

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/22/2023 4:09:44 AM

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Comments: As a citizen of the Roanoke Valley, the former infrastructure director of the Virginia Youth Climate Cooperative, and now a Biology and Environmental Studies student who conducts research on water quality, I cannot stand by the Mountain Valley Pipeline existing and running through the Jefferson National Forrest.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline, if building continues through final construction, will come with a significant cost, one that is both familiar and tragic to the people who live in Appalachia. The Mountain Valley Pipe (MVP), according to one study, would emit 90 million metric tons of CO₂ annually, which equals the emissions from 19 million vehicles. If construction is finished, the MVP would be the largest greenhouse gas emitter in Virginia.

Constructed on terrain no pipeline in the U.S. has been built on before, the MVP would traverse steep mountains, old-growth forests, sinkholes, caverns, and nearly 1,000 streams, rivers, and lakes in Virginia and West Virginia. The dredging required would risk the unleashing of sediment downstream and threaten aquatic ecosystems and drinking water. The pipeline would cut across key habitat for endangered species where it is set for un through the Jefferson National Forest and two key wilderness areas.

Pipelines disrupt the ecology when being built, requiring the felling of old-growth trees and digging through water ways and it will cause irreparable harm to the environment when the line inevitably leaks. The pipeline's construction has already led to hundreds of water-quality-related violations. The plants, animals, people, and engaged species of Appalachia will be the ones to pay, not the corporations.

Appalachia's Black and Indigenous communities, along with low-income and rural communities, have been bearing, and stand to bear, a disproportionate amount of the project's environmental side effects. A look at the proposed construction shows the pipeline would run through some of Appalachia's most "socially vulnerable" areas. A proposed extension into North Carolina would traverse through a majority-minority Congressional district and traverse traditional burial mounds of Siouan-speaking tribes, including the Monacan and Occaneechi. In 2021, the US Forest Service Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement confirmed its plan to weaken 11 fundamental rules protecting old-growth forests, soil health, wildlife, and scenic viewsheds in order to allow the fossil fuel developer to cross mountainous wildlands in the Jefferson National Forest. This was done allegedly in the economic benefit of the pipeline, being developed by a private, for-profit company, which they say should justify environmental damage on public lands. However, the MVP developers have never definitively shown a domestic need for the fracked gas that holds up.

The economics used to justify the pipeline's construction are not built on sound research and models. The demand for natural gas has decreased below the rate pipeline sponsors have used as justification for construction. Some projections show that the gas from the pipeline will likely not be any cheaper, and there is a lack of evidence that all of the gas delivered will be purchased and used.

If this pipeline were great for the people of Appalachia, its environment, and its economy, it would have been completed already. Instead, it is four years behind schedule, and delays continue to mount. In February, the U.S Fish and Wildlife permit was revoked by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit due to inadequate analysis of the pipeline's effects on wildlife. The court also denied permits issued by the U.S Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in the past, citing concerns over sediment and erosion, and denied the MVP's request for new judges in June.

With the permits invalidated and the delays costing billions, there was hope that we would not have a new pipeline cutting through our backyards. But then Democratic leaders in Washington made a deal without us in the

room.

We must not provide lifelines to the fossil fuel industry rather than focus on the immediate and future well-being of the citizens they are supposed to represent. The planet's climate emergency does not care how hard it is to get bills passed these days.

The people of Appalachia to be heard and for those across the country to help us in this fight. Although not everyone knows to make a public comment, I know firsthand from all of the people who have taken direct and indirect action in Appalachia: farmers directly affected, of war veterans, construction managers, and doctors sharing concerns, of the tree-sitters, old folks, and grandmas that have led blockades, and mass resistance protests in D.C. This pipeline may not be in your backyard, but it will be in someone's, and the fossil fuels will still be consumed on the planet we all share. This pipeline is not ethically, economically, or scientifically sound. Trust the science, the people, and the ecology. The Earth is this future. In an age of climate change and water scarcity, water is our future. Protect our forests, not the short-term wealth of a corporation and the dying fossil fuel industry.