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Administrative Law Court hearing on Dominion's Pamplico Pipeline set to begin today

PAMPLICO, SC - A hearing challenging Dominion Energy's proposed natural gas pipeline is set to begin today, February 27, in Administrative Law Court in Columbia.

The South Carolina Environmental Law Project is representing the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League in a challenge of a 401 Water Quality Certification permit issued by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), that authorizes Dominion Energy to proceed with construction of the pipeline, which will impact 32 separate wetland areas and cross six named tributaries of the Great Pee Dee River.

The South Carolina Environmental Law Project, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and community members argued they were not given enough information to meaningfully participate in the decision-making process and urged DHEC to deny water quality certification to the pipeline during community meetings in 2021, due to the project failing to demonstrate that it will satisfy South Carolina state water quality standards. But the permit was approved anyway, which led to the current legal challenge.

The project also involves the condemnation and taking of heirs' property and lands held by families for generations. Dominion has plans and the rights to install the pipeline, which will run alongside another pipeline installed in the 1960s, on about 20 properties using eminent domain.

"Through this case, we hope to address the disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and impacts that often fall on marginalized communities," said Lauren Megill Milton, the lead attorney on the case for SCELPA. "Our goal is to strengthen the voices of those who have historically been excluded from the decision-making process so that these communities are afforded an opportunity to meaningfully participate in those decisions."

"The proposed pipeline along the Great Pee Dee would place an unnecessary burden on property owners," said Kathy Andrews, Executive Director of BREDL. "These are property owners who by and large live below the poverty level and depend on the river for sustenance. Dominion Energy has not given the residents of the area a reason to build this pipeline, which will ultimately raise utility bills and compromise the health and welfare of the people who live there."

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The South Carolina Environmental Law Project is a nonprofit public interest law firm. We use our legal expertise to protect land, water, and communities across South Carolina.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a regional, community-based, non-profit environmental organization. Our founding principles are earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice, and community empowerment.