

KNOCK 'EM DOWN: MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception 1:

Using natural gas does not contribute to global climate change.

Reality:

Methane gas escapes from pipelines and creates planet warming and climate change. Though natural gas produces half the carbon dioxide of its equivalent in coal when burned, its main component, methane, is a powerful greenhouse gas when released unburned, that is, in pipeline leaks (which have occurred in all existing pipelines) and in compressor station blowdowns, the letting off of unburned gas into the air to regulate pressure. MVP plans a large compressor station in the Catawba Valley.

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Misconception 2:

Natural gas pipelines do not pollute the air or water.

Reality:

Methane and other heavy hydro-carbons (such as benzene) predictably escape from pipelines and can enter ground water and thus drinking water through local wells and then the New River. An explosion or major leak could be disastrous for local water supplies.

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In addition, the gas in the proposed MVP would be “unnatural” gas, “fracked” gas. Traces of the toxic chemicals, along with precious fresh water, that is pumped into the wells to retrieve fracked gas remain in the gas that is distributed in pipelines. In 2013 a research team found that 25% of the chemicals known to be used in fracking fluids are implicated in cancer, 37% in endocrine (hormonal) disruption, and 75% could affect the skin, eyes, and respiratory system.

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A natural gas pipeline requires a pressure station to maintain the pressure needed to move the gas through the line, especially up and over mountains. The proposed MVP will be a high pressure pipeline having 1,440 PSI (pounds per square inch). MVP proposes to build a large compressor station on 10 acres in the Catawba Valley, which will burn the “fracked” gas that is running through the pipeline, producing both toxic and global-warming fumes. The largest single emission at a pressure station is a blowdown pressure release; these occur frequently and can last up to 3 hours. Materials released can cause cancer, worsen asthma, cause serious respiratory illness, and increase deaths from heart disease.

<http://preservethenrw.org> and <http://preservemontgomerycountyva.org>

Misconception 3:
Natural gas pipelines are safe and quiet.

Reality:

Natural gas pipelines can and do explode. Natural gas pipeline explosions have killed hundreds of people, injured more than a thousand, and caused more than \$5 billion in property damage. Between 1994 and 2013 there have been 5,623 “significant incidents” (costing more than \$5K each), \$6,700,203,540 in losses, 1,397 injuries, and 362 deaths. If there were an explosion in certain areas of the Preston Forest subdivision, where the pipeline is proposed to transect the neighborhood, many families would have no way to get to safety—unless possibly rescued by helicopter, not a service the county is prepared to provide.

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MVP proposes to build a large compressor station on 10 acres in the Catawba Valley. Compressor stations release materials that can cause cancer, worsen asthma, cause serious respiratory illness, and increase deaths from heart disease. Compressor stations produce constant light and noise (24/7) and intermittent loud peaks of noise and low frequency noise that pose health risks for communities.

<http://preservethenrw.org> and <http://preservemontgomerycountyva.org>

Misconception 4:
The gas in the MVP will benefit citizens of Montgomery County and Virginia.

Reality:

Citizens would not be able get natural gas (to heat their homes or for cooking; natural gas, of course, is not a fuel for cars) directly from the proposed MVP, which is intended for interstate transport of gas to TRANSCO, the destination of the MVP after it crosses Virginia. Recently it was reported that a representative from EQT (one of the parent companies proposing the MVP) told a member of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors that access could be provided for about \$500K per connection during construction or over a million dollars after construction. At the May 26, 2015 meeting of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, under persistent questioning by a board member, an official of MVP finally admitted that they had received no queries from companies in Montgomery County who were seeking to gain access to this gas. There is good reason to believe that the fracked gas proposed to cross Virginia untouched is destined for foreign export—for higher prices and thus more corporate gain for the transporter, MVP.

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Misconception 5:

The Mountain Valley Pipeline will bring lots of local jobs.

Reality:

Although it is possible that pipeline excavation could bring temporary employment opportunities to operators of earthmoving equipment, this is not a certainty. Pipeline construction is a specialized business; the welders, for example, are expected to be transient employees who have the specialized skills and credentials required and who follow pipeline construction from state to state. In terms of permanent jobs, the Mountain Valley Pipeline's own website lists the economic benefits of the MVP project to Montgomery County as "a total of 34 jobs across the state." These same 34 permanent jobs are also listed as an economic benefit to these additional counties: Craig, Franklin, Giles, Pittsylvania, Roanoke—the same 34 jobs for six counties in Virginia! That's not much to brag about.

<http://mountainvalleypipeline.info/economic-benefits/>

Misconception 6:

The MVP will bring economic benefits to Montgomery County.

Reality:

There could be some revenue to Montgomery County from fees and permits, although if the Board of Supervisors does not raise certain existing fees for permits and inspections, the county could end up losing money here. There would also be revenue from ad valorem taxes, that is, land use taxes for the easements in which the pipeline is located, but these easements would be depreciated rapidly and thus the taxes would decrease rapidly. Questions have been raised about MVP's estimates of the value of these taxes to various localities. In addition, there would be significant losses in property tax revenue due to the devaluation of homes and farms in the areas the pipeline is proposed to cross. If approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), MVP could take land for the pipeline by eminent domain; it would not buy the land from the landowners, who would still pay property taxes on the land taken even though the owners' use of that land would be restricted by MVP. It is not clear how much responsibility MVP would take for repairing roads and infrastructure damaged during construction, how they would maintain access for residents and school busses during the construction phase, how responsibly they would act in terms of environmental regulations (the lawsuits and fines against EQT, one of the parent companies, in other states are worrisome), and whether MVP has sufficient insurance in case of an accident in the pipeline or the compressor station (the fact that a new Limited Liability Company has been formed is not encouraging). Montgomery County could well be disadvantaged economically by the direct loss of property taxes due to devalued homes and farms and the indirect loss of revenue from recreational and tourist opportunities; the county could be economically devastated by one significant accident.

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