



For immediate release

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Contact: Ernie Reed, Vice Chair, 434-971-1647 cell, [lec@wildvirginia.org](mailto:lec@wildvirginia.org)

Lovingston, VA: As expected, Duke Energy has selected Dominion Resources and its subsidiaries to build and operate a massive new natural gas pipeline slicing through the heart of central Appalachia and Virginia's Southside. Dominion will have to seize private property through eminent domain, uproot farms and families, and disrupt businesses and lives in their attempt to complete the project. The pipeline will also fragment over 50 miles of remote National Forest in Virginia and West Virginia.

[Friends of Nelson](#), one of many local groups of property owners opposed to the pipeline, remains emphatically opposed to the pipeline in its entirety.

Ernie Reed, Vice Chair of the group stated, "This is a long process and the pipeline cannot be built without approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). We, along with our partners in the counties along the route, intend to fight the pipeline until the project is dead. This pipeline is not in the public interest. It is purely a speculative venture to profit from the massive increase in natural gas supplies due to highly controversial hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking.'"

He continued, "Friends of Nelson grows every day with new landowners calling us wanting help protecting their private property from Dominion's trespassing surveyors and threat of eminent domain."

A 2004 [law](#), passed by the General Assembly and signed by then-Governor Mark Warner, allowed gas companies to trespass without permission in order to survey for new pipelines. Virginia is one of a handful of states that allows such trampling of private property rights. According to Virginia Public Access Project, Dominion Resources is the [largest non-party donor](#) to elected officials in Virginia.

Kathy Versluys, a small business owner in the path of the proposed pipeline, stated, "We were pleased to see that Augusta County Board of Supervisors [passed a resolution](#) requesting Attorney General Mark Herring review the constitutionality of the 2004 law. Given Dominion's stranglehold on elected officials in Virginia, we are not holding our breath. We have incorporated and are preparing our legal case."

Also as expected, Governor McAuliffe lent his backing to the project. Vice Chair Reed stated, "We were surprised that the Governor came out so early in support of a project that has not undergone any review for its impact on the people and natural resources of Virginia. It seems he has been negotiating, perhaps secretly, with the big corporations, but he certainly has never contacted the people in Nelson County whose lives have been upended by this proposal. We expected more from Governor McAuliffe.

Reed continued, "It is shortsighted of the Governor to support this venture given the tremendous and permanent impact it will have on the families, farms and forests in its path. Thousands of Virginia families and businesses will be negatively impacted by this proposed pipeline. If Governor McAuliffe

wants to create jobs he should invest in efficiency and renewables, the fastest growing sectors in the energy industry, not the polluting, carbon-intensive fossil fuel industry.”

Friends of Nelson is a citizen-run, community-based, membership organization dedicated to the protection of property rights, property values, rural heritage and the environment for all the citizens of Nelson County, Virginia.

Additional Background material:

The pipeline would go through fifty miles of the most sensitive areas of the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests. It would also cross the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail--two of Virginia's national treasures known for their one of a kind views and beautiful natural forests.

The newly-named Atlantic Coast Pipeline would also disturb the headwaters of major watersheds that provide high quality drinking water for much of Virginia and the District of Columbia. Augusta, Nelson and Highland Counties are the headwaters for the Chesapeake Bay and for millions of water users. Most of our counties' residents rely on mountain forest headwaters or wells for their drinking water. The pipeline would cross almost four hundred streams in Virginia and destroy the riparian buffers and wetlands that protect them. The Shenandoah, Rockfish and James River watersheds would suffer from heavy sedimentation caused by pipeline construction.

The pipeline would have to be constructed in severely challenging mountainous terrain and through unstable karst formations that dominate the topography of Highland and Augusta Counties. Karst is characterized by sinkholes and sinking streams that greatly increase construction and operational safety concerns. In addition, these counties are known for “orthographic lifting,” the weather phenomenon that causes tropical storms to stall over the mountains and dump extraordinary amounts of rain on the mountains in a few hours resulting in mountains sliding away and tiny streams turning into raging torrents.

In August, 1969, Nelson County was struck by disastrous flooding caused by Hurricane Camille. Camille dumped 27 inches of rain, mainly within a three-hour period. 153 people were killed and over 133 bridges were washed out. Along Davis Creek, which the pipeline is proposed to cross, 52 people were killed or could not be found and only 3 of 35 homes were left standing after the floodwaters receded. This is not an area where anyone should want to build a pipeline.

We are small rural counties, whose economies depend on our rural heritage including our forested landscapes, farmlands and mountain vistas remaining free of invasive infrastructure or clear-cut swaths. Our main businesses of low-impact tourism and agriculture rely on our high quality drinking water, unfragmented grazing areas, fertile, undisturbed soils, and priceless viewsheds. This project threatens the economic viability of some of Virginia's most productive farms, many of which have been in the same family since the 1700s.