



ABRA Update #67 – February 17, 2016

New ACP Route Filed with FERC

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC (Atlantic) filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on February 16 a new route variation (GWNF 6) for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). The firm had announced the new route last Friday, February 12 (ABRA sent out an information alert to its mailing list that afternoon). The proposed route is in response to the U.S. Forest Service (NFS) January 19 request of Atlantic that it change the route to avoid threatened species on Cheat Mountain in the Monongahela National Forest and on Shenandoah Mountain in the George Washington National Forest.

The GWNF 6 route would depart from the originally-proposed ACP route just north of Kumbrabow State Park (at mile marker 47.5), head south through Pocahontas County, cross through the southwest corner of Highland County, enter Bath County at U.S. 220, continue southeast into Bath until turning north into the Deerfield Valley in Augusta County, rejoining the original ACP route at West Augusta (mile marker 115.2). Atlantic said in its filing that the new route segment, by avoiding Cheat and Shenandoah Mountains, “addresses the issues identified by the U.S. Forest Service and allows the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement to continue.” An interactive map of the route is at: <http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=8be77225bbe44c67bed8a04dfc3f1697&extent=-80.8907,37.7908,-78.0177,38.913>.

The new route is 95.7 miles long and adds 30 miles to the overall length of the ACP. Private property accounts for 81% of the new route, of which 8.5% involves conservation easements held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

The filing concludes by stating that field surveys and further studies will be completed in Spring 2016 and that additional information on the new route will be filed with FERC in the second quarter of 2016 (by or before July 1).

ABRA has particular concerns about the new route. In a statement released to the press last Friday, we stated:

“A pipeline through this area would significantly increase the likelihood of catastrophic erosion and sediment pollution of several significant waterways. Furthermore, the new route opens up to potential devastation a whole new set of cultural and natural resources. The many newly-affected landowners and local officials must be carefully consulted before the project should be allowed to continue with the FERC process.

Once again, Dominion has proposed a route without thinking through or understanding the environmental and other consequences of its decision.”

Dominion acknowledges some of these difficulties in its filing by noting that:

“ . . . the route crosses 39.8 miles of soils with near surface hard bedrock, 22.1 miles of soils with near surface soft bedrock, 74.5 miles of soils that are highly erodible by water, and 76.4 miles of soils with revegetation concerns. The soils data reflect the terrain conditions along much of the route, which is mountainous. Approximately 24.3 miles of the route crosses slopes greater than 30 percent and approximately 8.6 miles of the route crosses side slopes greater than 30 percent. A total of approximately 55.5 miles of the route crosses areas characterized by the USGS as having high incidence for landslides.”

Atlantic’s filing is on the ABRA website at:

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ACP_filing_on_GWNF-6_route_2-16-16.pdf

ABRA Plans Citizens Meetings in Bath and Pocahontas Counties

ABRA is convening a public meeting to discuss the potential impacts of the newly proposed route of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline on Bath County, VA. The meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25, 7:30 pm at the Hot Springs Fire Department and Rescue Squad, 2670 Main Street, Hot Springs, VA. We are working with Bath community leaders in organizing the event.

Presentations will be made by: Lewis Freeman, Chair/Executive Director of ABRA; Rick Lambert, President of the Virginia Speleological Survey; and Joe Lovett, Executive Director of Appalachian Mountain Advocates, a Lewisburg, WV-based public interest law firm. A question and answer period will follow the presentations.

Another citizens meeting is being organized by ABRA in Pocahontas County, WV, to be held on Wednesday, March 2 at the Linwood Community Library at Snowshoe in Slatyfork, WV. Leaders from the Eight-Rivers Council, a founding member of ABRA, are assisting. There will be more about this meeting in next week’s Update.

FERC Noncommittal About a Scoping Meeting for New Route

ABRA has urged FERC to give serious consideration holding a scoping meeting for the communities and property owners along the new route, noting that “the nature of the new route presents prominent impacts that differ from the earlier route and merit your prominent attention.” Kevin Bowman, the FERC staffer who chaired earlier scoping meetings on the ACP, responded:

“FERC does not have an official position on this subject at this time and because the case that you mention is a pending matter I am unable to comment more specifically. As a general practice, upon reviewing a project change or alternative officially filed by an applicant in any preceding, FERC will determine whether soliciting additional public comment is appropriate. Such a decision to do so would be announced to the public in the form of an official Notice issued by the Secretary of the Commission. Please also be advised that FERC will always accept comments in any preceding regardless of whether an official scoping period is announced.”

Economic Harm to Counties Would Exceed Total Cost of ACP

A newly released study, released February 16 by ABRA, finds that the economic harm to the property owners and affected communities in four Virginia counties (Augusta, Buckingham, Highland and Nelson) by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would ultimately exceed the cost of building pipeline and associated compressor station.

The study by Key-Log Economics, a Charlottesville-based economics firm, was sponsored by Highlanders for Responsible Development, Augusta County Alliance, Friends of Nelson, Friends of Buckingham, Virginia, and Yogaville Environmental Solutions.

