



ABRA Update #324 – January 13, 2022

Issue Highlights . . .

- National Forest Integrity Project Launched by ABRA
- Appeals on MVP water certification filed with Fourth Circuit
- WV Highlands Conservancy files objection with Forest Service
- MVP appeals Virginia Air Board vote on compressor station permit
- *In the News* – page 3

National Forest Integrity Project Launched by ABRA

ABRA has unveiled the first phase of its National Forest Integrity Project (NFIP). The project, part of ABRA's Conservation Hub, is a monitoring program created to track proposed and ongoing projects in the three National Forests that are located within the Central Appalachian Highlands (Monongahela in West Virginia and George Washington and Jefferson in Virginia).

The NFIP will support informed review of proposed Forest Service land and water management projects, as well as other public and private-use projects in the National Forests. The link to the NFIP is <https://nfip-abra.hub.arcgis.com>.

The NFIP is believed to be the first NFS monitoring project of its kind in the nation.

The first phase of the NFIP covers ongoing projects within the Monongahela National Forest. This Spring, projects in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests will be added to the NFIP.

Projects within the National Forests are important to the lands and communities surrounding them due to the number of streams and rivers that flow out of and through them. The health of the National Forests and the vegetation and wildlife within them are critical to the overall ecological balance of the Central Appalachian Highlands.

The importance of closely monitoring National Forest projects is underscored by an objection filed in January with the Eastern Region office of the U.S. Forest Service (NFS) concerning the environmental impact analysis NFS conducted for the Greenbrier Southeast project in Pocahontas County, West Virginia (see story, below, on Page 2)

Appeals on MVP water certification filed with Fourth Circuit

The December decisions by Virginia and West Virginia to grant water certificates to the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) have been appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Appalachian Mountain Advocates (Appalmad) filed with the Fourth Circuit on behalf of Sierra Club and five other conservation groups a petition for review of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's December 30 approval of a permit

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for the MVP under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. A copy of the groups' January 3 filing is available [here](#).

Appalmad and the Southern Environmental Law Center filed on January 4 with the Fourth Circuit a petition for review of the December 20 issuance of a 401 certificate for MVP by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, pursuant to a December 14 vote by the Virginia State Water Control Board (click [here](#) for background). A copy of the petition – filed on behalf of Sierra Club and eight other conservation groups, is [here](#).

WV Highlands Conservancy files objection with Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service's (NFS) environmental assessment of one of its projects in the Monongahela National Forest is the subject of a strong objection filed January 3 by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy (WVHC).

The Greenbrier Southeast project in the Monongahela National Forest, located in Pocahontas County, WV, according to the NFS, "seeks to improve forest stand health and composition to improve future wildlife habitat and to provide for future commercial timber sales and economic projects."

In its filed objection, WVHC stated:

This objection is made necessary by significant deficiencies in the Final Environmental Assessment for the project. These deficiencies leave us in doubt about whether sensitive resources would be protected adequately, such that—without additional analyses and protections—the impacts of the GSE project are likely to be significant. The deficiencies fall into two broad categories:

- (1) Inattention to analysis requirements related to the endangered candy darter and its designated critical habitat.
- (2) Unsupported conclusions concerning project effects and incomplete development of proposed mitigations.

For a copy of the WVHC objection letter, click [here](#).

MVP appeals Virginia Air Board vote on compressor station permit

Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC (MVP) on December 31 filed an appeal with the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals over the Virginia Air Pollution Control Board's December 3 denial of a permit for the Lambert Compressor Station, a project associated with the Southgate Extension of the MVP, which would run from the MVP in Pittsylvania County, Virginia into North Carolina. For background on the Air Board decision, click [here](#). For a copy of the MVP's petition of review, click [here](#).

In the News:

Regional Issues

MVP Still Targeting Summer 2022 Start-Up Despite Latest Lawsuit

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 1/6/22
<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/mvp-still-targeting-summer-2022-start-up-despite-latest-lawsuit/>
- Related:
- https://roanoke.com/news/local/legal-fights-continue-over-the-mountain-valley-pipeline/article_fdc651e0-700f-11ec-871b-0f6553a197ef.html

Trump EPA head, coal lobbyist tapped as Virginia’s environmental chief

- Virginia Mercury – 1/6/22
<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/01/05/trump-epa-head-coal-lobbyist-tapped-as-virginias-environmental-chief>
- Related:
- <https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Glenn-Youngkin-is-no-moderate-on-the-environment-Washington-Post-editorial-1-9-21.pdf>

Top Northam administration officials say state should not forbid new fossil fuel plants

- Virginia Mercury – 1/6/22
<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/01/06/top-northam-administration-officials-say-state-should-not-forbid-new-fossil-fuel-plants>
- Secretaries say Virginia can meet ambitious decarbonization goals without a ban, and may be able to do so at lower cost.

