



Highlanders for Responsible Development

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HRD Announces Opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Highlanders for Responsible Development (HRD) expressed its concern about the proposed natural pipeline of Dominion Resources when the project was first announced by the company in May. We said then that the proposed pipeline would transverse over 20 miles of Highland County and raised serious questions. Among those questions were the ecological and economic impacts the project would have upon Highland County and its citizens. In the ensuing weeks HRD has monitored presentations that Dominion officials made about the project to the Highland County Board of Supervisors, as well as to the boards in Pocahontas, Augusta and Nelson Counties. We have also conducted a public meeting to hear from citizens about the project. Based upon the information and opinions we have gathered, HRD today expresses its strong opposition to Dominion's proposed pipeline, now a joint venture called the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Our principal reason for opposing the project is that a pipeline of this magnitude built through Highland County would have serious and permanent negative impacts upon the county's ecology and economy. Our organization is in favor of economic development in Highland County that has an overall benefit to the county. However, the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline would not be beneficial and would be incompatible with Highland County's greatest asset: its incomparable landscape, water and natural resources. Specifically:

1. The fragile karst topography that underlies most of Highland County is inappropriate – ecologically and geologically – for a natural gas pipeline to be responsibly and safely built. The valuable water resources of the county, which include the headwaters of two of the East Coast's major rivers (Potomac and James), would be harmfully affected by changes in sediment and water flows, which in turn would negatively impact water sources for many county residents as well as wildlife and other natural resources that are so important to the uniqueness of Highland County. Dominion has even recognized the danger by stating publically on several occasions that it would avoid a route that crossed karst topography and associated sinkholes. The company has not done due diligence in its research of a pipeline, for karst and sinkholes could not be avoided in building a pipeline through the county.

Highlanders for Responsible Development is a citizens group that promotes stewardship of Highland County, Virginia's unspoiled landscape, natural resources and exceptional quality of life. We support policies and activities that are based upon informed community discourse, democratic decision making, prudent land use and sustainable economic development.

2. The demands the project would place on Highland County's limited government resources – including emergency services and law enforcement – would dwarf its capabilities. Dominion, when asked about this, has responded wholly inadequately. This again raises the question of whether the company fully understands the impacts the proposed project would have on the communities through which the project would pass. Or, cares.
3. The overall project would have a negative impact on the economy of Highland County. While it is true that affected landowners would receive payments for the pipeline to cross their land and additional money would be spent locally for some services purchased during construction, these benefits would be significantly offset by the decided disruption the project would have on the county's efforts to grow its tourism, attract new residents and would have a negative impact upon property values. On the latter point, Dominion claims there would be no impact on esthetics or property values. But, there is already evidence to the contrary. Some potential buyers of land located in counties through which the pipeline would be built, including Highland, are rethinking their interest in purchasing property because of the proposed pipeline project.
4. In conclusion, the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline would not be development that is in the best, long term interests of the county. Rather, it would represent irresponsible development. We urge Highland County citizens, organizations and their elected officials to oppose the Atlantic Coast Pipeline being built through Highland County.