



For Immediate Release

Contact: Joanna Salidis
434-242-5859
josalidis@gmail.com

Friends of Nelson Joins Grassroots Coalition Protesting FERC's Flagrant Disregard for the Public

Today, on the steps outside the Washington Office of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Friends of Nelson is protesting FERC's flagrant disregard for the public in the permitting process for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Nelson County residents have joined activists and organizations all over the East and Northeast in opposing FERC's abuse of its responsibility to fairly consider the public and their comments.

"We want FERC and its commissioners to know that we are here this week because their complicity to route the ACP through our home deeply violates so many of our personal and community values," said Joanna Salidis, President of Friends of Nelson. "Nelson County property owners want FERC to uphold their claim that eminent domain is a method of last resort -- not a gift from the government to maximize profit on the backs of unwilling private property owners and communities."

This week, citizens from many states across the country have gathered to protest FERC's rubber stamping and undemocratic processes. The FERCus protestors include residents of communities along the ACP route and other proposed pipelines who are demanding that their health and well-being should not be sacrificed for corporate profit and foreign customers. The protestors also oppose FERC's approval of the Cove Point LNG facility in Maryland. Beyond Extreme Energy, Qualmless Organizer Jimmy Betts said, "The bullying and deceptive tactics of how fracked gas infrastructure

projects, like LNG export terminals, are permitted for private profits at the expense of our planet's water, soil, air, climate, and human and natural rights, should be reason enough to question and ultimately block these devastating fossil fuel follies."

"People have come from Vermont, Maryland, New York, Nebraska, Virginia..." said Anne Buteau, who came from Nelson County for the protest. Joyce Burton, who was also present, said "Many communities are being hurt by the FERC's practice of indiscriminately approving every fossil fuel pipeline project that comes across their desks, no matter how ill-conceived."

"FERC has denied the public the right to participate in the process," said Ernie Reed of Friends of Nelson. "It has set an unrealistic schedule for a process that needs time to be done correctly. FERC has closed its eyes and ears to the public and we are here to bring attention to this fact."

Friends of Nelson cite the facts that:

- FERC turned away more than 200 people wishing to comment publicly at FERC scoping meetings in Augusta and Nelson Counties in March of this year.
- FERC failed to make good on its promise to hold an open house or scoping meeting in Buckingham County, where a proposed compressor station would turn an area dominated by agricultural development into a polluting, industrial landscape.
- FERC's transcription of public comments from the scoping meetings, intended to identify issues to include in the environmental analysis, is so full of errors it is incomprehensible.
- FERC failed to extend its scoping period for public input despite reasonable and repeated requests made by Senators Tim Kaine, Mark Warner, Congressman Robert Hurt and hundreds of Virginia residents to do so.
- FERC set an unreasonably short time period of 2 weeks for Dominion to respond in full to over 20,000 comments submitted on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.
- FERC continues to permit dozen of pipeline proposals despite the absence of a national energy policy that recognizes the potential contributions of renewable energy to local and regional energy supplies.

“The FERC process fails to protect the public and weigh harm versus need,” said Ms. Salidis. “We've seen that FERC doesn't work even with our own limited experience, but other communities who have been dragged through the entire regulatory process provide more definitive examples. FERC's business as usual allows industry to claim domestic use and need, even when the gas is destined for export. We know that the ACP fracked gas will similarly be exported if it is more profitable, while property owners and communities are left paying the price of lost property values, rural heritage, and clean water.”

Friends of Nelson and hundreds of citizens have asked that FERC halt the permitting process until FERC produces a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement documenting the cumulative impacts of all three pipelines proposed for the Allegheny Blue Ridge region --The Atlantic Coast Pipeline, the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the Appalachian Connector -- together. “Three 42-inch pipelines with the same source and the same terminus that serve the same purposes must be considered as one single project,” said Ms. Salidis.

“Dominion claims to FERC that they cannot afford to take the time to give the process due diligence,” said Reed. “We submit that FERC cannot afford not to fully engage the public in the process.”

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