Restoring Lands Impacted by Scuttled Appalachian Natural Gas Pipelines to Cause Minimal Impacts, FERC Affirms

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 12/27/21
<https://www.naturalgasintel.com/restoring-lands-impacted-by-scuttled-appalachian-natural-gas-pipelines-to-cause-minimal-impacts-ferc-affirms/>

SCC throws roadblock at proposed Central Virginia pipeline project

- Augusta Free Press – 12/24/21
<https://augustafreepress.com/scc-throws-roadblock-at-proposed-central-virginia-pipeline-project/>
- The State Corporation Commission has determined that Chickahominy Pipeline LLC is a public utility, which means SCC approval is necessary before the company can construct and operate an 83-mile natural gas transmission line across several Central Virginia counties.

Gold mining study begins as discoveries continue in Virginia

- Virginia Mercury – 12/21/21
<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/12/21/gold-mining-study-begins-as-discoveries-continue-in-virginia>
- More gold exploration in Buckingham, copper and zinc “base metals” project in Pittsylvania County.

How big can the offshore wind industry be in Hampton Roads? Leaders ‘trying to create it from scratch.’

- The Virginian-Pilot – 12/28/21

<https://www.pilotonline.com/business/vp-nw-fz21-wind-energy-fund-1224-20211228-jlmngb3qufh3zlpmwagwlcucq-story.html>

Solar boosters pool money and know-how to put panels on neighbors’ homes

- Energy News Network – 1/3/22

<https://energynews.us/2022/01/03/solar-boosters-pool-money-and-know-how-to-put-panels-on-neighbors-homes/>

A solar “barn raising” model pioneered this spring in a Shenandoah Valley community is about to spread across the state through a partnership with more than a dozen local Habitat for Humanity affiliates.

Big Picture:

2021 was the year clean energy finally faced its mining problem

- The Verge – 12/29/21

<https://www.theverge.com/22858437/2021-mining-critical-minerals-clean-energy-renewables-climate-change>

A clean energy revolution will hinge on getting mining right

Related:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/27/us/mining-clean-energy-antimony-tribes.html>

What to watch at DOE, FERC, Interior in 2022

- E&E Energywire – 1/5/22

<https://www.eenews.net/articles/what-to-watch-at-doe-ferc-interior-in-2022/>

One year after President Biden took office, federal agencies are facing pressure to carry out his administration’s energy and climate policies while navigating political calculations ahead of critical midterm elections.

Clean Energy on FERC’s Agenda as Agency Eyes Utility Grid Powers

- Bloomberg Law – 12/23/21

<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/clean-energy-on-fercs-agenda-as-agency-eyes-utility-grid-powers>

It doesn’t matter how cheap solar and wind get if the energy cannot leave the property where it is generated. Long-haul transmission must be prioritized if a clean energy future is to be realized.

What to expect from the world's sixth mass extinction

- DW – 1/11/22

<https://www.dw.com/en/what-to-expect-from-the-worlds-sixth-mass-extinction/a-60360245>

It ain’t pretty. But the fat lady hasn’t sung quite yet. (She is warming up though!)

Time is running out. Here’s how the climate movement can level up.

- Vox – 1/10/22

<https://www.vox.com/22846697/climate-change-activism-joe-manchin-protest-build-back-better-biden>

The high-risk, high-reward stakes of building a more radical movement.

It's Time to Hold Law Firms Accountable for Their Role in Climate Change

- The Nation – 1/12/22

<https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/law-firms-climate-change/>

Students are boycotting Gibson Dunn for representing the corporation behind the Dakota Access Pipeline, undermining the Indian Child Welfare Act, and more. That firm is just the (very visible) tip of the iceberg.

Interested in protecting old-growth forests? Here are some steps you can take.

- The Washington Post – 1/7/22

<https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Protecting-old-growth-forests-Washington-Post-1-7-21.pdf>

Saving a single 500-year-old tree from logging might not be feasible. But experts have other ideas.

Burgeoning US offshore wind industry will hit important milestones in 2022

- S&P Global – 12/27/21

<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/energy-transition/122721-feature-burgeoning-us-offshore-wind-industry-will-hit-important-milestones-in-2022>

With more than 30 GW of offshore wind power capacity under development along the US East Coast, power market participants are paying close attention to when these projects will begin delivering power into the regional markets, with several milestones expected in 2022.

Related:

- <https://cleantechnica.com/2022/01/12/how-to-grow-u-s-offshore-wind-power/>