



ABRA Update #128 – May 4, 2017

Comment Opportunities Expanded in WV for ACP Water Quality Certificate

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has said it will hold public hearings on the application of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to obtain a certificate from the state as required by Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The DEP had originally set May 8 as a comment deadline, but last week it stated in emails to several ABRA members that one or more public hearings will be held, meaning that the deadline for written comments to be filed will be extended to ten days after the last hearing. No dates have been set yet for the hearings, but they are anticipated to occur in June.

In Virginia, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be considering the 401 application for the ACP. The DEQ has committed to hold public hearings, which will be conducted by the State Water Control Board. Though ACP's application has yet to be completed and hearing dates are not set, citizens can express views to the Water Board about the 401 issue during comment periods at regularly Board meetings. The next scheduled meeting is May 17 in Glen Allen, VA. Details [here](#).

FERC Commissioner Honorable to Leave Agency, Comments on Infrastructure

Collette Honorable, one of two sitting Commissioners on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, indicated last week that she will not seek reappointment when her term expires in June. She will need to be replaced by a Democrat since no more than 3 of the 5 FERC commissioners can be of the same party. While several names have been prominently mentioned as potential Republican appointees to the three existing FERC vacancies, President Trump has not yet submitted the names of any nominees. As has been noted previously, the agency will require at least 3 sitting commissioners to constitute a quorum. When all vacancies are filled, 4/5ths of the FERC commissioners will be appointees of President Trump.

In an interview last week with E&E News, conducted before she announced her plans to leave FERC, Commissioner Honorable had the following exchange about infrastructure

E&E News: What do you think the next steps are going to be on infrastructure coming out of the commission?

Colette Honorable: Thank you for the question about it. As you know, at FERC, infrastructure, I guess the hearing of applications for certificates is really a major part of our work, although it's stalled at the moment while we don't have a quorum. And so the first next step needs to be hearing the names of our three future colleagues who will join us. As you might imagine, we have quite a backlog developing, and I want to acknowledge our acting chair, Cheryl LaFleur, who is leading an effort to work on how we can expedite our colleagues' transition to FERC in a way that will help alleviate this backlog so that the stakeholders that have been eagerly awaiting hearing from us can

Please support ABRA's important work by clicking [here](#).

do so. I'm really proud of our work on competitive transmission development and looking at ways to improve our processes to allow for more timely development of projects, improvements to competitive bidding processes and ways to improve transmission cost allocation and planning, particularly inter-regionally in places where we can get better cost efficiency and the alleviation of seams issues at the inter-regional seams of RTOs or ISOs. We're also, as you know, continuing our work, though at times controversial, on hearing applications for interstate gas pipelines. That is a mandate that we received from Congress and, yes, that work will continue as well. So, we have a lot on our plate with regard to infrastructure, and I must also mention our very important work focused on energy infrastructure security, focused not only on resilience, protecting the grid from physical attacks, severe weather events, but also cybersecurity, which is something that I think keeps a lot of us up at night. We really can't pay too much attention there.

Three ABRA Leaders Honored

Two of ABRA's most prominent activists are among the 5 persons nationwide to be named as 'River Heroes' by River Network, the nationwide organization charged with protecting the nation's river systems. Angie Rosser, Executive Director of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition (and a member of the ABRA Steering Committee) and David Sligh, Conservation Director of Wild Virginia (also a consultant to the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition) will be honored at River Network's national conference, River Rally, this coming week in Grand Rapids, MI.

Rick Webb, Program Coordinator for DPMC and a member of the ABRA Steering Committee, will receive on May 7 in Richmond the prestigious Abbott Conservation Award from the Virginia Society of Ornithology at the organization's annual meeting.

Congratulations to Angie, Dave and Rick. Well-deserved!

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Mountaintop removal argued in pipeline plan

- The Recorder – 5/4/17

[http://www.abralliance.org/wp-](http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Mountaintop_removal_argued_in_pipeline_plan-Recorder_20170504.pdf)

[content/uploads/2017/05/Mountaintop_removal_argued_in_pipeline_plan-Recorder_20170504.pdf](http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Mountaintop_removal_argued_in_pipeline_plan-Recorder_20170504.pdf)
Opponents claim many miles will be "scalped". Dominion denies this but produces no new information to support its position.

