

FRIENDS OF NELSON

Annual Report for 2021

2021 has been a transitional year for the FoN steering committee. With the cancellation of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline in July, 2020, our highly intense focus on stopping the pipeline shifted to exploring how FoN can continue to serve Nelson County in the future. Although our stated mission may change as a result of strategic planning, at this time we continue to follow the mission established seven years ago:

“Friends of Nelson is...dedicated to the protection of property rights, property values, rural heritage and the environment for all the citizens of Nelson County, Virginia.”

Personnel

Current steering committee members are: Jill Averitt, Connie Brennan, Ron Enders, Mary Eiserman (vice president), Kelly Faust, Woody Greenberg, Cheryl Klueh (treasurer), Susan McSwain (secretary), David Schwiesow, Coe Sweet and Doug Wellman (president). Both contractors resigned: Jill Averitt joined the steering committee, and Joyce Burton “retired” but continues to help county landowners obtain release of easements.

Finishing Up

Atlantic Coast Pipeline’s cancellation was a major victory, and it has been followed by the cancellation of a number of other massive pipeline projects around the country. The shift away from fossil fuels is gaining momentum. The following FoN initiatives are aimed at resolving issues remaining from the ACP battle and helping other citizens’ groups with their pipeline challenges.

Professional archivist Ellen Bouton, with assistance from Woody Greenberg, is nearing completion of the **Friends of Nelson archive**. The archive will be housed permanently at the Virginia State Library. It will be a useful resource for scholars, journalists, activists and others who want to understand how an apparently unstoppable multi-billion dollar project that had the backing of both federal and state officials was defeated.

Led by David Schwiesow and Joyce Burton, we are pushing for the **release of the easements** Atlantic Coast Pipeline extracted from landowners in Nelson County and along the entire 600 mile length of the pipeline. To this end, we submitted three detailed comment letters to FERC, urging them to require Dominion Energy to release the

easements. We also coordinated with the Southern Environmental Law Center and the Niskanen Center, each of which filed comments on our behalf of FoN and other citizens and citizen advocacy groups.

Project leaders Ron Enders and Woody Greenberg are producing a **manual and accompanying video on the lessons we learned about grassroots organizing** in our campaign to stop the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The goal is a digital document that can be readily accessed at no cost by other grassroots organizations across the country. We envision a living document that can periodically be amended to incorporate the lessons learned by other grassroots organizations fighting pipelines. This work is supported by a grant re-purposed from our planned well-water testing analysis.

Jill Averitt, with assistance from Joyce Burton, is working with the Property Rights and Pipeline Center (PRPC) in Washington, DC, on a “**Landowners Rapid Response Guide.**” This is not officially under the auspices of Friends of Nelson, but it is a worthy effort we want to encourage. The guide will be a place for landowners to get clear, trustworthy and timely information on how they can protect their land and their communities against unwanted pipeline projects. Four topics with supporting videos cover: knowing your rights, organizing as a community, creating awareness and getting a lawyer. This project will be free and available in January of 2022 on the PRPC web site.

Moving Forward

We are investigating new ways of serving the citizens of Nelson County. This involves transitioning from a clear and compelling goal—NO PIPELINE—to a broader, less well defined goal of helping Nelson County preserve and enhance our natural and cultural heritage.

During the course of 2021 we have explored a number of projects. Our largest effort involved providing information about how we can reduce **waste, especially plastics**. Worldwide, use of plastics has emerged in recent years as an enormous source of pollution. We would like to see Nelson County emerge as a leading example of responsible use and disposition of plastic waste in rural counties. We participated in the TREX (manufacturers of plastic decking) contest by collecting used plastic film (bags etc.) at the Nelson Farmers Market, the Nellysford IGA and the Lovingson Food Lion. We reached our goal of collecting over 500 pounds of plastic bags, and were award a TREX bench that will be present in our community next summer.

Other projects of interest include: improving disposal of organic wastes, supporting zero-polluting transportation, encouraging greater efficiency in home heating and cooling, maintaining intact forest ecosystems, and fostering soil-building regenerative agriculture.

Our exploratory work in 2021 has led us to the work the Steering Committee will be undertaking in 2022. With support from the Center for Nonprofit Excellence, we will be going through **strategic planning** to help clarify where we'll be heading in the next few years and how we can organize most effectively to achieve our goals.

Almost assuredly, our new mission will also focus on providing Nelson residents with good and current information. One essential component of effective communications in the digital age is an **effective web site**. Our current web site has served us well; it has been a source of valuable information for our members, the community at large, and other anti-pipeline organizations. With the cancellation of the pipeline, most of the current website is no longer of immediate interest, so we plan to archive it so it will be accessible from the new web site. Our objective with the new web site is to make it inviting and easily navigable. It should be a primary vehicle for informing and educating the citizens of Nelson County.

We look forward to the second generation of Friends of Nelson. With your support, we will do our best to keep Nelson County at the forefront of rural counties in Virginia.