



ABRA Update #165 – January 25, 2018

Citizen Surveillance Program for the ACP Is Announced by ABRA

A citizen initiative to monitor construction activities of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) was publicly announced by ABRA on Monday, January 22. The objective of the Pipeline Compliance Surveillance Initiative (Pipeline CSI) is to ensure strict application of environmental laws and regulations for the ACP.

“We strongly believe that the ACP is unneeded and cannot be built safely without causing permanent damage to the environment, particularly critical water resources,” stated Rick Webb of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, who is chairing the development of the new ABRA program. “We will continue to challenge the government decisions involving the project. But, with certain pre-construction activities already underway, citizen oversight is essential given the limited resources of government agencies that are responsible for regulating pipeline construction.”

Continuing, Webb said “the need for citizen oversight of pipeline construction has been made clear by observations of recent pipeline projects and ineffective government agency response to repeated violations and water resource harm. We have no reason to expect more from the agencies during construction of the ACP, given their failure to require submission of complete environmental plans prior to project approval. This deferral of critical review and analysis sets the stage for significant and long-term degradation of high-quality streams and groundwater supplies.”

The Pipeline CSI will gather in-depth data and assess the landscape the ACP is proposed to cross to fill in information gaps in official records. The Pipeline CSI planning team is currently developing programs on stream quality monitoring, aerial surveillance, and regulatory review, as well as establishing appropriate guidelines and protocols. The program will initially concentrate on the most mountainous portions of the ACP route, where major watersheds are potentially impacted.

The overall effort will involve hundreds of volunteer observers in Virginia and West Virginia, plus several partnering organizations that have existing programs with which CSI will coordinate and supplement, including the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Trout Unlimited, Wild Virginia, FracTracker Alliance, SouthWings, and Appalachian Voices.

ABRA plans to establish working relationships between the Pipeline CSI program and regulatory agencies that have inspection and enforcement responsibilities for the ACP. ABRA representatives this week had an initial meeting with officials of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. Similar meetings with other key agencies are being planned.

Information on how interested ABRA member organizations and individuals can participate in Pipeline CSI will be forthcoming over the next two weeks.

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North Carolina Poised to Grant 401-Certification to ACP

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NC DEQ) may announce as early as Friday its certification of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), under provisions of Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, according to reports that surfaced Wednesday and Thursday (see article below in In the News). Last year NC DEQ delayed its consideration of permitting the ACP due to the absence or insufficiency of needed information. As recently as January 4, the agency disapproved ACP's erosion and sediment control application. Permits for air pollution and stormwater are also still pending.

Pipeline Water Regulation Bill Advances in Virginia Senate

A bill that would tighten water quality reviews for natural gas pipelines was unanimously approved today by the Virginia Senate committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources. [SB 950](#) (Sen. Emmett Hanger, Augusta County, is lead sponsor) requires the Department of Environmental Quality (the Department) to determine whether any activity associated with a federally regulated natural gas pipeline project will occur in an upland area or other sensitive area, will be likely to result in a discharge to state waters and will not be covered by a federal Clean Water Act certification.

Among the measures provisions is a requirement that the State Water Control Board "conduct a review that includes, at a minimum, (i) an individual review of each proposed water body crossing consistent with the requirements of a Virginia Water Protection Permit, (ii) a review of any construction through karst terrain, and (iii) a review and approval of erosion and sediment control plans and stormwater management plans."

S.B. 950 now goes to the Senate Finance Committee for further consideration. Constituents in the Senate districts of Finance Committee members should let their Senators know how important this legislation is. Committee members are Senators Norment (Co-Chair), Hanger (Co-Chair), Howell, Saslaw, Lucas, Newman, Ruff, Wagner, McDougle, Vogel, Carrico, Obenshain, Barker, Dunnavant, Stuart, and Dance. For contact information for these Senators, click [here](#) and then click on the name of the Senator.

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Agency grants request to begin tree cutting for Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 1/19/18

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/agency-grants-request-to-begin-tree-cutting-for-atlantic-coast/article_b2515843-e37d-57c3-b4c6-ba786e05d6e3.html

The approval is limited to spots where easements have been obtained for land access, where surveys have been completed and where no additional state or local permits are required for the activity.

