



POTOMAC  
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## FEDS APPROVE POTOMAC PIPELINE DESPITE PUBLIC OPPOSITION AND RISKS TO POTOMAC RIVER AND DRINKING WATER

In 3-1-1 Vote, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Dismissed Concerns Raised by Upper Potomac Riverkeeper on Water and Climate Change Impacts Posed by Fracked Gas Pipeline

**Washington, DC – July 20**– Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) decried the decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on July 19<sup>th</sup> to approve TransCanada’s application to build a new natural gas pipeline that would carry fracked gas from Pennsylvania across Western Maryland to West Virginia, passing under the Potomac River. Three out of five FERC Commissioners voted to approve the Columbia Gas pipeline, with a fourth concurring but disagreeing with FERC’s decision to ignore climate change impacts of expanding fracked gas infrastructure in its decision. In a strong dissent, Commissioner Glick, the fifth vote, passionately disagreed with his colleagues, calling them out for ignoring the impacts of burning natural gas, and stating that “Climate change poses an existential threat to our security, economy, environment, and, ultimately, the health of individual citizens.” The Potomac pipeline also faced widespread public opposition in local communities along its route, and numerous public officials and municipalities voiced concerns and opposition, including County Commissions and Councils from Washington, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s and Carroll Counties and the City Councils of Hagerstown, Boonsboro, Sharpsburg, Frederick, and Washington, DC.

“From the start, we have made clear our concerns to FERC over the serious threats this pipeline poses to the Potomac River and 6 million downstream citizens who rely on it for clean drinking water. Instead of doing a careful analysis that weighed the risks vs. the public benefits of yet another fracked gas pipeline, FERC continued its shameful and illegal pattern of rubberstamping unnecessary and harmful pipeline projects,” said Brent Walls, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper. “FERC continues to ignore its legislative mandate to only approve projects that are in the public interest, clearly favoring the gas industry over local communities. Upper Potomac Riverkeeper is carefully reviewing FERC’s decision and considering all of our legal options in response to this unfortunate decision.”

Upper Potomac Riverkeeper’s opposition to the Potomac pipeline is based on:

- FERC’s failure to properly evaluate the serious risk and potential impacts on public health and safety posed by horizontal directional drilling under the Potomac River and C & O Canal

- FERC's failure in its environmental review to assess properly the climate change impacts of burning the natural gas transported by this pipeline, as well as the future expansion of fracked gas extraction in Pennsylvania that would be facilitated by more pipeline infrastructure.
- FERC's failure to fully examine alternatives, including use of renewable energy to meet any energy needs and alternative routes, including one that would entirely avoid a crossing under the Potomac River.
- FERC's failure to verify TransCanada's claims that the pipeline was needed to supply gas to West Virginia.
- FERC's decision not to consider the construction or climate change impacts of the 23 mile Mountaineer Gas pipeline project in West Virginia, despite the fact that the two pipelines are entirely dependent on each other – Mountaineer depends on its connection with the Potomac pipeline for its gas supply, and the only reason to build the Potomac pipeline is to supply gas to Mountaineer.

Walls concluded, "In the coming days, we will be rallying our supporters to continue the fight at the state, local and federal level to prevent this dangerous project from being built. Once again, we call on Governor Hogan of Maryland to stand up for Western Maryland communities threatened by this project, and use his authority to reject construction easements still needed by TransCanada to build the pipeline through Maryland. Governor Hogan and the Maryland legislature made the wise choice to ban fracking in Maryland in 2017. We hope he will use his authority to prevent fracked gas from being transported through Maryland, with no benefit and high risks to the state and the Potomac River."

### **About Potomac Riverkeeper Network**

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches: Potomac Riverkeeper, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper and Shenandoah Riverkeeper. Our mission is to protect the public's right to clean water in our rivers and streams. We stop pollution to promote safe drinking water, protect healthy habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.

For more information, visit <http://www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org>.

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