



ABRA Update #115 – February 3, 2017

VOF Trustees to Vote on ACP Conservation Easement Proposal Next Week

The long-awaited vote by the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) on a proposal for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to cross ten conservation easements held by the VOF will take place next Thursday, February 9 in Henrico, VA. ABRA is in opposition to the proposal because it does not comply with the explicit requirements set forth in statute for exceptions to the easement requirements. All who are concerned about this unprecedented proposal are strongly urged to express their views by writing Bobbie Cabibbo of VOF at bcabibbo@vofonline.org. For those who wish to attend the VOF Trustees meeting, it will be held at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 7870 Villa Park Drive, Suite 400, Henrico, VA 23228. The meeting begins at 10 am. Public comments will be received beginning at 10:05 am; each speaker is limited to 2 minutes each. A 30-minute comment for “affected landowners” will begin at 11:05 am. A copy of the meeting agenda is [here](#).

A comprehensive background piece on the conservation easement proposal and the reasons why it should be rejected is available [here](#).

DEIS Briefing Meetings Begin



A packed room at the Bolar Ruritan Building in Highland County, VA heard an in-depth briefing February 1 on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The meeting was co-sponsored by Voices From Bath and Highlanders for Responsible

ABRA Needs Your Support

*The challenges facing the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance in 2017 are daunting.
With your financial support we can continue to fight effectively
against unneeded pipelines through our region*

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

Development, both ABRA members. Presentations were made by Greg Buppert of the Southern Environmental Law Center, Joe Lovett of Appalachian Mountain Advocates, Rick Webb of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, Nancy Sorrells of the Augusta County Alliance and Lew Freeman of ABRA. Additional local meetings on the DEIS are slated for Pocahontas County, WV (February 7), Buckingham County, VA (February 12) and elsewhere in anticipation of the public comment sessions that are being held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission beginning February 13. Information about the DEIS process, the public comments sessions and how to file written comments is located [here](#).

FERC Raises New Questions With MVP, Delaying a Final DEIS

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has posed an array of new questions about the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline that will necessitate a delay in the release of a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. The comment period for the draft EIS ended in December and a final EIS had been scheduled to be released by March 10. But, in a [January 26 letter](#) to Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC, FERC submitted 28 pages of questions, stating:

“You should be aware that the information described in the enclosure is necessary for us to complete preparation of the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Mountain Valley Project (MVP). Once we have received your responses and reviewed them for completeness, we will establish a revised schedule for completing the EIS.”

The FERC questions ask for more information in some cases and in other instances for clarification on previously submitted information where discrepancies and inconsistencies exist.

Law Suit Filed Against Proposed Buckingham County Compressor Station

A Buckingham County, VA landowner has filed suit local Circuit Court asking for a declaratory judgment that the Buckingham Board of Supervisors issuance of a special use permit for the compressor station proposed to be built for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was “in violation of the Buckingham County Zoning ordinance and the Virginia Code.” The [law suit](#) was filed by Appalachian Mountain Advocates on behalf of Carlos Arostegui, a Buckingham County resident whose farm is located within one-half mile of the location of the proposed compressor station. The Board of Supervisors issued the permit on January 11, 2017, following a January 5 vote.

FERC Approves Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline Just Before Losing Its Quorum

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline project moments before the agency lost its quorum with the resignation of Commissioner Norman Bay, effective 5 pm on February 3. 183-mile pipeline would run through more than 50 "protected" conservation easements in Pennsylvania and feed an additional 1.7 bcf/day of fracked gas into the Transco system, which serves Cove Point. The 93-page FERC decision is [here](#).

Among other last minute actions the agency took before Commissioner Bay's resignation took effect was to approve a 55-mile natural-gas pipeline to be built by Dominion Carolina Gas Transmission in South Carolina over the objections of landowners and environmental groups. More details [here](#).

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Harrison County Commission backs Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- WDTV5 News – 2/1/17
<http://www.wdtv.com/content/news/Harrison-County-Commission-backs-Atlantic-Coast-Pipeline-412485163.html>

Lewis County Commission to consider support for Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- The Exponent Telegram – 1/30/17
http://www.theet.com/news/local/lewis-county-commission-to-consider-support-for-atlantic-coast-pipeline/article_97a10075-4a22-5aa7-9181-6e1294fc8cf2.html

OPINION: Pipeline 'impact statement' a bloated whitewash

- The News Virginian – 1/29/17
http://www.dailyprogress.com/newsvirginian/opinion/guest_columnists/opinion-pipeline-impact-statement-a-bloated-whitewash/article_5e44c542-e68b-11e6-b3a2-db9608dc8cbf.html

Unions rally at Capitol to tout Atlantic Coast Pipeline as good for American jobs

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 1/30/16
http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/article_92655991-0eb4-54e8-818d-4e283883e80b.html
Pipeline supporters tout potential, temporary jobs as important economic booster...but are they, really?

