

Issue: Pipelines

## Atlantic Coast Pipeline — Talking Points

### Introduction

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is a bad solution to an industry-generated “problem.” Destined to transfer energy dependence from one polluting source to another, the 600-mile project cutting across Virginia is the brainchild of Dominion Energy and three of its gargantuan peers. Far from ensuring energy independence for the region, it competes with—and may delay—development of renewable energy for years to come. It was approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2017 and could deliver one billion cubic feet of West Virginia’s fracked gas to North Carolina per day.

### Is It Needed?

*Doubtful.* The FERC approved the project based on Dominion’s 15-year forecast of future demand which, it was later determined, was 75 percent higher than the forecast of PJM, the regional grid operator. In December 2018, the State Corporation Commission rejected Dominion’s long-term resource plan, having “considerable doubt regarding the accuracy and reasonableness of the company’s load forecast for use to predict future energy... requirements.” The inflated load forecast was a major justification for building the pipeline.

### What Will It Do to Virginia’s Forests and Streams?

*A great deal of damage.* With pipeline construction temporarily halted, areas already stripped of trees resemble war zones. Crossing the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains, it would cut a 16-mile swath 75 to 100 feet wide through the George Washington National Forest. The route would increase noise and air pollution and cross waterways dozens of times. Expect facelifts for mountain ridgelines. Construction blasts and erosion will push sediment into streams, hurting wildlife and water quality.

### What Is Its Impact on Climate Change and Renewable-Energy Alternatives?

If built, the pipeline’s methane leaks and other emissions will cause 68 million metric tons of yearly greenhouse gas pollution—the same as 20 coal plants. Pipeline supporters argue that natural-gas energy replaces dirtier coal-fired energy. Really? Right now, renewable projects are flowering in Virginia. A 500-megawatt solar energy plant is being built in Spotsylvania County. Dominion is expanding its wind-energy capacity and planning a \$300 million project with two 6MW offshore wind turbines. New natural-gas energy could crowd out new renewable energy, not coal.

### How Much of the Bill Would Ratepayers Pay?

The state must decide what ratepayers will pay for the \$7.5 billion project. “Overbuilding pipeline capacity fattens the balance sheets of investors and strands captive ratepayers with extra costs,” one law professor wrote in [GoDanRiver.com](http://GoDanRiver.com). Testimony indicated ratepayers would pay up to \$2.3 billion in pipeline charges; the Richmond Times-Dispatch said the government guarantees a 14% rate of return for developers. Pending legislation requires the Corporation Commission allow new ratepayer charges only if new gas was needed to supply customers’ power—something very much in question.