



ABRA Update #65 – February 3, 2016

ABRA Addresses Virginia Legislators

ABRA Chair/Executive Director Lew Freeman addressed the Virginia Environment and Renewable Energy Caucus on February 1 in Richmond about coalition views on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, particularly as they relate to pending legislation. The caucus membership includes 19 Delegates and Senators in the General Assembly, with both Democrats and Republicans represented (<http://patch.com/virginia/arlington-va/lopez-launches-caucus-tackle-environmental-concerns-virginia>).

Caucus members are: Delegates Bulova, Carr, Hope, Keam, Kory, Lopez, Murphy, Plum, Rasoul, Simon, Sullivan, Surovell, Toscano and Yancy; Senators Ebbin, Favola and McEachin.

Also speaking was a Dominion representative: Jack Rust, a former Delegate in the General Assembly from Northern Virginia. Interestingly, Mr. Rust spoke only in opposition to legislation that would repeal of VA Code Section 56-49.01 (SB 614 and HB 1118), which provides natural gas companies an exemption from state trespassing laws for purposes of surveying property. When asked if he had other comments to make, he declined.

Below is a follow-up communication sent to members of the caucus.

To: Members of the Virginia Environment and Renewable Energy Caucus

Thank you for the opportunity yesterday, February 1, to address your meeting regarding the concerns of the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA) about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. For those of you not able to attend yesterday, I attach a copy of ABRA's policy statement and summarize below my remarks.

Summary of remarks by Lewis Freeman to the VERE Caucus

- 1. The Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance is a coalition of 44 conservation and environment organizations in Virginia and West Virginia that are opposed to the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). We were formed in 2014.*
- 2. We oppose the ACP because of: a) the prospect of long-term ecological damage to the affected region; and b) serious questions about the net economic benefit of the project.*

Ecological concerns

- The proposed route would disturb vulnerable soil and karst topography of the region, creating a strong likelihood of sediment run-off into underground water sources that would endanger human and animals using it. The Town of Monterey (Highland County) would lose its water supply according to experts who have studied the problem. A new study we have conducted concludes that the potential for moderate or severe soil erosion along the proposed route in Highland County alone is 94% (4/5ths of that potential is categorized as "severe"). That would be a disastrous consequence for that county's water supplies, streams and rivers, which include the headwaters of both the Potomac and the James Rivers. Other counties along the route are also being studied for erosion potential and that data will be available soon.*

- We support Sen. Edwards' bill, SB 726, that would require erosion and sediment control plans to be filed with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for utility projects affecting 50 acres or more. However, we are concerned about the DEQ's ability to oversee satisfactorily the proper implementation of such plans, based upon conversations we've had with agency officials.
- The ACP would present a serious threat to several endangered species of plants and animals. This was at the core of last month's permit denial for the ACP by the U.S. Forest Service regarding the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests.
- We believe there are serious ecological and safety challenges in building a pipeline over (and in some cases through) the steep mountain terrain proposed for the ACP route. Consequently, we share the concern of the sponsors of HB 1261, which would grant authority to the State Corporation Commission to conduct safety inspections for natural gas pipelines, and support passage of that legislation.

Economic benefit questions

- The claims associated with the ACP that it would create significant jobs and bring other economic benefits to affected communities are significantly overstated and ignore the harm that would result for many businesses and other economic enterprises in the project's path. ABRA issued last year a study refuting those claims (<http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Synapse-Report-on-ACP-Benefits-6-12-15.pdf>) and will issue later this month a new study on the net economic impact of the ACP on four Virginia counties: Augusta, Buckingham, Highland and Nelson.
- What is the true need for additional pipeline infrastructure to serve expected growth in demand for natural gas in the markets that would be served by the ACP, and what are the long-term prospects for supply originating from the Marcellus shale deposits? These questions will be addressed by another new study soon to be released by ABRA. They are questions that have been previously raised by the U.S. Department of Energy and, most recently, at the Seventh Annual Marcellus-Utica Midstream Conference & Exhibition in Pittsburgh. Several speakers at that conference last week observed that production is waning in the Marcellus and Utica fields, and that the region's takeaway capacity may be soon overbuilt.

Finally, we support SB 614 and HB 1118, which repeal VA Code Section 56-49.01, granting an exemption from trespassing laws for natural gas pipeline companies seeking to survey private property. We believe this section is not at all in the interest of the public good, as evidenced by the contention and confusion it has raised among so many in the public this past year.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you have. Thanks again for the opportunity to speak to you yesterday.

- Lew

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Judge allows pipeline surveys on two Augusta properties

- The News Virginian – 2/1/16

http://www.dailyprogress.com/newsvirginian/news/judge-allows-pipeline-surveys-on-two-augusta-properties/article_47bd8c36-c932-11e5-944e-d70efec6dec3.html

Court sanctions Dominion's right to survey against property owners' will

Report: Pipeline climate impacts could double that of smokestacks

- Augusta Free Press – 1/29/16

<http://augustafreepress.com/report-pipeline-climate-impacts-could-double-that-of-smokestacks/>

Related:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/vapipelines>

Letter: Questions about Dominion, pipeline, in Buckingham County

- Augusta Free Press – 1/31/16

<http://augustafreepress.com/letter-questions-about-dominion-pipeline-in-buckingham-county/>
 Dominion, press paying token attention to residents of Buckingham County

No need for division over ACP

- News Leader – 1/29/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/no_need_for_division_over_pipeline_newsleader_20160129.pdf
 Despite Dominion's claims, there ARE options other than the ACP

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Stanton and Wolf: Natural gas pipelines need re-think and regional analysis

- Roanoke Times – 2/3/16

http://www.roanoke.com/opinion/commentary/stanton-and-wolf-natural-gas-pipelines-need-re-think-and/article_725de078-127e-5bd3-b950-d6a180b2faeb.html
 Discussion of need for PEIS relating to natural gas projects

Pipeline compressor station proposed for Meadow Bridge

- The Register-Herald – 1/28/16

http://www.register-herald.com/news/pipeline-compressor-station-proposed-for-meadow-bridge/article_2613ff2a-a8f0-5e30-92fe-0518e240452f.html

ConEd creates new subsidiary for electric and gas transmission

- Utility Dive – 1/28/16

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/coned-creates-new-subsiary-for-electric-and-gas-transmission/412866/>
 ConEd doubles down on Marcellus gas

Big Picture:

NatGas Groups Caution FERC Against Expanding Scope of Environmental Reviews

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 2/1/16

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NatGas_Cautions_FERC_Against_EnvRepReq_20160201.pdf
 In a shocking turn of events, NatGas Groups don't want expanded Environmental Reporting Requirements

US Sen. Elizabeth Warren takes strong stand against Northeast Energy Direct natural gas pipeline

- Daily Hampshire Gazette – 2/1/16

<http://www.gazettenet.com/news/townbytown/cumington/20844325-95/us-sen-elizabeth-warren-takes-strong-stand-against-northeast-energy-direct-natural-gas-pipeline>
 Says the people of Massachusetts need "a good federal partner"

ISO New England: Natural gas pipeline constraints threaten grid reliability

- MassLive.com – 1/27/2016

http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/01/iso_new_england_natural_gas_pi.html
 During periods of extreme cold...a few days each year, statistically

Federal agency investigating New England's high energy costs

- Keene Sentinel – 2/1/2016

http://www.sentinelsource.com/news/local/federal-agency-investigating-new-england-s-high-energy-costs/article_cf85029e-7448-5bbc-8c67-0e4905205b1d.html
 FERC thinks ISO's rate formulas "unjust, unreasonable and unduly discriminatory or preferential"