



ABRA Update #117 – February 16, 2017

New Study Concludes that ACP & MVP Will Increase Climate Change

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) are “climate disasters,” according to [new studies released February 15 by Oil Change International \(OCI\)](#). The studies conclude that the ACP and MVP “would together contributed a much greenhouse gas pollution as 45 coal-fired power plants – some 158 million metric tons a year.” OCI points out that the methodology that has been used in the past by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to measure climate impacts is “out of date” and “is failing to protect communities and citizens around the country.”

OCI further states:

FERC’s assessment of greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted by the Atlantic Coast pipeline in the project’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was woefully inadequate. FERC appears to have selected data, sources and assumptions that conveniently allow it to conclude that the project “would not significantly contribute to GHG cumulative impacts or climate change.

Two fundamental flaws underpin FERC’s analysis leading to this deficient conclusion:

1. Emissions from gas are assumed to be less than half those of coal;
2. Upstream production and downstream consumption of gas are assumed to be unaffected by the project.

FERC cites a Department of Energy (DOE) report published in May 2014. While this report is relatively recent, the science and study of methane leakage from oil and gas production and infrastructure has moved on significantly since its publication. The report dramatically underestimates the life cycle emissions of natural gas use for power generation leading to an inaccurate conclusion that gas is consistently cleaner than coal.

Synopsis of DEIS Process and Highlights Now Available

A new overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the ACP is now available. [DEIS: What is it? What's in it? What you can do!](#) is a 16-page overview of the DEIS process, prepared by ABRA. It features highlights and excerpts of the 2300+ page document and a discussion of how concerned citizens can comment on the document. The overview is designed as a resource for those preparing to file comments or deliver them at the FERC public sessions that began this week in North Carolina and conclude March 2 in West Virginia.

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

Dominion's Aaron Ruby's Interviewed by Allegheny Mountain Radio

Aaron Ruby, principal spokesperson on ACP matters for Dominion, was interviewed recently by Allegheny Mountain Radio (serving Pocahontas, Bath and Highland Counties) about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Here are excerpts from the [complete interview](#):

- The conclusions of the report were very favorable – essentially, what the agency concluded is that all of the environmental measures, and the safety protections that we have put in place for the project would significantly reduce the impacts, and that the project will be built in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.
- I know that we've heard concerns from some folks in different communities about the impact that pipeline construction and operation would have on tourism. FERC looked at this very carefully, and they determined. . . that tourist economies are perfectly compatible with natural gas pipeline development. They also looked at concerns that have been raised about impacts on residential property values, or residential development. And what FERC concluded. . . that there is nothing about natural gas pipeline development that diminishes the residential property values or prevents developers from building residential properties.
- FERC. . . looked very carefully at our karst mitigation plan, and they determined that our plans were adequate, and that they would significantly minimize risks to karst topography and to underground water aquifers, especially in the areas of western Virginia
- We've got a deeply personal stake in making sure that we do this the right way, that we do it in an environmentally responsible way, we do it safely, so that we preserve the natural beauty and the landscapes of the region for the enjoyment of future generations.

What Might the Oroville Dam and the ACP have in Common?

The recent breaching of the Oroville Dam in California revealed a disturbing historical incident that bears bringing to everyone's attention. In October 2005, according to a San Jose [Mercury News story published February 12](#), the Sierra Club and two local environment groups filed a motion with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission "as part of Oroville Dam's relicensing process, urging federal officials to require that the dam's emergency spillway be armored with concrete, rather than remain as an earthen hillside." FERC has regulatory authority over dams.

The motion stated that the dam did not meet modern safety standards because in the event of extreme rain and flooding, fast-rising water would overwhelm the main concrete spillway, then flow down the emergency spillway, and that could cause heavy erosion that would create flooding for communities downstream, but also could cause a failure. According to the *Mercury News* story, "FERC rejected that request, however, after the state Department of Water Resources, and the water agencies that would likely have had to pay the bill for the upgrades, said they were unnecessary."

Another, troubling example of short-sited regulatory due diligence!

ABRA Grassroots Committee Created

A new Grassroots Committee within ABRA has been created to strengthen coordination and spur new initiatives to mobilize citizen action in opposition to proposed pipelines that threaten the Allegheny-Blue Ridge region. The new committee will be chaired by Kate Boyle, Director of Campaigns for Appalachian Voices. Kirk Bowers, Pipelines Program Coordinator for the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club will serve as Co-Chair. Persons interested in serving on the Grassroots Committee should contact Kate at kate@appvoices.org

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Open-space foundation tables easement decision

- The Recorder – 2/16/17

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Open-space_foundation_tables_easement_decision-Recorder_20170216.pdf

Opposition to Dominion's plan dominates hearing

McAuliffe backs scrapping deal that protects Dominion from rate review

- The Washington Post – 2/9/17

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/mcauliffe-backs-scrapping-deal-that-protects-dominion-from-rate-review/2017/02/09/e0c768ea-eefa-11e6-b4ff-ac2cf509efe5_story.html?utm_term=.425173e6069e

McAuliffe switches stance on rate freeze issue...indicates no plans to submit a bill himself. Since no new bills can be introduced to the General Assembly and he is not up for re-election, McAuliffe can now speak his mind with no fear of consequences.

