



ABRA Update #175 – April 5, 2018

Governor Northam Calls for Review of State Environmental Regulations

An Executive Order directing Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality to conduct “a comprehensive review of DEQ’s permitting, monitoring, and enforcement activities across all program areas” was issued April 4 by Governor Ralph Northam. The Order directs the agency to:

- A. Review DEQ’s permitting, monitoring, and enforcement activities across the air, water, and solid waste programs.
- B. Evaluate every proposed federal regulatory or guidance modification released after January 20, 2017, regarding air, water, and solid waste to determine the impact on public health, drinking water supplies, and land and water protection.
- C. Work with stakeholders to improve communication with the public and the regulated community and provide more opportunities for proactive education, especially among underserved and lower income populations.

The DEQ is to conduct its review in consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources, who oversees the agency, and is to provide a report to the Governor by April 30, 2019. The full text of the Executive Order is available [here](#).

In a separate action, Governor Northam on April 2 reappointed David Paylor as Director of the DEQ. Paylor has worked in environmental regulation in Virginia since 1973 and has led the department since 2006 under both Democratic and Republican governors.

Road Closures for ACP in GW National Forest Still Undecided

Public access to roads in the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) during construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) is still an unresolved issue. At this writing, the U.S. Forest Service has not yet issued a notice regarding what roads might be closed to the public in the GWNF while the ACP is being built. Conversations ABRA recently has had with the GWNF indicate it is unclear when decisions on road closures will be made. In contrast, the Supervisor of the Monongahela National Forest signed on [March 7 a 120-day closure notice](#) for certain roads in that Forest associated with ACP activity. And, a [notice associated with the construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline](#) through the Jefferson National Forest, which is under the authority of the same forest supervisors as the GWNF, was signed on March 30. It calls for a two-year closure of specified roads.

Keep up with new developments by visiting and liking us on [Facebook](#).

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CSI Reporting System in Full-Operation; Volunteers Still Needed

ABRA's Pipeline Compliance Surveillance Initiative (CSI) is now in fully functioning. The reporting system for observed incidents is operational and reports are being made. A reminder that to report an incident, one can phone or email. If the latter, attached photographs are appreciated.

Email: csi@abralliance.org Phone: 877-GO2ABRA (877-462-2272)

Response for volunteers to participate in the CSI program has been strong, but more people are needed. To volunteer, go to <http://pipelineupdate.org/csi/> and fill out the online Volunteer Form. In order for the program to be successful, your help is essential!

In the News:

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Pipeline incompatible with county goals, citizens warn

- The Recorder – 4/4/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Pipeline-incompatible-with-county-goals-citizens-warn-Recorder_20180404.pdf

During a public hearing March 29, opponents to the current route for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline agreed it would conflict with the Highland County Comprehensive Plan, despite a consultant's advice.

The biggest regional land-clearing project since the federal highway program of the 1960s is now underway in Virginia and West Virginia.

- AltDaily – 4/4/18

<http://altdaily.com/the-treetop-movement-watching-dominions-every-move-as-they-construct-their-pipeline-in-the-virginias/>

Good news, bad news and a call for continuing vigilance!

Bath emergency services, Dominion discuss protocols

- The Recorder – 4/4/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bath-emergency-services-Dominion-discuss-protocols-Recorder_20180404.pdf

Representatives of Bath County emergency services, Dominion Energy and Atlantic Coast Pipeline attended a meeting held last Wednesday to discuss emergency procedures during pipeline construction.

Volunteers, citizens deserve information

- The Recorder – 4/4/18

https://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Volunteers-citizens-deserve-information-Recorder-editorial_20180404.pdf

Dominion's pipeline story doesn't add up

- News Leader – 3/30/18

<https://www.newsleader.com/story/opinion/readers/2018/03/30/dominions-pipeline-story-doesnt-add-up/472459002/>

Editorial: Norfolk pipeline vote was realistic

- The Virginian-Pilot – 4/3/18

https://pilotonline.com/opinion/editorial/article_d17cf408-36a3-11e8-9c47-23c50f9a29ea.html

For those disappointed by the Norfolk council's decision, the issue is as much this particular pipeline as the continued reliance on non-renewable fuels it represents. Climate change continues to reshape Hampton Roads and residents are done no favors by promoting energy sources that accelerate and worsen those problems.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

A tree-sit protest of the Mountain Valley Pipeline has spread to Roanoke County

- The Roanoke Times – 4/2/18

http://www.roanoke.com/business/a-tree-sit-protest-of-the-mountain-valley-pipeline-has/article_40eb2131-f3d5-5b34-95c4-2f0ce16376a4.html

The latest person to climb up a tree in the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline — hoping to prevent tree cutting as construction of the project begins — got off the ground Monday on private land in Roanoke County.

