issues

### Forest Service supports Mountain Valley Pipeline route through Jefferson National Forest

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 12/11/20  
[https://www.wvgazettemail.com/news/energy\\_and\\_environment/forest-service-supports-mountain-valley-pipeline-route-through-jefferson-national-forest/article\\_3c12d48f-7f77-50e3-b6a7-12be4dc898ba.html](https://www.wvgazettemail.com/news/energy_and_environment/forest-service-supports-mountain-valley-pipeline-route-through-jefferson-national-forest/article_3c12d48f-7f77-50e3-b6a7-12be4dc898ba.html)
- Related:  
- <https://appvoices.org/2020/12/11/trump-administration-rams-through-final-forest-service-analysis-of-controversial-mountain-valley-pipeline>

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## DEQ ignores its duties, again

- Virginia Mercury – 12/8/20

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/12/08/deq-ignores-its-duties-again>

Despite the fact that DEQ has a legal obligation to ensure our water quality standards are enforced on all regulated projects, the department has admitted that it hasn't done so.

## Panel again hears environmental concerns about Mountain Valley Pipeline

- The Roanoke Times – 12/9/20

[https://roanoke.com/news/local/panel-again-hears-environmental-concerns-about-mountain-valley-pipeline/article\\_72b92e96-3a7e-11eb-8f21-ab99aa69ae64.html](https://roanoke.com/news/local/panel-again-hears-environmental-concerns-about-mountain-valley-pipeline/article_72b92e96-3a7e-11eb-8f21-ab99aa69ae64.html)

Citizen groups highlight erosion and sediment failures that continue to plague the project.

## Federal regulators are rewriting environmental rules so a massive pipeline can be built across West Virginia

- Mountain State Spotlight – 12/8/20

<https://mountainstatespotlight.org/2020/12/08/federal-regulators-are-rewriting-environmental-rules-so-a-massive-pipeline-can-be-built-across-west-virginia>

After their most recent court loss, West Virginia officials are once again rewriting their restrictions to help pave the way for Mountain Valley Pipeline to qualify for Nationwide Permit 12's streamlined permitting process.

## Ted Boettner: Embracing clean energy vital to WV's future

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 12/5/20

[https://www.wvgazettemail.com/opinion/op\\_ed\\_commentaries/ted-boettner-embracing-clean-energy-vital-to-wvs-future/article\\_524c48ef-ed5f-5d73-a23c-fe3d282d4325.html](https://www.wvgazettemail.com/opinion/op_ed_commentaries/ted-boettner-embracing-clean-energy-vital-to-wvs-future/article_524c48ef-ed5f-5d73-a23c-fe3d282d4325.html)

Coal isn't coming back. Gas isn't a bridge to a golden future full of jobs, as it has been sold. WV needs to get on board with the future and determine how it will fit into the new economy that is surely coming.

## Naval power plant proposal tests Virginia on environmental justice

- Bay Journal – 12/9/20

[https://www.bayjournal.com/news/energy/naval-power-plant-proposal-tests-virginia-on-environmental-justice/article\\_8b8db992-3a5a-11eb-9a48-d78ac19efa91.html](https://www.bayjournal.com/news/energy/naval-power-plant-proposal-tests-virginia-on-environmental-justice/article_8b8db992-3a5a-11eb-9a48-d78ac19efa91.html)

The new plant would emit far less pollution than the shipyard's current energy source, an incinerator that handles much of the region's trash. Whether that plant will continue operating after the Navy pulls out is unclear.

## Despite setbacks for new natural gas projects, companies push forward with plans

- Virginia Mercury – 12/16/20

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/12/16/despite-setbacks-for-new-natural-gas-projects-companies-push-forward-with-plans>

## Reaching Net Zero Emissions In Virginia Could Increase State GDP More Than \$3.5 Billion Per Year

- Forbes – 12/9/20

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/energyinnovation/2020/12/09/reaching-net-zero-emissions-in-virginia-could-increase-state-gdp-more-than-35-billion-per-year/?sh=5c218c526711>

## Dominion takes 'monumental step' on offshore wind

- E&E Energywire – 12/17/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Dominion-takes-monumental-step-on-offshore-wind-EE-Energywire-12-17-20.pdf>

Dominion Energy Inc. yesterday began construction on a \$500 million marine installation vessel that could be pivotal to developing the U.S. offshore wind market, analysts say.

## Task force recommends new environmental justice positions at four key state agencies

- NC Policy watch – 12/4/20

<http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2020/12/04/task-force-recommends-new-environmental-justice-positions-at-four-key-state-agencies/>

## Big Picture:

### How Russia Wins the Climate Crisis

- The New York Times - 12/16/20

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/16/magazine/russia-climate-migration-crisis.html>

Russia, our once and future(?) rival, may benefit greatly from climate-related human and environmental migrations.

### FERC draws fire over pipeline policy

- E&E Energywire – 12/20/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FERC-draws-fire-over-pipeline-policy-EE-Energywire-12-10-20.pdf>

### Biden picks Michael Regan to lead EPA

- E&E Greenwire – 12/17/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Biden-picks-Michael-Regan-to-lead-EPA-EE-Greenwire-12-17-20.pdf>

President-elect Joe Biden has selected Michael Regan, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, as his nominee for EPA administrator, four sources tell E&E News. Regan, 44, has served at the state environmental agency since 2017 and previously worked at EPA. If confirmed, Regan would be the first Black man to lead the agency.

### Biden taps N.M. Rep. Deb Haaland for Interior secretary

- E&E News – 12/17/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Biden-taps-N.M.-Rep.-Deb-Haaland-for-Interior-secretary-EE-News-12-17-20.pdf>

If confirmed by the Senate, the 60-year-old avowedly progressive lawmaker will be the first Native American to head the sprawling department whose responsibilities range from tribal affairs to the management of some 500 million acres of public land.

### LNG as bad for climate as coal over next 20 years —report

- E&E Energywire - 12/8/20

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/LNG-as-bad-for-climate-as-coal-over-next-20-years-EE-Energywire-12-8-20.pdf>

### Princeton Study Charts a \$2.5T Pathway to a Net-Zero Carbon US

- Greentech Media – 12/17/20

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/princeton-study-charts-a-2.5t-pathway-to-a-net-zero-carbon-u.s>

The report forecasts massive renewables investments and radical shifts in transport, heating and energy, as well as a relatively slight increase in energy costs.