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Nelson Businesses and Citizens Call for Strong Federal Review of Proposed Gas Pipelines

44 Nelson County businesses, four community organizations and hundreds of private citizens are urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to conduct a comprehensive, simultaneous review of all four proposed gas pipelines that would cross Virginia instead of following their usual procedure of one-at-a-time environmental assessments.

This overview of multiple proposals is called a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement or PEIS. A PEIS would evaluate the full environmental impacts of all of these pipeline proposals together. It would: analyze the cumulative impacts to air, water, soils, and climate, both regionally and state-wide; assess the total environmental impacts, from drilling and fracking at the source through the combustion of the gas at the end; and determine whether there is enough domestic need to justify the proposed pipelines.

Finally, it would evaluate other possible scenarios—including conservation and investing in renewables like solar and wind—that would fulfill the same needs but not require granting energy companies the power of eminent domain to build the

pipelines across thousands of properties without the consent of those property owners.

“We’re simply asking that FERC get a plan,” said Randy Whiting of Friends of Nelson. “There is no comprehensive environmental and economic review of the more than 1000 miles of pipelines proposed that would slice across Virginia.”

Dominion’s 590-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the 300-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline are just two of four pipelines that have been proposed to carry natural gas across Virginia. (FERC is currently considering proposals for over 45 different LNG projects and over 3,700 miles of new pipelines east of the Mississippi.) Many experts in the field—including the U.S. Department of Energy—have called this proliferation of pipelines redundant and unnecessary.

Friends of Nelson County has been contacting local businesses to register their concerns about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline by endorsing a policy statement published in June of 2015 by the Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA). ABRA is an advocacy group formed to challenge the ACP and other gas pipelines proposed for this region. It has a membership of 47 organizations spanning four counties: Nelson, Augusta, Buckingham and Highland. The ABRA statement identifies environmental, economic and social concerns about the proposed pipeline.

To date, 45 small businesses have endorsed the statement, along with four community groups. Friends of Nelson continues to add additional support from the county business community.

In addition, Friends of Nelson has gathered hundreds of citizen signatures in Nelson County, making the same request of FERC.

These citizens and groups requesting a full PEIS join 13 state senators and delegates, including Senator Creigh Deeds, Delegate David Toscano, the Roanoke City Council, and Westmoreland and Craig County Boards of Supervisors. U.S. Congressmen Robert Hurt, Bob Goodlatte, and Morgan Griffith, and Senators Tim

Kaine and Mark Warner, have also called for a comprehensive analysis of all the Virginia pipelines from FERC.

“It makes no sense to be investing billions of dollars of rate-payers’ money in these pipe dreams when the great majority of the gas will eventually be sold to purchasers overseas,” said Ernie Reed of Friends of Nelson. “The only beneficiaries are energy companies, like Dominion, who stand to rake in billions, while all the costs and liabilities of these pipelines are shouldered by property-owners and ratepayers.”

Nelson County Businesses Endorsing ABRA Policy Statement include:

Acorn Inn B&B
Afton Mountain B&B
Art Is An Egg
Basic Necessities
The Blackburn Gallery and The Loft at Blackburn
Blue Ridge Pig
Blue Toad Hard Cider
Bookwrights
Cardinal Point Winery
Chirios Pizza
Davis Creek Farm
Edible Landscaping
Dr. Mitchell A. Fleisher, MD
Flying Fox Vineyard
Goodwin Creek Farm
Heartwood Design
Hibnig Hollow Assoc., LLC
Inkville Writing and Editing
K Robins Designs
Ligmincha International’s Serenity Retreat Center
Lovingston Cafe
Mark Addy Inn

The Monroe Institute
Mountain Cove Vineyards
Nelson 151 (10 members)
Old Orchard Farm
Ragland Auto Repair
Rockfish Baking Company
Rockfish Valley Inn
Rockfish Valley Veterinary Clinic
Spruce Creek Resort and Market
Strawberry Finch
Steve Baker Construction
St. Brigid Press
Synchronicity
Trager Bros. Coffee
Veritas Vineyard and Winery
Virginia Rock Shop
Wild Man Dan
Biocentric B&B
Wild Wolf Brewing Co.
Charles R. Wineberg Jr., Realtor
Wintergreen Hardware
Yoga Health Works
360 Ventures, LLC