

The Daily Progress

Wintergreen Resort announces opposition to pipeline

- BY RACHAEL SMITH Nelson County Times
- Jun 4, 2015

LYNCHBURG — Wintergreen Resort officially announced its opposition to the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline on Memorial Day at a meeting attended by more than 550 Wintergreen property owners and members.

Wintergreen General Manager Hank Theiss said the purpose of the meeting was to bring people together to understand the resort's position and to provide an opportunity for information of the path and its likely impacts.

Of the 2,700 properties at Wintergreen, only about 150 are full-time residents. Many other owners live in places like Washington, D.C., and Richmond.

Theiss decided to hold the meeting over Memorial Day weekend, knowing attendance would be higher than usual.

“There is an opportunity to be involved or engaged in trying to influence Dominion in taking a more responsible route or using existing rights of way,” he said.

Theiss, along with Charlotte Rea with the anti-pipeline All Pain, No Gain campaign, Doug Coleman, director of the Wintergreen Nature

Foundation, and Jon Ansell, a Wintergreen property owner, spoke to the crowd about the background of the pipeline, the environmental and real estate impacts as well as economic impacts to the resort.

“We in no way are trying to suggest that we speak for the members or property owners,” Theiss said. “We understand the value of the pipeline and appreciate energy dependence and are supportive of that, but feel it’s not a reasonable path.”

Frank Mack, a Dominion Resources spokesman, said the company will continue to look for additional opportunities to co-locate the pipeline along existing rights of way where allowed.

“The concerns of Wintergreen regarding the short-term impact of any construction are important to the ACP project team,” he said. “One recent route change as a result of listening is that we are not planning to cross under the Wintergreen entrance road. We will go farther south and bore safely under Beech Grove Road [Virginia 664]. While we may use flag men at times, we do not expect road closures or activities that would impede access to Wintergreen for its members, guests or emergency vehicles.”

Theiss said Nelson County is an exiting place for tourism and has “pristine” environmental assets.

Many of those who do not live full time on the mountain had heard about the pipeline project in the news but the potential impact to their own lives did not strike home until the meeting, Theiss said.

“We received many ‘thank you’s’ for organizing the meeting,” he said. “I think the community, the residents and businesses are very much aligned with what we would like to see happen.”

Theiss described the “brand” of Wintergreen to be part of the amazing natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

“To have a pipeline come through is not consistent with that,” he said.

Theiss also worries that as demand develops for natural gas, Dominion or other gas companies will try to put in two, three or four more pipelines to connect with the ACP.

“It would be more damaging and could cause delays in possible development in Wintergreen,” he said.

Theiss gave credit to the “All Pain, No Gain” group, saying they have brought the issue to the forefront.

“We need to be collaborating with the various groups and look to have contacts with political leaders as well as Dominion,” he said.