



## ABRA Update #307 – April 29, 2021

### Issue Highlights . . .

- ACP restoration: what happens next and by when?
- Over 60 groups ask Biden Administration to suspend MVP permits
- Participants being sought for survey on pipeline impacts
- New study promotes gas pipelines to meet climate change goals
- *In the News* – page 2

### ACP restoration: what happens next and by when?

Since the April 16 deadline for filing public comments with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on the proposed route restoration for the cancelled Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and the related Supply Header Project (SHP), ABRA has been in touch with officials at the agency to learn what the next steps are in the review of the proposed plan (click [here](#) the April 20 *ABRA Update* review of some of the comments filed).

The March 2 scoping Notice by FERC inviting comments on the proposed ACP restoration plan represents a re-initiation of the review process required by the National Environmental Protection Act. FERC has told ABRA that the agency’s “announcement of the exact form that will take (for example, an environmental assessment or supplemental environmental impact statement) will be announced via another issued Notice in the near future. The process moving forward and the resulting environmental document will include FERC staff’s review and conclusions (and recommendations) concerning the ACP/SHP plans, and will take into consideration the comments received during the scoping period.” The agency further told ABRA that it can’t provide an “exact timeline right now, but our process should clear up a bit once we issue our next Notice.”

### Over 60 groups ask Biden Administration to suspend MVP permits

A letter has been sent to top officials in the Biden Administration by over 60 conservation groups asking for a review of permits for the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) in light of [President Biden’s Executive Order #13990, “Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis,”](#) that was issued January 20, 2021. The letter points out that “MVP is inconsistent with several of the national objectives outlined in the Order, including the use of science in decision making, protecting our environment, ensuring access to clean air and water, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” Continuing, the letter states:

MVP’s construction impacts to date have already caused irreparable harm to landscapes and clean water—West Virginia and Virginia have assessed MVP more than \$2 million in penalties for more than 350 environmental violations, mostly related to improper erosion control and stormwater management, and there are allegations of even more. Yet there is much more high-risk construction still planned. MVP still has to construct

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several hundred waterbody crossings. Not one of MVP's nine "spreads" is 100% complete; only 51.3% of the entire route is completed to final restoration. MVP's route includes more than 225 miles of high landslide risk—more miles than any other approved gas pipeline, comprising more than 74% of the route. The remaining sections to be constructed include some of the steepest slopes and extensive karst topography, raising significant concerns that more environmental damage will occur, destroying private property along the way when there is no public benefit.

Recipients of the letter were the Secretary of the Interior, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Secretary of Agriculture, Acting Secretary of the Army, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality and the National Climate Advisor to the President. ABRA and several of its member organizations are among the signatories.

For a copy of the letter and list of signatories, click [here](#).

## **Participants being sought for survey on pipeline impacts**

Virginia Tech University and the Niskanen Center, a Washington, DC-based think tank that has been involved in pipeline issues, are partnering on a survey to gather information about pipeline-affected residents' experiences with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The results of the survey will be used in a report submitted to FERC as part of the agency's consideration of public input on its new Office of Public Participation. Anyone who was directly or indirectly affected by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline or the Mountain Valley Pipeline projects, you are invited to consider participating in the survey. For more information on participating, click [here](#).

## **New study promotes gas pipelines to meet climate change goals**

A new study released April 25 by the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University argues in favor of natural gas pipelines making a positive contribution toward reducing climate change.

The study states:

The Biden administration's move to bring the United States back into the Paris Agreement and lower greenhouse gas emissions to address climate change will, if carried through, lead to a reduction in fossil fuel consumption. Cutting back on the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas will be critical to transitioning the country to the lower-carbon energy system it needs to achieve decarbonization targets. But while it may seem counterintuitive, investing more in the domestic natural gas pipeline network could help the US reach net-zero emission goals more quickly and cheaply. Fortifying and upgrading the system could prepare the existing infrastructure to transport zero-carbon fuels as they become available and, in the meantime, reduce harmful methane leaks from natural gas.

For a copy of the 64-page study, *Investing in the US Natural Gas Pipeline System to Support Net-Zero Targets*, click [here](#). An *E&E Energywire* article discussing the study is available [here](#).

## ***In the News:***

### **Regional Issues**

#### **Virginia DEQ announces new Environmental Justice Office**

- Virginia Mercury – 4/22/21

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/virginia-deq-announces-new-environmental-justice-office/>

The new office “is the result of DEQ’s efforts to address environmental justice issues across the entirety of the agency’s programs,” said DEQ Director David Paylor in a news release from the agency.

