



http://www.theet.com/pipeline-debate-wages-on-in-west-virginia/article_820c8ae7-4dbf-5d18-8da5-f7f309770a82.html

<

PREVIOUS

REGATA MARILOR VELIERE, LA UN NOU SUCCES

>

Pipeline debate wages on in West Virginia

by Sarah Tincher THE STATE JOURNAL Sep 2, 2016

CHARLESTON — Pipeline infrastructure has long been a topic of debate in the United States, and more recently in West Virginia, where more than a dozen new pipelines and pipeline expansion projects are currently pending regulatory approval.

Industry developers and their supporters tout the widespread economic benefits of infrastructure development, but an army of opponents has raised numerous concerns with water contamination and other public health impacts, wildlife disturbance and quality-of-life issues caused by nearby development.

Spotlighting Benefits



The oil and gas industry, as well as downstream sectors such as manufacturing, have repeatedly lobbied for an increase in pipeline infrastructure in the Mountain State. Their argument is that pipelines help keep demand high for the state's natural gas resources by bringing it to markets where it's needed, in addition to creating opportunity to bring downstream activity, such as an ethane cracker plant to the region.

Similarly, the Consumer Energy Alliance launched its "Pipelines for America" campaign Aug. 11 to "educate consumers about the increasing importance of U.S. energy infrastructure." CEA, which bills itself as a consumer advocacy organization, has a record of backing oil and gas drilling and pipeline projects.

"What we've seen for too long is that consumers have been left out of the discussion and haven't been engaged on these issues across the country," said Brydon Ross, the director of CEA's Southeast Chapter. "Pipelines are incredibly important, not only for home heating and electricity and transportation fuels, but these are also the feedstocks for our manufacturers, for recruiting industries into communities and states, and frankly building feedstocks out for a whole variety of industries that people just don't think about on a day-to-day basis.

"Pipelines are underground; they are largely safe and go unnoticed, so I think it's out of sight, out of mind," Ross continued. "We want to be sure that we are expanding and elevating that profile on the importance of energy security and economic security in this country."

The campaign comes as an effort to counter anti-pipeline movements, such as the widespread “Keep It in the Ground” campaign, that aim to promote the development of renewable energy as an alternative to fossil fuels. According to Ross, many of these movements have “given people an unrealistic and one-sided perspective on how to meet energy demand in this country.

“There’s been a lot of misinformed anti-development groups that have been trying to thwart projects, and we see that as a real hindrance to energy and economic security in this country for regular, everyday consumers,” Ross said. “Their claim is not realistic.

“CEA certainly supports renewable energy development — we have renewable members. ... We think that’s a big part of our energy future, but the reality is we can’t power a multi-trillion-dollar economy like the United States on intermittent resources,” he continued. “Even people who support a lot of the environmental regulations you see out there, be it the Clean Power Plan or what have you, the administration recognized that we’re going to need baseload fossil fuels for a long, long time in this country — for many, many decades.

“Pipelines bring energy security to our country, they keep fuel prices low, they keep our electricity prices low, and they’re vitally important for consumer goods in this country and give us a real leg up on an internationally competitive basis. When you think about economies that have lots of resources, one of the real challenges they have is getting those resources to marketplace. We could do that in the United States with our robust pipeline network.”

Raising Red Flags

Concerned citizens and environmental advocates throughout Appalachia have assembled various organizations to take a stand against pipeline development in the region.

Just a week after CEA announced its pro-pipeline movement, Morgantown-based consulting firm Downstream Strategies released a report on the potential impact on the quality and quantity of water supplies along the pipeline routes.

“While pipeline developers tout the economic benefits, many are concerned about the potential environmental and human health impacts of these projects,” noted the study, which was sponsored by 10 different advocacy groups. “Concerns are diverse and include surface water and groundwater impairment, habitat fragmentation, forest degradation, and private property rights.”

The report is meant to serve as an informational guide to landowners and water providers about the potential impacts of pipeline development.



While the report highlights the variety of environmentally focused regulatory hoops a pipeline developer has to jump through in order to actually begin construction, it did not address the effectiveness of these regulations, noting that “concerns about regulatory system performance have been raised by a number of conservation groups and pipeline opponents.”

“Any large-scale construction project or development will have some environmental impacts, and pipelines are no exception,” the report stated. “The (Mountain Valley Pipeline) and (Atlantic Coast Pipeline) will be buried 7 to 10 feet below the surface, removing vegetation, soil, and bedrock along the path. The construction right of way will be 125 feet wide, and an extensive network of access roads and staging areas will be required. This disturbance to the surface has implications for both surface water and groundwater resources.

“Alterations caused by pipeline construction can lead to increased turbidity and total dissolved solids, as well as changes in flow patterns, in both surface and groundwater resources. Another concern is the potential for spills — of fuel or other petrochemicals from the machinery used to construct the pipeline — which could make their way into surface water or groundwater.”

Researchers also noted that surface contamination caused by pipeline development has led to the pollution of groundwater and drinking water supplies in the past, highlighting a 2015 incident when diesel fuel that was spilled at a pipeline staging area near a sinkhole

contaminated the water supply of the Red Sulphur Spring, Virginia, Public Service District.

Autumn Bryson, program director for the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, said her group isn't necessarily opposed to pipelines as a whole. Rather, the group's opposition is mostly rooted in the fact that there are 16 transmission-related projects currently being proposed in West Virginia.

"We realize that we have gas and people need the gas for energy and pipelines are going to be built, but there's also a lot of pipelines that are already in the ground that aren't at full capacity," Bryson said. "And the fact that there are so many proposed for this region just makes us feel like maybe we don't need them all.

"If they're going to build we want to see a responsible build out and to actually have some forethought and planning into it," she added. "If the gas is able to be harvested responsibly and without damaging our water sources, then we wouldn't have a problem with it, but the way they're extracting it now with little regulations and there's been a lot of issues with contaminating water supplies so we're not in favor of any extraction where we are compromising our water sources for an energy source."



**American
Owned and
Operated**

**Where do you have your
retirement dollars?**

Let me show you how an
American Equity Annuity
can help with securing your
retirement!

Bob Flowers, CLU*, ChFC*
304-365-1284
www.BobFlowersCLU.com

144 678 6000 Westtown Pkwy, West Des Moines, IA 50366 ©2014 American Equity All Rights Reserved.
Insurance Products offered by American Equity Insurance Company*

Sarah Tincher can be reached at stincher@statejournal.com

Pam Kendall