Pocahontas Co. Commission Meeting Part 1: Dominion Updates on Pipeline Project

- Allegheny Mountain Radio – 2/8/17

<http://www.alleghenymountainradio.org/pocahontas-co-commission-meeting-part-1-dominion-updates-on-pipeline-project/>

Meeting for landowners held

- The Farmville Herald – 2/15/17

<http://www.farmvilleherald.com/2017/02/meeting-for-landowners-held/>

More than 50 people attended a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Landowner's Informational Meeting held at Buckingham County Middle School on Sunday

In Wilson, media shut out of FERC public listening session on Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- The Progressive Pulse – 2/15/17

<http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2017/02/15/wilson-media-shut-ferc-public-listening-session-atlantic-coast-pipeline/#sthash.gQgTJu8b.dpbs>

North Carolinians not happy with new FERC meeting format... "This is a joke"

FERC's Alternative Climate Facts

- Earth Island Journal

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

FERC clinging to outdated modeling and assumptions

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Pipeline easement agreements stir questions, strong feelings

- The Roanoke Times – 2/12/17

http://www.roanoke.com/business/news/pipeline-easement-agreements-stir-questions-strong-feelings/article_92fe9bfd-6a32-5780-99cd-512c11a42340.html

Importance of obtaining legal counsel during negotiations stressed

Peckman: Sometimes, red tape is essential

- The Roanoke Times – 2/13/17

http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/peckman-sometimes-red-tape-is-essential/article_381751c5-ed32-5d5f-8025-3262f4bf2576.html

Discusses a few shortcomings of the MVP DEIS

Senator Blair Introduces Bill That Would Allow Pipeline Companies to Survey Without Permission of Landowner

- MorganCountyUSA – 2/15/17

<http://morgancountyusa.org/?p=2743>

The bill was written by the natural gas industry to bypass a West Virginia court decision — McCurdy v. Mountain Valley Pipeline — holding that the MVP pipeline was not for a public purpose and therefore the pipeline company didn't have a right to survey people's land without their permission

Justice continues criticism of WVDEP inspectors

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 2/15/17

<http://www.wvgazette.com/news-politics/20170215/justice-continues-criticism-of-wvdep-inspectors>

The governor again promised that the agency would stop saying "no" to the state's businesses, but refused to cite any examples of the DEP having actually done so

DEP eliminates protections for noise, light from natural gas facilities

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 2/11/17

<http://www.wvgazette.com/news/20170211/dep-eliminates-protections-for-noise-light-from-natural-gas-facilities>

"Pipeline Fighters" Documentary Premieres in Blacksburg

- WVTF Radio – 2/14/17

<http://wvtf.org/post/pipeline-fighters-documentary-premiers-blacksburg#stream/o>

What began as series of episodes focusing on people in the New River Valley grew into a broader look at fracking and pipeline building and at what's happened in other states that already have them.

Big Picture:

Congressional Review Act Used to Repeal Energy Disclosure Rule as Trump Cabinet Members Await Vote

- National Geographic – 2/16/17

<http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2017/02/16/congressional-review-act-used-to-repeal-energy-disclosure-rule-as-trump-cabinet-members-await-vote/>

Congress continues to gut environmental (and in this case ethics) regulations

Related:

<http://www.ecowatch.com/fracking-rule-disappears-blm-2263527541.html>

Trump plans executive orders aimed at shaking up EPA, climate change policy, reports say

- CNBC – 2/16/17

<http://www.cnbc.com/2017/02/16/trump-plans-executive-orders-aimed-at-shaking-up-epa-reports-say.html>

Inside EPA's source did not share the contents of the planned executive actions, but told Inside EPA they would "suck the air out" of the room

Company Behind DAPL Reported 69 Accidents, Polluting Rivers in 4 States in Last Two Years

- EcoWatch – 2/14/17

<http://www.ecowatch.com/energy-transfer-partners-track-record-2260932274.html>

Eversource and activists at odds over latest New England pipeline study

- MassLive – 2/13/17

http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2017/02/eversource_and_climate_activis.html

Synapse report on Access Northeast details reasons why project is not needed...link to report in story

Renewable energy draws increasing Republican support. That could shift climate politics

- Vox – 2/16/17

<http://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/2/16/14629806/renewable-energy-republican-support>

For politicians at the state and local level, it's an immense practical benefit to their constituents [renewable energy].

In such matters, ideology tends to fall by the wayside

Related:

- <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/governors-to-trump-renewable-energy-is-an-american-success-story>

Opinion: The tipping point for renewable energy is nearly here

- MarketWatch – 2/16/17

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-tipping-point-for-renewable-energy-is-nearly-here-2017-02-15>

Renewable energy, primarily solar and wind, could jump from 4% of global power generation today to as much as 36% by 2035