#### **Virginia landowners urge FERC to require cancelled Atlantic Coast Pipeline to relinquish easements**

- Virginia Mercury – 4/21/21

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/04/21/virginia-landowners-urge-ferc-to-require-cancelled-atlantic-coast-pipeline-to-relinquish-easements/>

Related:

- [https://dailyprogress.com/opinion/editorial/opinion-editorial-owners-have-right-to-land-use/article\\_5485817c-a3a1-11eb-b17f-of424628808d.html](https://dailyprogress.com/opinion/editorial/opinion-editorial-owners-have-right-to-land-use/article_5485817c-a3a1-11eb-b17f-of424628808d.html)

#### **Pipeline Run; MVP Opponents Continue the Protests**

- WVTF Virginia’s Public Radio – 4/28/21

<https://www.wvtf.org/post/pipeline-run-mvp-opponents-continue-protests#stream/o>

Related:

- <https://gearjunkie.com/news/mountain-valley-pipeline-protest-run>

#### **62 groups urge Biden admin to scrap Mountain Valley permits**

- E&E Energywire – 4/22/21

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/62-groups-urge-Biden-admin-to-scrap-Mountain-Valley-permits-EE-Energywire-4-22-21.pdf>

#### **Protester who blocked pipeline work in Giles County is charged, jailed**

- The Roanoke Times – 4/20/21

[https://roanoke.com/news/local/protester-blocks-pipeline-work-in-giles-county/article\\_cad438fc-a1d3-11eb-977c-8b8440867a9e.html](https://roanoke.com/news/local/protester-blocks-pipeline-work-in-giles-county/article_cad438fc-a1d3-11eb-977c-8b8440867a9e.html)

It was the latest in a series of human blockades of the natural gas pipeline since construction began in 2018.

#### **Hileman: DEQ should reject MVP's water-crossing application**

- The Roanoke Times – 4/17/21

[https://roanoke.com/opinion/columnists/hileman-deq-should-reject-mvps-water-crossing-application/article\\_d948d442-97e7-11eb-9b1f-2b5830af6abb.html](https://roanoke.com/opinion/columnists/hileman-deq-should-reject-mvps-water-crossing-application/article_d948d442-97e7-11eb-9b1f-2b5830af6abb.html)

#### **As it takes up another contentious permit, air board wrestles with public engagement**

- Virginia Mercury – 4/29/21

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/04/29/as-it-takes-up-another-contentious-permit-air-board-wrestles-with-public-engagement/>

Related:

- <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/04/27/groups-ask-virginia-environmental-officials-to-reopen-chickahominy-power-permit/>

## **New superintendent named for Blue Ridge Parkway**

- E&E News – 4/19/ 21

[https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/New-superintendent-named-for-Blue-Ridge-Parkway-EE-News\\_20210419.pdf](https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/New-superintendent-named-for-Blue-Ridge-Parkway-EE-News_20210419.pdf)

## **Big Picture:**

### **Senate votes to restore Obama-era regulation of methane, a climate-warming gas**

- CNBC – 4/28

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/04/28/senate-restores-obama-era-regulation-of-methane-emissions.html>

The 52-42 vote sets up the first official reinstatement of one of more than 100 climate regulations dismantled by the Trump administration.

### **BIDEN'S FIRST 100 DAYS: New FERC chair making changes 'at warp speed'**

- S&P Global – 4/29/21

<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/042921-bidens-first-100-days-new-ferc-chair-making-changes-at-warp-speed>

US President Joe Biden's first 100 days have brought a shift at a key independent regulator with oversight over energy markets and interstate gas pipelines, thrusting a Democrat with a strong interest in climate into a leadership position.

### **Supreme Court questions pipeline's land grab**

- E&E Energywire – 4/29/21

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Supreme-Court-questions-pipelines-land-grab-EE-Energywire-4-29-21.pdf>

The Supreme Court yesterday appeared sympathetic to New Jersey's arguments that it should be able to block a pipeline company's access to state-owned land but questioned the ripple effects of a ruling in the Garden State's favor on the natural gas industry.

### **Jordan Cove LNG terminal on ice after permit denials**

- E&E News – 4/23/21

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Jordan-Cove-LNG-terminal-on-ice-after-permit-denials-EE-News-4-23-21.pdf>

"I think this means that [the Jordan Cove export project] is finally reading the writing on the wall," said David Bookbinder, chief counsel at the Niskanen Center, who is representing landowners opposing the Pacific Connector natural gas pipeline.

### **Cities confront climate challenge: How to move from gas to electricity?**

- PBS News Hour – 4/22/21

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/cities-confront-climate-challenge-how-to-move-from-gas-to-electricity>

Of the country's 120 million households, about 58 percent are heated primarily with natural gas. To zero out carbon emissions from those homes, all of their furnaces, water heaters, and other appliances will have to be fueled with "green molecules" (such as biogas, hydrogen, and synthetic gases) instead of fossil gas, or swapped out for heat pumps and other devices powered by renewable electricity.

### **Climate tipping points may have been reached already, experts say**

- CBS News - 4/26/21

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-change-tipping-points-amazon-rainforest-antarctic-ice-gulf-stream/>

## **Eminent domain opens doors for fossil fuels — could it do the same for renewable energy?**

- Grist — 4/27/21

<https://grist.org/energy/eminant-domain-opens-doors-for-fossil-fuels-could-it-do-the-same-for-renewable-energy/>

Some legal experts see flaws in current eminent domain law that they say need to be rectified for it to be as effective as possible in the clean energy transition.

## **The U.S. Will Need a Lot of Land for a Zero-Carbon Economy**

- Bloomberg Green — 4/29/21

<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2021-energy-land-use-economy/>

Truth. However, solar and wind don't permanently degrade that land as fossil fuel extraction so often does. Try organic farming near [Fort McMurry](#) in the next 500 years! (look around)