Senator's bill to end Dominion's campaign contributions dies

- CBS6 News – 2/2/17
<http://wtr.com/2017/02/02/senators-bill-to-end-dominions-campaign-contributions-dies/>

Riggleman, a contender for Virginia governor, takes on utility giant Dominion

- The Washington Post – 1/31/17
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/riggleman-contender-for-va-governor-takes-on-utility-giant-dominion/2017/01/31/fb6b93ce-e7cf-11e6-80c2-30e57e57e05d_story.html?utm_term=.3675827e53ba

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

FERC delays release date for final environmental statement for Mountain Valley Pipeline

- Roanoke Times – 1/31/2017
http://www.roanoke.com/business/news/franklin_county/ferc-delays-release-date-for-final-environmental-statement-for-mountain/article_32e5fb8a-7126-5ba4-9114-9068e0b7d1d2.html
In a letter dated Jan. 26, FERC advised Mountain Valley of a broad array of information needed before FERC can complete the environmental impact statement for the 42-inch-diameter, 303-mile buried pipeline

Negotiations under way for Peters Mountain study

- The Register-Herald – 2/2/17
http://www.register-herald.com/news/negotiations-under-way-for-peters-mountain-study/article_dboe94e1-e455-5d86-84co-f4eabc36dd16.html
First mentioned last fall in connection with the local movement to block construction of the MVP, the study is now being touted as a basis for future economic development

Monroe County couple at center of pipeline debate

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 1/28/17

<http://www.wvgazette.com/news-politics/20170128/monroe-county-couple-at-center-of-pipeline-debate>

Pipeline's impacts on Appalachian Trail raise concerns

- Roanoke Times – 1/27/17

http://www.roanoke.com/business/news/pipeline-s-impacts-on-appalachian-trail-raise-concerns/article_c536b260-ea3a-55d7-b11e-9e037d2ab252.html

Big Picture:

Reflections from Acting Chairman Cheryl LaFleur: A Look at FERC in its Final Days of a Quorum and in the Upcoming Non-Quorum Period

- The National Law Review – 1/30/17

<http://www.natlawreview.com/article/reflections-acting-chairman-cheryl-lafleur-look-ferc-its-final-days-quorum-and>

LaFleur says FERC is working on a potential expansion of Staff's delegated authority during the period of non-quorum, drawing from the experiences of other agencies during similar periods of non-quorum

Resignation threatens to bring U.S. pipeline rulings to halt

- World Oil – 1/29/17

<http://www.worldoil.com/news/2017/1/29/resignation-threatens-to-bring-us-pipeline-rulings-to-halt>

Among the pipelines waiting for approval are: Energy Transfer Partners LP's Rover project and the Atlantic Sunrise system by Williams Partners LP. Spectra Energy's Nexus system and National Fuel Gas Co.'s Northern Access expansion may also be affected

President Trump Prepares to Withdraw from Groundbreaking Climate Change Agreement, Transition Official Says

- Fortune – 1/30/17

<http://fortune.com/2017/01/30/donald-trump-paris-agreement-climate-change-withdraw/>

"If the (U.S) administration decides to go in a different direction, I think sooner or later they will have to come back to the realization that climate change is happening."

Former EPA head is worried about Trump, climate change

- The Boston Globe – 2/1/17

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/01/31/former-epa-head-raises-concerns-about-trump-administration-approach-climate-change/vk18JAnV8HfOqFJoDO5FnL/story.html>

"There's no question that there are plans to make significant cuts to the EPA's budget, and those cuts are not only likely to cut federal enforcement of environmental regulations but state enforcement as well,"

Related:

- <http://www.seeker.com/trumps-epa-has-begun-removing-climate-change-information-from-its-webs-2234021914.html>

Despite Senate Inquiry into Potential Conflicts of Interest, FERC Approves Spectra Energy's Atlantic Bridge Project

- Desmog – 1/26/17

<https://www.desmogblog.com/2017/01/26/despite-senate-inquiry-potential-conflicts-interest-ferc-approves-spectra-energy-s-atlantic-bridge-project>

The project remains under scrutiny by Massachusetts Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey relating to potential conflicts of interest

Related:

- <http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2017/02/sens-warren-and-markey-call-on.html>

Army Corps ordered to issue final Dakota Access pipeline permit, two lawmakers say

- The Washington Post – 2/1/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/01/31/army-corps-ordered-to-issue-final-dakota-access-pipeline-permit-two-lawmakers-say/?hpid=hp_rhp-more-top-storie&utm_term=.72b3d827dfad

Rule the House seeks to kill limits methane emissions

Where Is Fracked Gas Really Headed as It Passes Through Texas' Trans-Pecos Pipeline?

- Desmog – 2/2/17

<https://www.desmogblog.com/2017/02/02/where-fracked-gas-headed-mexico-texas-trans-pecos-pipeline>

Japan, apparently

House overturns Obama rule on natural gas 'flaring

- The Detroit News – 2/3/17

<http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2017/02/03/congress-obama-rule/97443254/>

Rule the House seeks to kill limits methane emissions