



ABRA Update #53 – November 5, 2015

ACP Route Changes Meant To Avoid Problems Create More Problems

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline announced last Friday (10/30) that it had filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission supplemental information that provides route alternatives “to minimize impacts of the proposed route on several environmental, historic and public land issues.” (The announcement was emailed the same day to the Update mailing list. Links to the ACP press release and FERC filing are, respectively: <https://www.dom.com/corporate/news/news-releases/137066>; and http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20151030-5363.)

One of the four route adjustments would affect the ACP as it traverses the George Washington National Forest over Shenandoah Mountain, located along the shared border of Highland and Augusta Counties. The company proposes using “horizontal directional drill (HDD) construction to avoid potential impacts on Cow Knob salamanders and their habitat.” What that could mean to the affected environment is vividly and disturbingly described in a major story in this week’s Recorder newspaper (11/5/15 issue).

The ACP proposal was in response to U.S. Forest Service concerns about the Cow Knob salamander habitat on Shenandoah Mountain. The USFS said in a July 30 filing with FERC (http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NFS_comments_on_ACP_Resource_Reports_1-10_7-30-15.pdf), and reiterated in a September 17 letter to the agency (<http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/GWNF-letter-on-Cow-Knob-salamanders-9-17-15.pdf>) that the habitat threat could be avoided by re-route the pipeline’s route or employing horizontal drilling techniques. ACP has chosen to pursue the latter alternative, but it doesn’t entirely avoid affecting the habitat of the Cow Knob salamander. Moreover, it would create new environmental problems that would adversely impact areas far-removed from the pipeline route.

The Recorder story quotes Rick Webb, Coordinator of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, an ABRA member:

“Significant sedimentation will be unavoidable. The drilling operation will require large staging areas for the entry points for the drilling operations and major access roads to bring in the drilling equipment, drilling materials, and tanker trucks. A tributary of Shaws Fork, on the western side of Shenandoah Mountain, and Hodges Draft, a tributary on the eastern side of Shenandoah Mountain, will be subject to sediment laden runoff from the staging areas and access roads, which will be built right on top of the streams.

“Shaws Fork drains into the Cowpasture River, which is a high-quality stream, and which sinks into the underground karst system to emerge eight miles downstream as the source water for the economically important Coursey Springs Trout Hatchery.

“Dominion is pushing the limits of the technology. Another real concern here is that Dominion continues to avoid accountability for its environmental plans and potential impacts. Dominion is not making its specific maps or plans for the drilling operation available to the public. This is a pattern. Dominion also does not plan to make its erosion and sediment control plans available to the public or even the state Department of Environmental Quality.”

The Recorder article with supplemental information and photos is available at:
<http://pipelineupdate.org/2015/11/05/drilling-through-shenandoah-mountain/>.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Governor's office to coordinate state agency comments about pipeline projects

- Roanoke Times – 11/03/15
http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/governor-s-office-to-coordinate-state-agency-comments-about-pipeline/article_a2a33doc-f826-54c5-9a0c-ed666112ba2d.html
Concerns grow amongst opposition groups, despite reassurances of “no muzzling of state agencies”

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Submits Route Changes To Avoid Environmental Impacts, Address Stakeholder Concerns

- PR Newswire – 10/30/15
<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/atlantic-coast-pipeline-submits-route-changes-to-avoid-environmental-impacts-address-stakeholder-concerns-300169699.html>
Any route has impacts...

Dominion to run pipeline through mountain to avoid rare salamander

- Richmond Times Dispatch – 10/30/15
http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/article_96ab65e1-8doe-5f6d-b587-df489ab5cd5c.html
And the circus continues...

Objections intensify against FERC, proposed pipelines

- The Recorder – 10/29/15
http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Objections_intensify_against_FERC-proposed_pipelines-Recorder_10-29-15.pdf

Friends of Nelson launches No Pipeline! video contest

- Augusta Free Press – 11/1/15
<http://augustafreepress.com/friends-of-nelson-launches-no-pipeline-video-contest/>

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Putnam County becomes focus for gas drilling possibilities

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 11/3/15
<http://www.wvgazettemail.com/article/20151103/gz03/151109829/1419>
Low prices, tough terrain and uncertain transport future do not deter drillers

Big Picture:

Veteran Attorneys Don't See Comparative Hearings of Pipeline Projects in FERC's Future

- [Natural Gas Intelligence](#) – 11/2/15
http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NGI_NG-Attorneys_No-PEIS.pdf
Industry attorneys expect business as usual...what a surprise!

Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas merger would create a political powerhouse

- Institute for Southern Studies – 10/28/15
<http://www.southernstudies.org/2015/10/duke-energy-piedmont-natural-gas-merger-would-crea.html>
Political power of major big-business utilities already a problem for democracy

Feds deliver blow to proposed Sabal Trail pipeline running through Georgia

- AJC politics – 10/27/15
<http://politics.blog.ajc.com/2015/10/27/feds-deliver-blow-to-proposed-sabal-trail-pipeline-running-through-georgia/>
More detailed story on EPA comments on Sabal Trail pipeline

U.S. Shale Drillers Running Out Of Options, Fast

- OilPrice.com – 10/22/2015
<http://oilprice.com/energy/crude-oil/us-shale-drillers-running-out-of-options-fast.html>
It's getting tougher to keep the 'machine' rolling...

NJ Public Wants Renewable Clean Power, Not Cheap Natural Gas, Poll Finds

- NJ Spotlight – 11/3/2015
<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/15/11/01/nj-public-wants-renewable-clean-power-not-cheap-natural-gas-poll-finds/>
State policies don't represent public's priorities...

National Grid Wants to Buy Natural-Gas Contracts

- EcoRI News – 10/30/2015
<http://www.ecori.org/renewable-energy/2015/10/30/legal-group-fears-national-grid-buying-natural-gas-contracts>
New MA rule allows electric generators to "lock in" pipeline infrastructure payments from rate payers