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Hearing features comments for, against Mountain Valley Pipeline

by Darlene J. Swiger STAFF WRITER Mar 9, 2017



Phillips



Laura Cooper of the state Department of Environmental Protection speaks prior to a public hearing on the Mountain Valley Pipeline Thursday, explaining how cofferdams are used to run a pipeline through a stream.

Staff photo by Darlene J. Swiger

CLARKSBURG — About a dozen people spoke for and against the Mountain Valley Pipeline during a public hearing held Thursday at Robert C. Byrd High School.

The third and final hearing on the pipeline's 401 Water Quality Certification, Natural Streams Preservation Act Permit and Oil and Gas General Water Pollution Control Permit was hosted by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline project is comprised of approximately 195 miles of natural gas pipeline, along with compressor stations, meter stations, access roads and interconnects, running through Wetzel, Harrison, Doddridge, Lewis, Braxton, Webster, Nicholas, Greenbrier, Fayette, Summers and Monroe counties in West Virginia, according to DEP spokesman Jake Glance.

Tom Bond, 83, spoke about problems with large-diameter pipelines, which he described as “a disaster waiting to happen.”

“Not only rights of way, but land on both sides are affected. It ties up the land in perpetuity,” Bond said. “The efforts should be going into renewable energy.”

Kevin Williams, a property owner, said the newer pipeline projects are better than before.

“Gas needs to be moved out of West Virginia. It’s a good thing. I am in favor of it, and I have seen both sides,” Williams said.

The Department of Environmental Protection also provided information on the proposed pipeline route, as well as stream, wetland and Greembrier River crossings.

Julie Berry, who works on permitting for other gas companies, and Jason Lockhart, of SLS Land and Energy Development, spoke in support of the project, highlighting the jobs it would create and the economic boost it would give counties and the state.

Greg Hefner of the Harrison County Economic Development Corporation also spoke in favor of the pipeline.

“It will be an \$811 million capital expenditure in West Virginia, with \$47 million in taxes and 4,500 in jobs,” Hefner said. “West Virginia can’t afford to miss out on this opportunity.”

Not everyone was in favor of the project, however.

Joe Guzzi was passionate in his opposition, saying an energy exploration company had damaged his property and refused to fix his road.

"The road is caving in. I have argued with them for two years, but they won't take responsibility for the road. I am now suing them for the \$35,000 in damage they caused," Guzzi said

Rose Scott acknowledged there is an economic advantage to building the pipeline, but said it could be only short term.

"West Virginia has as its strongest gift natural resources. There are three major pipelines proposed for the state. They will impact multiple streams and wetlands," Scott said. "The DEP must ensure plans to protect the water, and protect and preserve forests and streams."

Pastor Tammy Phillips said her family has made a living in the natural gas business, but realizes it is important to be good stewards of the land.

"The gas company fixed roads in Wallace that hadn't been touched in 80 years by the Division of Highways. When a project is done correctly, it is phenomenal," Phillips said.

Public comments on the Mountain Valley Pipeline can be submitted until 8 p.m. March 19 via email at dep.comments@wv.gov. The DEP plans to respond to each comment by early April.

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