

Socioeconomic Issues and Environmental Justice, Section 4.9, pages 4-383 to 4-413

Always include information about your knowledge of local conditions and concerns!

The introduction to this section lists almost all positive economic impacts before any analysis, indicating a clear bias: impacts of ACP listed include: Increased property tax revenue, increased job opportunities, increased income associated with local construction employment. increased demand for housing and public services, tourism and transportation, and increase in government revenue associated with sales and payroll taxes.” The only adverse effect mentioned is temporarily increased traffic or disruption of normal traffic patterns. Despite the DEIS emphasizing there will be increased employment, the DEIS only acknowledges the following permanent jobs for the ACP: 15 in Northampton, 5 in Johnston

DEIS says that Atlantic would maintain emergency response plans and that concerns about costs and local ability to respond to a catastrophic accident are unfounded, “based on statistical data.” If there is no basis for concern, why would data from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration show a dramatic increase in pipeline incidents for pipelines built in the past 6 years, even higher than for pipelines built before 1940.

The DEIS dismisses the Key Log study of economic impacts on property values in VA counties as biased. Instead they cite studies commissioned by Dominion and real estate sources saying that there’s no impact on value of local properties, except in the first few years after a pipeline accident. The DEIS completely fails to take a “hard look” or to critically review studies commissioned by and data provided by Atlantic and its contractors. The DEIS estimates total NC spending during operation years: \$11.7 million, with about \$72,000 in individual income tax payments to NC Dept. of Revenue. This indicates a very low individual tax rate (only 0.6%), indicating that actual income is far lower than \$11.7 million!

The DEIS cites studies to show the economic benefit of projected reduced energy costs, predicting increased spending in other parts of the economy. These studies assume stable or increasing natural gas production and stable low natural gas prices. Production has been decreasing recently, and prices are expected to rise, so the \$5.1 B debt that ratepayers would pay for in increased utility bills will NOT be compensated for by any “low cost” energy supply!

ACP anticipates paying \$30 million annually to local governments for property taxes, but it’s unclear what impact would be on property values if pipeline is underutilized. This projected tax income from the ACP has swamped critical local governance concerns, including adequacy of local emergency management and other services, reduced uses of land by citizens of a county.

Environmental Justice

The DEIS assumes the principle policy impact of the Environmental Justice Exec Order is to ensure widespread notification and public participation. In fact, federal policy demands more than simply wide public notification and in fact the DEIS congratulations are far from deserved. In doing door to door outreach in low income and minority communities very close to the pipeline corridor, we found almost no one who was familiar with the proposed pipeline route, how close their homes were located, or how to make comments on their concerns.

FERC study acknowledges that more than half of NC counties are below the median income for NC. Even more stunning is the fact that, “Twenty-seven of the 42 census tracts in North Carolina within a 1-mile radius of ACP facilities have a higher percentage of persons living below poverty-level when compared to the state.” This clearly documents a disproportionate impact to low income communities as compared to the state average--a clear environmental injustice.

In discussing minority communities, the DEIS only compares the population of minorities in census tracts to the population of THAT COUNTY, which badly and deliberately skews the results. “In 13 of the 42 census tracts, the minority population is meaningfully greater than that of the county in which it is located” Many counties through which the ACP would pass have much higher % minority population than the state as a whole, and that comparison of census tracts to state population is the one that should have been made. Only comparing the % minority in the census tracts adjacent to the pipeline with the county minority populations, greatly minimizes the discrepancy in minorities that could be impacted by the pipeline.

The DEIS denies any disproportionate risks to Environmental Justice populations, despite the high proportion of residents below the poverty line in census tracts close to the ACP, and the high proportion of minorities living in census tracts close to the ACP that the DEIS minimizes.

A final handwaving argument by the DEIS that completely undermines the meaning of “disproportionate impact” is in the statement: “Because the projects would generally traverse rural areas, the number of persons who would be at risk of injury due to a pipeline failure would be low, and there is no evidence that such risks would be disproportionately borne by any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group.”