

News Advance/Nelson County Times

Dominion identifies alternative routes for planned Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- **Rachael Smith**
- **Feb 23, 2015**

Dominion Resources has identified new potential alternate routes for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline that potentially could change the course of the pipeline through Nelson County.

If approved and built, the pipeline would transport natural gas roughly 550 miles from West Virginia southward through Nelson County and into North Carolina.

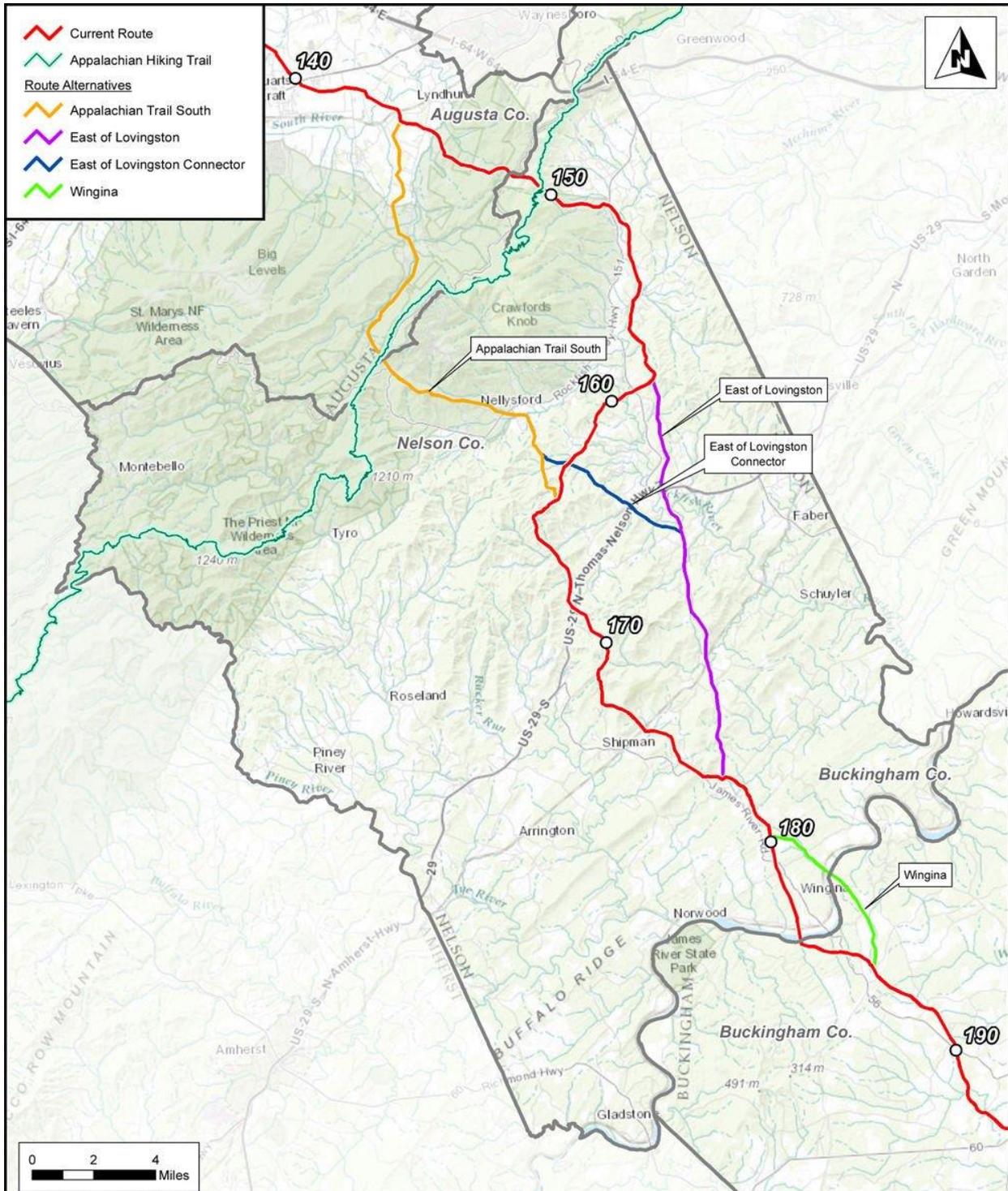
Dominion Resources Director of Communications Jim Norvelle said letters were sent Monday to landowners along the alternate routes seeking permission to survey.