Related:

- <http://wajr.com/dominion-environmentalists-spar-over-mountaintop-removal-claims/>
- <http://www.c-ville.com/mountaintop-removal-groups-argue-definition/#.WQs-LtLyuU1>

The Failed Mountain "Decapitation" Narrative

- Bacon's Rebellion – 5/4/17

<http://baconsrebellion.com/the-failed-mountain-decapitation-narrative/>

Bacon accepts Dominion at its word, as do others. Clearly, few people have even a basic understanding of a major construction site. Cleared trees and excavated material must go **somewhere** immediately. On a ridgetop that can be two places...a larger, excavated level area or down the side of the mountain. Machinery must move around and needs near-level surfaces on which to operate. Pipe must be stored. Ingress/egress avenues must be maintained for safety. All of this requires creating flat space.

Virginia pipeline opponents escalate as governor's race heats up

- Southeast Energy News – 5/3/17

<http://southeastenergynews.com/2017/05/03/virginia-pipeline-opponents-escalate-as-governors-race-heats-up/>

Opponents contesting the Atlantic Coast Pipeline's proposed route through Virginia are rolling out fresh arguments against the controversial projects which are becoming flashpoints dividing Democratic candidates running for governor there.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Despite shorthanded FERC, EQT expects Mountain Valley Pipeline environmental decision this summer

- Utility Dive – 5/1/17

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/despite-shorthanded-ferc-eqt-expects-mountain-valley-pipeline-environmental/441630/>

EQT says Final EIS could be issued June 23. However, a final decision on a certificate would require a vote by FERC commissioners. Commissioner Colette Honorable announced last week that she will step down, possibly leaving only one member, Acting Chair Cheryl LaFleur.

How mountaintop mining affects life and landscape in West Virginia

- PBS News Hour – 5/3/17

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/mountaintop-mining-affects-life-landscape-west-virginia/>

Science correspondent Miles O'Brien reports on how the Appalachian landscape is being fundamentally and irrevocably changed.

Virginia power broker in the hot seat in governor's race

- The Washington Post – 5/3/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/longtime-virginia-power-broker-in-the-hot-seat-in-governors-race/2017/05/03/do1af8f4-2b81-11e7-be51-b3fc6ff7faee_story.html

Dominion, which has given \$425,000 to Democrats and \$356,000 to Republicans in the past year, finds its role in the political process being challenged in unfamiliar ways.

Dominion Power Promises Huge Solar Investments and a Lower Carbon Footprint—Or Does It?

- Blue Virginia – 5/3/17

<http://bluevirginia.us/2017/05/dominion-power-promises-huge-solar-investments-lower-carbon-footprint>

In short...it does not.

Big Picture:

Nato warns climate change is 'global security threat' as Donald Trump mulls Paris Agreement

- Independent – 5/4/17

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/nato-warns-climate-change-global-warming-security-risk-donald-trump-considers-paris-agreement-a7716711.html>

"If one nation, especially the biggest nation... if they do not recognise a problem, then we will have trouble dealing with the causes of climate change."

U.S. Power Demand Flatlined Years Ago, and It's Hurting Utilities

- Bloomberg – 4/25/17

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-25/u-s-power-demand-flatlined-years-ago-and-it-s-hurting-utilities>

Missed this last week. Solid discussion, lots of great graphs!

US House looks to expedite pipeline permitting

- Argus Media – 5/3/17

<http://www.argusmedia.com/news/article/?id=1453485>

Industry groups say the bills would be helpful but are urging lawmakers to go even further. Pipeline companies have been increasingly concerned about actions by states to block pipelines by denying needed water permits.

Trump's American Pipe Dream

- Axios – 5/1/17

<https://www.axios.com/trumps-american-pipe-dream-2381973303.html>

Trump wants all-US-steel pipelines. Pipeline industry is having none of it!

The EPA climate website taken down for review was accurate, scientists say

- The Washington Post – 5/4/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/05/04/the-epa-is-reviewing-its-climate-change-website-these-scientists-say-it-was-already-accurate/?utm_term=.41c5bd704a03

“This is akin to removing all emergency exit signs from a movie theater while a movie is showing because the upper management has decided they might need to improve their disaster plans.”

The carbon consensus: Generators, analysts back CO2 price at FERC technical conference

- Utility Dive – 5/3/17

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/the-carbon-consensus-generators-analysts-back-co2-price-at-ferc-technical/441862/>

...one noteworthy area of consensus emerged from nearly every corner of the diverse stakeholder group — the need to price carbon in wholesale power markets.

People's Climate March Draws Massive Crowd in DC

- EcoWatch – 4/29/17

<http://www.ecowatch.com/peoples-climate-march-dc-2385202141.html>