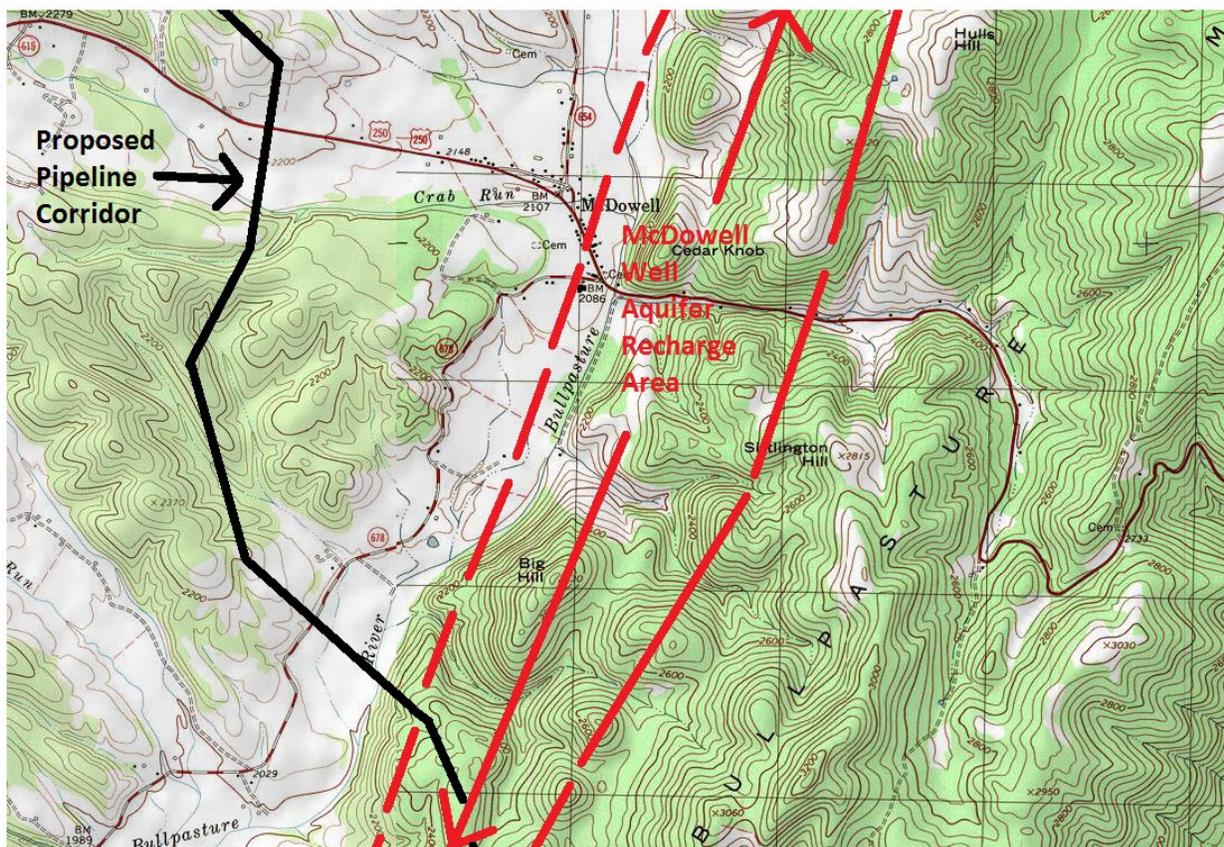


[http://www.therecorderonline.com/news/2015-04-23/Top\\_News/McDowell\\_study\\_advised\\_for\\_pipeline.html](http://www.therecorderonline.com/news/2015-04-23/Top_News/McDowell_study_advised_for_pipeline.html)



Danger zone Map shows MacDowell aquifer and Dominion's preferred route for the proposed pipeline. (Courtesy Rick Lambert)

4/23/15

## McDowell study advised for pipeline

BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER

MONTEREY — Highland supervisors learned at their April 15 work session that the county-owned McDowell water system could be in more peril than Monterey for potential contamination by construction of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Rick Lambert of Monterey, who is a member of the Virginia Speleological Society, described McDowell's aquifer as deep, narrow and confined, making it more susceptible to erosion runoff, sedimentation and construction related contamination.

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He recommended supervisors write to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission about the concern. "If you don't bring it up, they won't know," Lambert said.

Place the burden of performing a study of the potential impact on the aquifer on Dominion, Lambert suggested. He said an impact would not be hard to prove because the aquifer is so deep along the

Bullpasture River Valley. He said streams flowing down Bullpasture Mountain are sinking streams and that as the water flows, it sinks into the aquifer.

Supervisor David Blanchard asked if the town were assessing the same thing.

Mayor Rich Holman said the town was following the advice of Dominion government affairs manager Emmett Toms to take its concerns to FERC.

County attorney Melissa Dowd said any negative impact might happen quickly.

The town voted in a special called meeting April 13 to hire William Jones, a karst specialist, to write a letter of opinion for FERC's consideration.

Dowd asked about mitigation.

"You could ask them (Dominion) to move" the pipeline route, Lambert said.

Dominion applied for an exemption to the open trench law, he added. He said having 2,000 feet of open trench and two inches of rain would create four times the sediment as a trench built at the 500-foot limit.

It was suggested the county ask FERC to reroute the pipeline corridor and limit the trench to 500 feet. In a related matter, the Virginia Cave Board filed a 50-page report by Lambert Monday recommending measures to mitigate damage to aquifers by rerouting the preferred route away from those of Monterey and McDowell, limiting open trenches to 500 feet, establishing a preconstruction baseline of karst environment health and many other safeguards.

Blanchard said any landowner needs to be aware of the open trench and that 2,000 feet "is pretty big. You might not be able to get from one side of your property to another without a bridge."

Lambert related Dominion's Toms said, "You have to make your case to FERC."

Supervisor Lee Blagg said the county does not know exactly where the pipeline would go.

Dominion told Lambert the original route that passes west of McDowell is the preferred route. No action was taken.

Supervisors will meet next at 7:30 p.m. April 30 in the modular conference room to finalize the county budget.

The next regular supervisors' meeting will be 7:30 p.m. May 5 in the same location.