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Dominion to survey southern route

BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER

MONTEREY — More Highland real estate owners just received pipeline survey letters in the mail.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline LLC again is asking landowners in Highland, as well as Randolph and Pocahontas counties, W.Va., for permission to survey their land now that the company is looking at a potential alternate route for its proposed 42-inch interstate natural gas transmission pipeline.

Dominion, the lead project partner, explained the new route consideration in a statement released Monday.

The alternate route would enter Highland County 12-15 miles south of the currently proposed route near Hightown, and about two miles north of the Route 84 state line crossing George Washington National Forest.

It would cut eastward across Mill Gap, cross U.S. 220 near Mustoe, and trace across upper Big Valley and the middle section of Bullpasture River Valley toward its same eastern egress point as the current route, about two miles south of U.S. 250 on the west shoulder of Shenandoah Mountain, again across GWNF.

Dominion said both the alternate route and the currently proposed “preferred” route involve the Monongahela National Forest. “Dominion is pursuing survey permission to determine if the alternate route is a more suitable route than the proposed preferred route,” Dominion said in the statement.

The announcement follows the recent closing of a public comment period by Monongahela National Forest concerning the proposed “preferred” pipeline route. Letters seeking permission to survey were mailed to the landowners along the alternate route at the end of last week.

The alternate route was discussed in Resource Report 10, which was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in early December.

The alternative was described as MNF 5, beginning on page 10-20 under “Southern Route Alternatives.”

Dominion said surveys are necessary to find the best route with the least impact to the environment, and historical and cultural resources. The company is required to submit its

preferred route in its application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission later this year.

Typically, the first step in evaluating a route alternative is to conduct surveys and environmental studies along the potential corridor. Dominion notified the landowners along the alternate route that it plans to begin the studies on or about March 1.

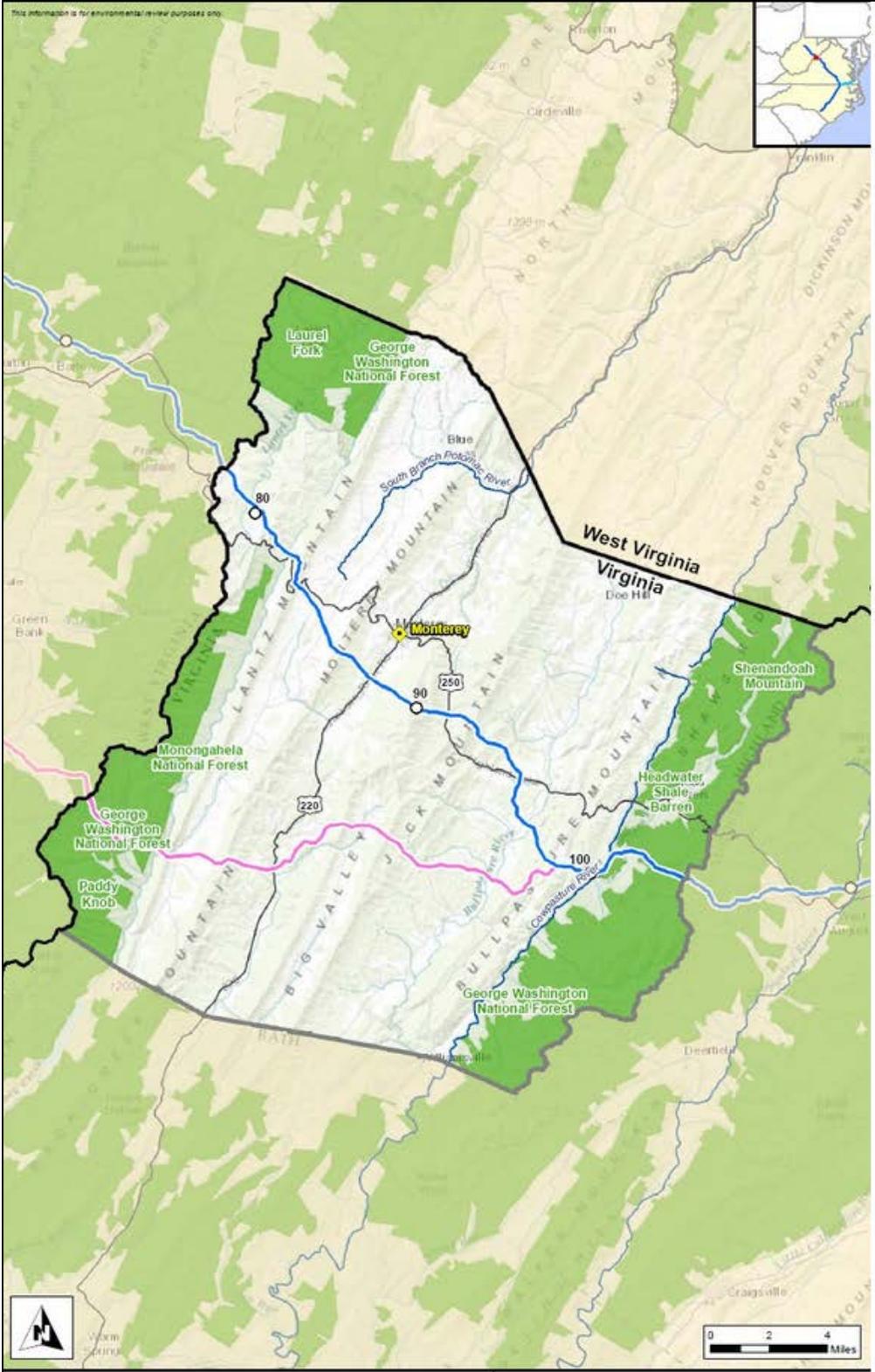
The company said granting permission to survey does not imply that landowners agree to construction of the pipeline on their property. Once a final route has been selected, the ACP will seek a separate easement agreement from all affected property owners before construction, Dominion said.

Rick Webb of Mustoe, coordinator of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition, said Dominion's move was designed to distract or mislead, calling it "a move to reduce the level of public opposition" to its proposed route across the center of the Monongahela National Forest and the high-elevation red spruce ecosystem. "I'll be surprised if Dominion is serious," Webb added. "It previously rejected the alternative under discussion based on construction problems related to topography. And it would not be a minor route change. Dominion would have to go back to FERC and back to both the Monongahela and George Washington National Forest with new proposals and new permit applications. "To change routes now would be a set-back in the race to deliver shale gas to the southeast markets and the coast," Webb said. "My thinking is that Dominion will either stick with the current route proposal or do what it should do, which is to make use of existing pipeline infrastructure. Another route through the Allegheny Highlands doesn't solve its problems," Webb said.

Here's a link to [Dominion's interactive map](#), which displays both alternatives through Highland and eastern WV. Note that the menu allows you to turn on layers, including alternate routes and affected properties.

Here's a link to a [set of maps showing the two alternatives](#) through Highland and eastern West Virginia.

This information is for environmental review purposes only.



Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- Current Study Corridor
- Alternative Corridor
- Milepost
- ◆ County or Locality Seat
- ▭ National Park/Monument
- USDA Forest Service

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Highland County Virginia