Related:

- http://www.roanoke.com/news/virginia/pipeline-opponents-continue-to-sit-along-mvp-route/article_8504ab01-dea1-58b6-boae-5b2cbb1f2c82.html

West Virginia Debuts Webpage on Pipeline Projects

- OSHA Online – 4/4/18

<https://ohsonline.com/articles/2018/04/04/west-virginia-debuts-page-on-pipeline-projects.aspx?admgarea=news>

Northam orders upgrade of DEQ amid criticism from pipeline opponents

- The Roanoke Times – 4/4/18

http://www.roanoke.com/news/local/northam-orders-upgrade-of-deq-amid-criticism-from-pipeline-opponents/article_11f46001-59b5-58a6-b2d4-41b0a6418cb8.html

The initiative is threefold: updating and better enforcing regulations, guarding against the rollback of environmental protections under President Donald Trump, and improving transparency at a time when DEQ has come under withering criticism from pipeline opponents.

Related:

- <http://augustafreepress.com/northam-signs-executive-order-on-environmental-protections-window-dressing/>

As Virginia pipeline battles continue, Northam reappoints head of state environmental agency

- Richmond Times-Dispatch – 4/2/18

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/as-virginia-pipeline-battles-continue-northam-reappoints-head-of-state/article_01c762ba-5220-592e-af54-b67e30e2c7f9.html

Northam's decision ensures continuity for a state agency that deals with complex environmental issues, but it disappoints some environmentalists who have pressured Northam and the DEQ to be more aggressive in policing energy companies.

Want records from past governors? Get ready to wait

- The Roanoke Times – 3/31/18

http://www.roanoke.com/news/virginia/want-records-from-past-governors-get-ready-to-wait/article_a5d2d4ec-44d9-5694-b9ff-f1422doc69c1.html

Lack of funding and personnel, deluge of electronic material and 'FOIA loophole' mean critical records may avoid public scrutiny for years.

Virginia ruling sets stage for legal fight over power suppliers

- Energy News Network – 4/4/18

<https://energynews.us/southeast/virginia-ruling-sets-stage-for-legal-fight-over-alternative-power-suppliers/>

Ruling lets businesses aggregate demand to bypass Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power and shop for alternative electricity providers.

Big Picture:

Biggest Threat to Humanity? Climate Change, U.N. Chief Says

- The New York Times – 3/29/18

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/climate/united-nations-climate-change.html>

The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, on Thursday called climate change “the most systemic threat to humankind” and urged world leaders to curb their countries' greenhouse gas emissions.

Cyberattack Shows Vulnerability of Gas Pipeline Network

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/business/energy-environment/pipeline-cyberattack.html>
3rd-party communications and control system hacked, a cause for concern for major energy companies.
- Related:
 - <https://threatpost.com/insecure-scada-systems-blamed-in-rash-of-pipeline-data-network-attacks/130952/>

Three struggling nuclear plants need 'emergency' rescue, FirstEnergy pleads

- Charleston Gazette-Mail – 3/30/18
https://www.wvgazettemail.com/business/three-struggling-nuclear-plants-need-emergency-rescue-firstenergy-pleads/article_of4c16ff-f76e-5a27-85e7-88c9cfeac41a.html
Whatever your thoughts on nuclear energy, market-based policy, etc., the loss of 4GW of carbon free, baseload energy is troubling...and difficult to replace quickly or economically.
- Related:
 - <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/oil-industry-renewable-groups-slam-utilities-plea-for-rick-perry-to-save-coal-nuclear-plants>
 - <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/4/5/17196676/nuclear-power-plants-climate-change-renewables>

Environmentalists see proposed Louisiana law to protect pipelines and penalize protesters as overreach

- The Advocate – 3/31/18
http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/crime_police/article_1b087942-34ee-11e8-8dcb-2b3538173f63.html
Fearful of large-scale protests like those that surrounded the Dakota Access pipeline, Louisiana legislators have joined their counterparts in other states to introduce legislation that specifically protects pipelines and establishes penalties for people who seek to damage them.

Energy costs: Renewables close in on fossil fuels, challenging on price

- USA Today – 4/4/18
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/energy/2018/04/04/energy-costs-renewables-close-fossil-fuels-challenging-price/485210002/>
The writing on the wall for coal has been clear for some time. But the threat to natural gas was not thought to occur so soon.

Emerging Economies 'Catching Up' in Global Renewables Race

- IEEFA – 4/3/18
<http://ieefa.org/emerging-economies-catching-up-in-global-renewables-race/>
Some developing countries such as Lithuania and Uruguay and Indian states such as Tamil Nadu are rapidly developing wind and solar power, demonstrating that middle and lower-income nations can make progress in adopting green energy.