Duke Energy, ready to build the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, goes to the top: Gov. Cooper

- The Progressive Pulse – 1/25/18

<http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2018/01/25/duke-energy-ready-build-atlantic-coast-pipeline-goes-top-gov-cooper/#sthash.FofgLwRj.dpbs>

Say goodbye to forests, vital habitat

- The Recorder – 1/25/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Say_goodbye_to_forests_vital_habitat-RecorderEditorial_20180125.pdf

Dominion repeating pattern of action without foundation

- The Recorder – 1/25/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Dominion_repeating_pattern_of_action_with_out_foundation-Recorder_20180125.pdf

Anti-pipeline group vows to 'monitor' project

- The News Virginian – 1/22/18

http://www.dailyprogress.com/newsvirginian/news/local/anti-pipeline-group-vows-to-monitor-project/article_d4249426-ffe5-11e7-9ef4-23a9bc673e58.html

ABRA Press Release:

- https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ABRA_press_release_on_Pipeline_CSI_20180122.pdf

Environmental groups file legal challenges to VA pipeline

- Bay Journal – 1/22/18

https://www.bayjournal.com/article/environmental_groups_file_legal_challenges_to_va_pipeline

Lawsuits seek federal court review of state's narrow approval of Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Surprise! Dominion Energy favors latest slew of rate legislation in Richmond

- The Virginian-Pilot – 1/22/18

https://pilotonline.com/news/local/columnist/roger-chesley/article_ef366d3c-9fco-5223-9582-78eab3643855.html

Delegates and senators said the new legislation would help customers by providing refunds, expanding solar power and improving the electric grid.

Related:

- https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/lawmakers-from-both-parties-raise-alarm-about-rush-to-redo-dominion-oversight/2018/01/24/e5b8bdf0-0145-11e8-9d31-d72cf78dbee_story.html?utm_term=.obobd655e388

How the Dominion-SCE&G deal could trample your property rights

- The State – 1/25/18

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/op-ed/article196571304.html>

A good read from our southern neighbors.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

Mountain Valley Pipeline construction start OK'd in West Virginia

- The Roanoke Times – 1/22/18

http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/franklin_county/mountain-valley-pipeline-construction-start-ok-d-in-west-virginia/article_2fdc895a-1e9f-517a-a7b8-3276f691ca16.html

Although the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's approval was limited to work on access roads and construction yards in five West Virginia counties, it marked the first time Mountain Valley has met all the requirements for preliminary construction to begin anywhere along the 303-mile route of its natural gas pipeline.

Roanoke County is Trying to Prepare Citizens for Tentative Mountain Valley Pipeline

- WVTF RadioIQ – 1/24/18

<http://wvtf.org/post/roanoke-county-trying-prepare-citizens-tentative-mountain-valley-pipeline>

The Great Grid Grab

- Bacon's Rebellion – 1/22/18
<http://baconsrebellion.com/41850-2/>
- Related:
- <http://baconsrebellion.com/logic-behind-grid-transformation-act/>

Big Picture:

Cold Snap Showed Grid Resilience, Lawmakers are Told

- Roll Call – 1/23/18
<https://www.rollcall.com/news/policy/cold-snap-showed-grid-resilience-lawmakers-told>
- But...
- <https://dailyenergyinsider.com/news/10248-iso-new-england-power-study-highlights-fuel-security-risks/>

Fighting Climate Change? We're Not Even Landing a Punch

- The New York Times – 1/23/18
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/23/business/economy/fighting-climate-change.html>
- The world's diplomatic meanderings suggest that the diplomats, policymakers and environmentalists trying to slow climate change still cannot cope with its unforgiving math.

FERC Protest: 200+ Groups Demand Changes To Toothless Pipeline Review Process

- Oil and Gas Online – 1/18/18
<https://www.oilandgasonline.com/doc/ferc-protest-groups-demand-toothless-pipeline-review-process-0001>
- Protesters Post List of Eight Key Reforms to Ensure “Meaningful Fixes” to Approval Process at FERC Headquarters.

Ohio again asks FERC to block drilling for Rover natural gas pipeline project

- Reuters – 1/24/18
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-energy-transf-ohio/ohio-again-asks-ferc-to-block-drilling-for-rover-natural-gas-pipeline-project-idUSKBN1FD2GE>

PennEast Gains FERC Certificate, But Regulatory Hurdles Still Remain

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 1/22/18
<http://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/113122-penneast-gains-ferc-certificate-but-regulatory-hurdles-still-remain>

Weather.com devoted its entire site to climate change today. Here's why.

- The Washington Post – 1/25/18
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2018/01/25/weather-com-devoted-its-entire-site-to-climate-change-today-heres-why/?utm_term=.37a9820fde20

Getting to 'head-spinning' low prices for U.S. offshore wind

- Utility Dive – 1/23/18
<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/getting-to-head-spinning-low-prices-for-us-offshore-wind/515188/>