The eye-opening analysis found that up to \$141 million in lost property value and services, such as water and air quality, would occur across the four-county study area just during construction. Further, the pipeline will depress area economies, contribute to job loss and reduce quality of life, and lower personal incomes in perpetuity to the tune of up to \$109 million annually.

Those estimates are conservative, notes Spencer Phillips, founder of Key-Log Economics: “Putting the stream of costs into present value terms and adding the one-time costs, the total estimated cost of the ACP in Highland, Augusta, Nelson, and Buckingham Counties is between \$6.9 and \$7.9 billion,” he said.

ABRA’s press release, with links to the overall study and the individual county summaries, is at: http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ABRA_Press_Release_on_4-County_Economic_Impacts_of_ACP_2-16-16.pdf.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

New Gas Pipeline Route Tries To Spare Nature But Affects More Landowners

- Think Progress – 2/16/16

<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2016/02/16/3749591/pipeline-new-route/>

Discussion of new route...issues include likely increase in use of eminent domain

Atlantic Coast Pipeline opponents cite costs in report

- Roanoke Times – 2/16/2016

http://www.roanoke.com/business/news/atlantic-coast-pipeline-opponents-cite-costs-in-report/article_f6414ca9-1ac2-59c2-90b5-f4402fdf17e7.html

Reports attempt to attach dollar figures to expected impacts of ACP. Dominion says “report lacks factual basis and credibility”, similar to opponents’ descriptions of ICF and CHMURA studies commissioned by Dominion Related:

<http://www.newsleader.com/story/news/local/2016/02/16/atlantic-coast-pipeline-study/80462784/>

<http://www.nbc29.com/story/31236774/report-released-on-economic-impact-of-atlantic-coast-pipeline>

Opposition groups see even more to dislike with new pipeline route

- The Daily Progress – 2/12/16

http://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/opposition-groups-see-even-more-to-dislike-with-new-pipeline/article_eb8df8c8-d1f7-11e5-8a8d-870e9ed62262.html

Less forest but steeper slopes, more karst and an entire county that thought it was safe

Cumberland County residents voice dissent for proposed pipeline

- Fayetteville Observer – 2/9/16

http://www.fayobserver.com/news/local/cumberland-county-residents-voice-dissent-for-proposed-pipeline/article_17b55bf5-9fec-57f4-90b2-ee3c81808674.html

Rare story about dissent over ACP in eastern North Carolina

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Pipeline foes argue property rights at Va. Supreme Court

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 2/16/2016

http://www.richmond.com/business/article_4c936653-c87a-5e18-bc8c-907f8ee98bf4.html

VA Supreme Court expected to take several weeks to decide whether to hear the case

General Assembly Notebook: Bill to allow state inspections of interstate gas pipelines moves forward

- Roanoke Times – 2/11/16

http://www.roanoke.com/news/politics/general_assembly/general-assembly-notebook-bill-to-allow-state-inspections-of-interstate/article_9a3be577-9df0-51fb-8e79-fde5bad8fa7b.html

This one may have legs

Despite US setback, Virginia moving forward on 'Clean Power'

- Fairfield Citizen – 2/10/16

<http://www.fairfieldcitizenonline.com/business/energy/article/despite-us-setback-virginia-moving-forward-on-6821414.php>

Virginia, Dominion, conservation groups all in agreement on this one

Big Picture:

How Weather And An 'Interstate of Renewable Energy' Could Save The Climate By 2030

- Forbes – 2/15/16

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/marshallshepherd/2016/02/15/how-weather-and-an-interstate-of-renewable-energy-could-save-the-climate-by-2030/#7280d373285a>

Describes a predictive energy model that chooses the best types and scales of energy sources to supply the U.S. cheaply and reliably

Related:

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/switch-to-clean-energy-can-be-fast-and-cheap/>

As Fossil Fuel Industry Stagers, a Massive Gas Pipeline Project Endures in Texas

- EarthIsland Journal – 2/16/16

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/as_fossil_fuel_industry_stagers_a_massive_gas_pipeline_project/

Good piece on the massive cross-border build-out in Texas, possible hidden plans to export via Mexico to Asia, eminent domain issues and landscape and cultural preservation. Bravo!

Power Plays: State House delivering blows to pipeline opponents

- Union Leader – 2/14/16

<http://www.unionleader.com/Dave-Solomons-Power-Plays-State-House-defeating-pipeline-proposal>

NH legislature dealing with bills similar to those brushed aside in VA

Editorial: Sen. Markey zeroes in on proposed fracked gas pipeline motives

- GazetteNet – 2/10/16

<http://www.gazettenet.com/home/20990306-95/editorial-sen-markey-zeroes-in-on-proposed-fracked-gas-pipeline-motives>

Markey questions economic and national security interest of exporting natural gas from New England...whose supply is supposedly constrained

How far can a bridge fuel reach?

- Pittsburg Post-Gazette – 2/16/16

<http://powersource.post-gazette.com/powersource/companies/2016/02/16/Natural-gas-may-be-prompting-overbuilding-of-plants-pipelines-shale-renewable-energy/stories/201602160003>

Today gas is cheap, but are we overbuilding? Over-committing?