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May 15, 2016

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## “Break Free From Fossil Fuels”: Virginians head to DC to demonstrate for an end to the fossil fuel era

*Citizens who oppose fracked gas infrastructure join with thousands around the world to stop dangerous and unnecessary dirty energy projects.*

CHARLOTTESVILLE -- Last year world leaders pledged to address climate change. This week citizens are mobilising to close the gap between those promises and what is still happening in communities where fossil fuel projects are encroaching

Virginians are traveling to Washington, DC to stand up against offshore drilling and expanding use of fracked natural gas at the Break Free action at the White House.

The movement to Stop the Pipelines in Virginia and our region is akin to struggles around the world where residents envision a clean energy future and are working to protect their homes and families from destructive forms of fossil fuel extraction and from the consequences of climate change. Press availability is as follows:

### Virginians against pipelines join Break Free action to Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground

What: Leaders who are challenging gas pipelines and compressor stations in Virginia will make the trip to DC on Sunday and are available for interviews while the bus is loading and while the bus is en route.

When: 8:30 am to 9:00 am - Face-to-face media availability of grassroots leaders

Visuals: Bus loading, signs & banners opposing pipelines, model wind turbines

Where: Giant grocery store parking lot, near intersection of Rolkin Rd and Abbey Rd, off Richmond Road in Pantops area, Charlottesville, VA

Phone interview availability: 9:30 - 11:30 while bus is en route

Kenda Hanuman of Friends of Buckingham County, where Dominion Resources has plans to locate a compressor station for its proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline, pleads, “The cost to our health would be staggering, from increased respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, cancer, neurological and psychological diseases, pregnancy complications and learning disabilities. And the compressor station would be responsible for an incredible contribution to greenhouse gas pollution, as methane gas traps more than 80 times as much heat on our planet in the short term than carbon dioxide does.”

Hannah Wiegard, Virginia Campaign Coordinator with Appalachian Voices and member of 350 Central Virginia: “Virginia’s largest electric utility is projecting defeatist skepticism about achieving a rapid shift to clean sources to meet our energy needs, while pursuing profit over people by making plans to deepen dependence on fracked gas. More and more of their customers are seeing that not only is moving to renewable options urgently necessary, it will bring economic benefits to our state - so we deserve and demand a 100% renewable energy plan and lifting of any regulations in the way.”

See: [wiseenergyforvirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Changing-Course-Full-Report.pdf](http://wiseenergyforvirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Changing-Course-Full-Report.pdf)

Thousands of people from around the world are joining actions taking place across 6 continents which aim to stop dirty fossil fuels and speed up the just transition to 100% renewable energy. These peaceful worldwide mobilisations taking place in May serve as an important point in the climate movement’s trajectory to increase pressure on the fossil fuel industry.

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Additional background information on gas transmission compressor station impacts:

Fossil fuel projects threaten to heap costly problems on communities, and citizens are resisting the injustices inherent in expanding fracked gas transmission infrastructure and energy generation proposals that would adversely impact generations to come.

Some of the gravest consequences if pipelines are built in Virginia would result from the dangerous methane and toxic air pollution from gas compressor stations built to keep gas flowing. Emissions from compressor stations are significant; 60–75 % of the estimated damages (mostly health problems) resulting from all natural gas activities result from compressor station activities.

According to a 2013 RAND study of air-quality damages in Pennsylvania (<http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/8/1/014017>) these toxins include:

- Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>)

- Light and heavy alkanes
- Benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene
- Hydrogen and carbonyl sulfides
- Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)
- Formaldehyde
- Particulate matter (tiny soot-like particles)
- Carbon monoxide (CO)
- VOCs
- Radon, polonium and lead
- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs).

Unfortunately, there are already significant leaks around the U.S. from existing sources in the oil and gas industry, and it was recently announced that those leaks are 34% worse than previously reported. Economically, 7 million homes could be heated each winter with the more than \$1 billion in natural gas that the oil and gas industry recklessly wastes by leaking it into the air.

Environmental Defense Fund researchers involved in a group of 11 studies on methane emissions in Texas' Barnett Shale demonstrated that methane emissions from oil and gas operations in the Barnett Shale region exceeded the emissions expected from the EPA's greenhouse gas inventory.

Harriss et al. Environmental Science & Technology;

<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.est.5b02305>

Not only are safeguards urgently needed to protect the public from existing sources of methane pollution, but each new pipeline project would add 30-40 years of continued toxic emissions.