“Surveys are the only way to understand fully the potential benefits and constraints of these potential alternatives,” he said.

On March 5 from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Dominion will host an informational open house on the alternate routes at Nelson County High School.

The alternate routes are in addition to the proposed route, Norvelle said.

“These alternatives are a natural part of the routing process,” he said.



This map shows the alternate Atlantic Coast Pipeline routes recently confirmed by Dominion.

After conversations with local, state and federal officials, and landowners, Dominion has developed these potential alternate routes.

“It is consistent with our promise to work with all parties to find the best route with the least impacts to people, the environment, and historic and cultural resources,” he said.

“It also is consistent with what we have done elsewhere along the proposed route.”

The four alternates include the “Appalachian Trail South,” “East of Lovington,” “East of Lovington Connector,” and “Wingina” routes.

Norvelle said the Atlantic Coast Pipeline must cross the Appalachian Trail because it continues from West Virginia through Virginia and into North Carolina.

“Many other natural gas pipelines, electric transmission lines and other infrastructure projects already cross the trail,” he said. “Our proposed route has a constructible crossing that we believe minimizes any potential impact on the trail and its surrounding area.”

» Construction for the “Appalachian Trail South” alternative would cross several more roads, but would be 1.5 miles shorter and cross about 10 fewer bodies of water than the proposed route, Norvelle said.

“Surveying this alternate route would affect 155 new tracts of land; 95 in Augusta and 60 in Nelson,” he said.

Dominion has determined that on this route, Horizontal Directional Drill construction could be implemented to install the pipeline well below both the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Parkway with no tree removal and no long-term visual impacts, Norvelle said.

» The “East of Lovington” route would avoid areas identified by The Nature Conservancy as critical habitat in Davis Creek, an area hit the hardest by Hurricane Camille in 1969.

“Many Nelson County landowners and residents have asked us to consider avoiding the areas damaged by Hurricane Camille in planning the ACP route,” Norvelle said. “This alternate route would straighten out the proposed route east of Lovingston, the Nelson County seat, and is about five miles shorter than the proposed route. Ninety-five new tracts of land would be affected.”

» The “East of Lovingston Connector” would be about 5.4 miles long and would affect 15 new tracts of land. If the “Appalachian Trail South” route is chosen, the pipeline would have to rejoin with the original proposed route or connect with the “East of Lovingston” route, Norvelle said.

» The “Wingina” route would move the original proposed route to avoid the Norwood-Wingina Historic District and would shorten the length of the route through Nelson by one mile and cross the James River under a narrower section, about three miles northeast of the proposed route. This route would affect 16 new tracts of land and would require a slight route variation in Buckingham County.

Norvelle said after conversations with landowners and community leaders along the proposed route, Dominion learned that the Virginia State Review Board and the Department of Historic Resources has recommended the Norwood-Wingina District to be eligible for nomination to the national and state historic registers.

“Interstate natural gas pipelines make every effort to avoid historic districts where possible,” Norvelle said.

Formal nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is expected in March this year. Norvelle said Dominion has yet to decide on which route will be submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which ultimately will approve or deny the project.

Dominion has said it plans to submit its final FERC application this summer.

Some local opponents of the pipeline aren't impressed with news of the alternate routes. Joanna Salidis, of Friends of Nelson, said Dominion is only "threatening" more property owners and landscapes.

"The fact that Dominion has now gone on record with a handful of routes doesn't solve any of their problems," Salidis said in a news release. "These will impact an entirely new list of landowners, resulting in increased property owner resistance and lawsuits. Dominion continues to ignore all requests to drop the proposal or to use existing pipeline easement infrastructure instead of depending solely on eminent domain to achieve its business goals."

However, David Hight, of Roseland, feels landowners should allow surveyors to access their land.

"Having alternatives is a sound engineering practice," he said. "That is why landowners denying access for survey is so dumb, how else can problems be identified?"

Before Dominion can submit a final route, surveyors will need to study and analyze the alternates as well as complete survey work on the current proposed route.

Norvelle said throughout the development of the project, Dominion's construction, engineering and environmental teams have reviewed and evaluated more than 3,000 miles of route variations.

The first steps in evaluating route alternatives are to identify and try to avoid potential constraints and to conduct surveys and environmental surveys along the potential alternative route corridor, Norvelle said.

"In almost all cases, evaluation of alternate routes is an exercise of balancing competing constraints," he said. "Identifying the least impactful route is always the objective. And, building and operating safely is our paramount concern."