

Comments for FERC scoping meeting, March 18, 2015

Hello, my name is Jennifer Lewis and I am President of Friends of Augusta.

I am speaking tonight as a neighbor and friend of Nelson County but I also work a part time job at a winery in Afton. I have been working in the tasting room of a local winery for about 8 years. I have seen the industry grow significantly, going from 150 wineries to now there being over 250. We have the 151 Trail now, there are new restaurants and B&B's, there are new taxi services and wine tours, all benefiting from the success of the tourism industry of Nelson County. People come from all over the world to taste wine in beautiful Nelson County. I have meet people from India, England and Japan, from France and Poland. I have met people from DC, New York and California. They are coming to Nelson County and spending money! October is Virginia Wine Month and we get thousands of visitors a day that are coming to see the breath taking view of the mountains as the leaves change. Even in the dead of winter, people come and enjoy a glass of Pinot Noir next to the fire and watch the snow cover the mountain top. The summer time is for late night concerts and dancing barefoot. People visit wineries to celebrate birthdays with families, to get engaged and to remember to stop and have fun. I am a bird lover and have seen an osprey fishing out of a lake near the winery property and have seen a bald eagle flying over the budding grape vines. We have had a bear come down our driveway but he turned around before getting to the picnic area! Our visitors love having seeing wildlife, it always makes their trip more memorable and special. Nelson is peaceful and quiet but can also be very exciting and wild! There is something special about Nelson County, it's hard to describe. You feel so removed from everything else when you are sitting at a winery with friends. You feel inspired by the simple beauty of grape vines with the sun setting behind the majestic mountains. You feel connected to your wine when you get to see where it was grown and made and maybe even talk to the person who made it.

People will not want to come to Nelson County to see a massive scar across the mountain and landscape. This pipeline will directly affect tourism and the money flowing into the county. The threat to the water that the wineries, along with the breweries and farmers, rely on is scary and real. If something would happen to the water in Nelson County, they would not be able to make wine and that puts families' livelihoods at risk. The view would be devastated by the pipeline, visitors would ask how we let this happen, I can hear them now, asking why such beauty was ruined. What is going to be my response, a couple people made some money off it? The pipeline does not belong anywhere in Nelson County!