

## NEWPORT VIRGINIA, A TREASURED RURAL COMMUNITY

Our family has lived for 50 years on a farm in Newport Virginia. Not a long time compared with many families whose roots go back seven and nine generations, back to the Revolutionary times. We moved into this very rural community, off the main road about a half a mile, secluded, surrounded by hills and trees. Our house cannot be seen except from the air. We raised our three children here; we participated in the many community activities: the fair, covered bridges day, litter campaigns, PTA events, building tennis court and basketball court, powerline opposition, community park management, etc. etc. We created several businesses over the years—logging, auto repair, farming, within this community. Our lives are here.

The present pipeline route, #200, would pass through the tiny village of Newport, close to the Methodist Church, an historic home, on one side and close to the Rescue Squad and Recreation Center on the other. It would significantly impact the home of an elderly couple (come within 65' of their house). The route comes through our pastures for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile and an access road through our farmyard. Another property we own is crossed by  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of pipeline, plus a valve and permanent access road and staging area. We feel targeted. These are just several of the issues we are concerned about.

The ruralness of this area through which a scenic byway passes would be disturbed or forever ruined by the immensity of this project, because it would destroy woodlands, carve out paths down steep slopes, and come perilously close to several homes. It comes through significant karst terrain which will require blasting. It comes within close proximity to many caves. The water which most of this rural community depends upon might be changed. All of these things are part of a rural landscape: forests, caves, water, farmlands, historic

buildings. These features shape our lives. These things must be protected and preserved.

Let me quote a passage from Jean Porterfield in whose family her farm has remained for over 200 years:

"Foundations of several old Porterfield homesteads can still be found on my farm. Remnants of old chestnut split rail fences dot the landscape. Rock fences border pasture fields...Family history and heritage bind us to this land." "I know every nook and cranny on my farm—I know where the wet weather springs are, I know the spot where the creek sinks, I can find the rock that holds the giant seashell..." "These are the things that ground me to place and provide my identity and I take great offense that your experts consider their loss to be mitigatable and summarily dismiss them."

Another long-time resident, George Jones, tells it this way:

"...my cousin, Gordon Jones, was the bearer of very distressing news.....He wanted to let me know that the talk of the small village of Newport was about a natural gas pipeline slated to be constructed within our beautiful rolling mountains and spring-fed streams. The Mountain Valley Pipeline Project was coming. It was coming to determine if our ancient and unique piece of earth was unworthy enough for their treacherous means of exploiting what we faithfully believe to be God-given." He mentions a community event which still continues to this day: "...the Newport Fair every summer beginning in 1936. For one day, they all gathered at the high school with the proof of the year's labor to be judged as the best. Folks entered vegetables, grains, livestock, baked goods, handmade goods, quilts and flower arrangements hoping to bring home the blue ribbon. We participated in contests such as cross cut sawing, jousting and catching a greased pig."

Such are the ways the present community affairs and life are connected to the long-time culture of this Newport rural community. These are things that cannot be mitigated. A 42" pipe, 1400 psi, 125' boundary coming over a scenic byway, down steep slopes after the removal of heavy tree growth, beside old homes and buildings, and through dense karst terrain would destroy our community and way of life. We will not give this up lightly.