

OPED piece, News Leader
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Dominion's Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), if allowed to be built, will be the largest disturbance of land and water in the Commonwealth of Virginia since the Interstate highways were built. Is it possible or even probable that Dominion can dig up a 600 mile long, ten foot deep, 125 foot wide swath through three states, crossing hundreds of streams and meet each state's water quality standards? I do not believe it is possible nor probable.

The ACP will unearth 9,090 acres (that's about 9,090 football fields) - 396 million square feet. That's 15.6 times larger than the footprint of the largest office building on the planet - the Pentagon which covers 583 acres.

The ACP in Virginia will be almost as long as Interstate 81 is in Virginia which is 325 miles long.

Have you ever seen a construction site that did not have brown water leaving the site after a rain? I have not, even with the proper erosion and sediment control practices such as silt fences and catch basins. Runoff water from construction sites is brown because it has suspended soil particles in it. These soil particles clog the gills of aquatic animals suffocating them, they die.

State Code of Virginia: "All state waters, including wetlands are designated for the following uses: recreational uses, e.g., swimming and boating; the propagation and growth of a balanced, indigenous population of aquatic life..."

How can any public body or any rational person believe this much earth moving and blasting will not pollute streams, destroy aquatic life, or disrupt the underground water supplies we depend on.

In the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) own written comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) concerning the ACP, they state, "Dye traces within the general project area have shown connections of karst features to springs and wells as far away as 7 miles..."

The ACP's planned mayhem of construction will go through the water recharge area of Gardner Spring which supplies the city of Staunton, population 24,000 with half of its water. The spring's recharge area is in karst geology. How many water recharge areas will the 600 mile long mayhem of construction go through? How much aquatic life will this destroy?

The DEQ states it will study every foot of upland disturbance created by the ACP. They should study, review and permit every stream and wetland crossing as well. But they are not.

They plan to give this responsibility to the Army Corps of Engineers where Dominion hopes to receive a blanket permit for all stream and wetland crossings. The planned ACP will cross 189 streams and 43 wetlands in Augusta County alone.

Farmers must get a permit for their cows to cross a stream. Shouldn't Dominion be held to the same standard? Why should they get a free pass on permitting?

Dominion needs a permit from the Virginia State Water Control Board (SWCB) to build their Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The Board has the authority and the responsibility to certify that Dominion's construction of the pipeline will not violate Virginia's water quality standards.

If they cannot certify that this mayhem of construction will not violate state water quality standards then the Board can and must deny the permit.

Our water is too precious to gamble with. Let the SWCB hear your voice. And please tell them the comment period for this action is woefully too short.

Send an email to:
comment-acp@deq.virginia.gov

Mail your comments to:

DEQ, Office of Wetlands and Stream Protection
P.O. Box 1105
Richmond, VA 23218

The comment period ends on August 22