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FERC Grants Mountain Valley Pipeline Permit Despite Continued Doubts It Will Be Completed

Controversial Fracked Gas Pipeline Still Lacks Essential Authorizations

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Today, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) granted Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC (MVP) permission to resume construction, even though the beleaguered fracked gas project still lacks some necessary authorizations. Industry watchers are growing increasingly skeptical of MVP’s future after a similar fracked gas pipeline, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, was cancelled as a result of similar permitting and legal challenges. Over a dozen environmental advocacy organizations have opposed MVP’s request.

Planned to run over 300 miles through West Virginia and Virginia, state inspectors have already identified hundreds of violations of commonsense water protections, and MVP has paid millions of dollars in penalties. There are also questions about whether MVP is accurately reporting how much of the project has been completed, with one analysis showing it is only 51% finished. At this time the project is at least $2 billion over budget, two years behind schedule, and developers admit they need two more years to complete the project.

In response, Sierra Club Beyond Dirty Fuels Senior Campaign Representative Joan Walker released the following statement:

"MVP has violated commonsense water protections hundreds of times and allowing them to resume construction just means putting more communities at risk for an unnecessary pipeline that may never even be built. FERC is supposed to regulate these fracked gas projects, not roll over for them.”

Roberta Bondurant of Preserve Bent Mountain/BREDL said:

“MVP construction crews have yet to traverse the most intense and well known geohazards —steep, in some places, nearly vertical slopes, slip prone soils, karst, and earthquakes— in the height of a global pandemic, during hurricane season —these multiple geohazards make today’s FERC/MVP plan to resume construction maniacal, wholly destructive to land, forest, water and living beings. With such challenges ahead, MVP’s latest promise to complete by early “2021” is suspect. People and places in the path of MVP are not disposable—we won’t be sacrificed for MVP investment returns.”
Russell Chisholm, Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights Co-chair said:
“FERC’s dangerous decision is an attempt to rescue MVP from their own mismanagement despite years of delays and documented failures. FERC favors energy policy by force, rewards negligence over the objections of thousands, ignores the evidence of harm to our communities, and shamefully denies climate realities. To do this as the COVID-19 crisis spreads through rural Virginia and West Virginia puts MVP and FERC’s disregard for our safety on full display.”

David Sligh, Conservation Director of Wild Virginia said:
“This is another in a long list of irresponsible decisions by FERC. In allowing construction to proceed while MVP still lacks required permits, the Commission is enabling the corporation's attempt to rush ahead, heedless of the harm already done and that which is sure to follow if this decision stands. The MVP is still not a done deal and FERC's collusion with the frackers won't make it so.”

Jessica Sims, Virginia Field Coordinator with Appalachian Voices said:
"It's clear that MVP is pulling out all the stops to rush this project through, and FERC is letting them get away with it. The agency ignored the 43,000 people who vigorously opposed this project moving forward, and disregarded the hundreds of water quality violations racked up so far. This pipeline was not needed when it was proposed, and is even less needed now. We will continue fighting to stop it."

Anne Havemann, General Counsel at the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, said:
“FERC's decision is unconscionable. Coronavirus is still raging in Virginia and now FERC is allowing fracked-gas companies to push through another health hazard. Tens of thousands of Virginians oppose this pipeline because they know we don't need it. We will keep fighting it until we win.”

Jared Margolis, Senior Attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, said:
“FERC is clearly not interested in protecting the public or ensuring that massive fossil fuel pipelines like MVP actually comply with the law. This project is a travesty that should never have been approved, and now it is being allowed to proceed even after devastating environmental harm from construction activities. We will continue to fight this horrible project to protect the people, wildlife and waterways in its path.”

About the Sierra Club
The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.8 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person’s
right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.