

Virginia People's Tribunal on Human Rights, Environmental Justice and Fracked Gas

I live in the Woods Rd/Union Hill neighborhood of Buckingham County. My husband and I have lived in

this quiet, rural neighborhood for 32 years. We live approximately one mile from the proposed compressor station. A little over three years ago I

received a call from a friend over in neighboring Nelson County. She asked me if I had heard about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and more so if I was aware that a

compressor station, as part of the pipeline, was proposed to be quite close to my home.

I didn't even know what a compressor station was at the time. I soon was to learn. In

the following hours I became initiated into the club that no one wants to belong to.

Soon after we had our first public meetings and organized as Friends of Buckingham.

I meanwhile went house to house and talked to my neighbors who had no knowledge of the pipeline or the proposed location of the compressor station in our neighborhood.

Our local governing body had meanwhile been meeting with Dominion Energy for many months and had even passed a resolution in support of the pipeline. And yet there was very little public knowledge of it and no public hearings.

The first questions my neighbors and I had when learning about the compressor station were, of course, will it be safe and what does this mean for our lives? We were assured by Dominion Energy that any air emissions from the compressor station would comply with all air quality requirements, which are established to protect the public health, safety and welfare. They told our local governing representatives and the public this time and time again during public hearings and informational sessions. They told us "we would not operate the compressor station if we could not operate it according to stringent air quality regulations." We did our own research and found

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information provided by experts and researchers on air emissions such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Clean Air Council in Pennsylvania, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and more recently the Institute for Health and the Environment in New York state, it being the only location in the country where a health department has done a study on the health effects associated with chemical emissions from fracked gas compressor stations. This together with the direct testimonies from people who lived near compressor stations led us to believe that these statements were very misleading.

Our proposed compressor station is regulated by the state Department of Environmental Quality because it is considered a minor source, rather than a major source which would have come under the EPA's rule and permitting process.

Cumulative effects from other polluting sources are not taken into account when looking at these permits. We already have in our county a highly polluting Dominion Energy power station that is regulated as a major source. Currently we have good clean air, so called the baseline ambient quality. Because we have good clean air Dominion Energy is allowed to pollute at fairly high levels, adding tons of toxic chemicals each and every day for 365 days a year, 24 hours a day for the rest of our lives. Although federal and state environmental laws and regulations are in place to protect the health of regional populations, they do not protect the health of groups most severely impacted in the areas surrounding compressor stations, especially during venting or blowdowns when many more toxic pollutants are blown out into the air. This is when people get sick, but the cumulative effect of year after year of exposure can also cause multiple health impacts and is not considered. These highly toxic polluting

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zones can be up to 10 or even more miles depending on topography and weather conditions. The current regulations are woefully inadequate for those near to compressor stations. This does not ensure us that the air we breath every day will be free of pollutants that cause illness, make existing conditions worse or shorten our lives. They might meet the emission standards but our air will still be saturated with dangerous chemicals with more added each and every day of our lives.

Our lives are being exposed against our will to a high level of pollution with many, many identifiable health risks then generally more affluent populations.

As a mental health professional I cannot fail to add to these concerns the very real effects of stress on the human body. Considerable stress has been placed upon the lives of those whose lives are being threatened by their

land and all future plans for it being taken, air and water being poisoned, health threatened and the ongoing stress of dealing with the sadly inadequate public regulatory process

that we all have been jumping through these last three plus years. The anticipatory stress of not knowing what your future holds weighs heavily on people as they have been forced to postpone their present and future plans for their lives and to be sacrificed for an unneeded pipeline and in Buckingham a deadly fracked gas compressor station. Long periods of uncertainty and looming threat create chronic stress symptoms. Our bodies are necessarily able to handle short bouts of stress, but long periods of uncertainty cause harmful chronic stress symptoms.

High levels of unrelenting stress cause an overabundance of cortisol, the stress hormone which causes multiple negative effects. Many of my friends, allies

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and neighbors have been experiencing this kind of chronic stress.

The symptoms are way too numerous for me to innumerate here so an addendum will be provided for your consideration.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard. It may be the first time since this nightmare came into our lives.

Chad Oba
Chair -Friends of Buckingham

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