

SUPPORT HB643

Short Title: Pipeline construction; certification requirement, minimum diameter, stop work orders

Patron: Delegate Chris L. Hurst

Reasons to Support HB643:

HB643 requires more stringent oversight on pipelines:

- Legislation would strengthen protective measures for Virginia's waterways and the enforcement of Virginia's water quality standards.
- Provides greater protection for the ecosystems that pipelines travel through by creating a more strict permitting process.
- Expands the rights of the State Water Control Board to have authority over the monitoring process and to issue stop work orders.
 - The increased monitoring allowed through this bill will reduce the likelihood of leaks and structural problems that can have detrimental effects on the environment.
 - Issuing stop work orders will allow projects that are having adverse effects on the environment around them to be postponed and reevaluated to prevent anymore damage.

Overview:

HB643 sets into place a more stringent permitting process for smaller pipelines. The minimum inside diameter measurement for natural gas pipelines has been reduced from 36 inches to 24 inches for an additional upland activity certification. The upland activity certification is necessary for a pipeline to obtain Clean Water Certification. The reduction in the minimum inside diameter makes it so that more pipelines have to go through the upland activity certification. The greater amount of pipelines that will have to go through this extra certification will ensure that they are environmentally viable.

The bill would also introduce a stricter permitting process for pipelines that are proposed to run through wetlands or state waters. For those pipelines, a separate Virginia Water Protection Permit instead of just a general permit is required. By requiring an extra permit for pipelines in wetlands and state waters, the valuable ecological resources that are located in those areas are ensured to be protected. Also, the Department of Environmental Quality and the State Water Control Board can issue stop work orders on projects that are not meeting requirements. Once a stop work order is put into place, the group that issued the stop work order can add further requirements or restrictions on any further construction.



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