

# Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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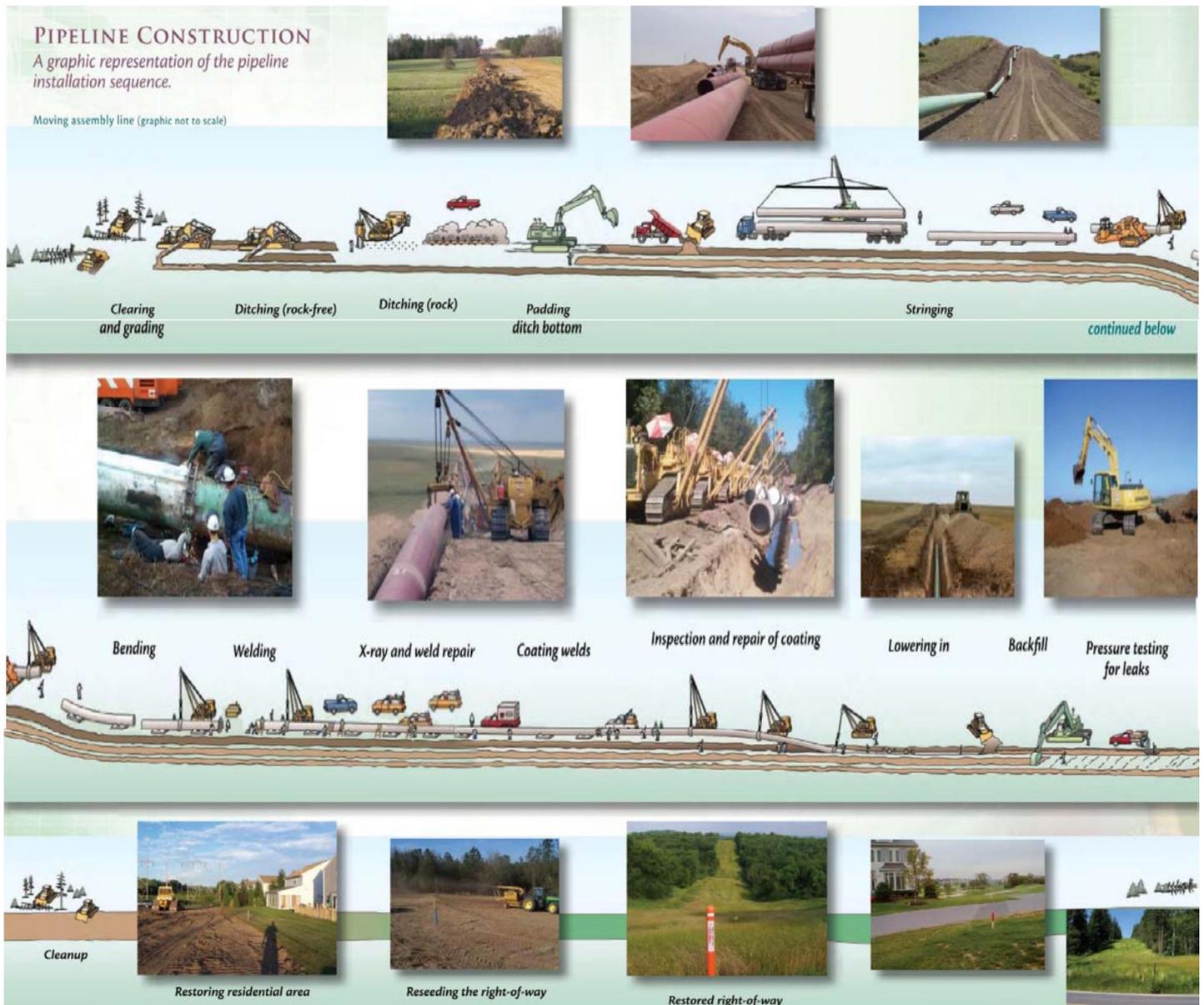
## PIPELINES

- Distribution of natural gas includes large industrial, commercial and electric generation customers as well as smaller individual users. While the larger consumers receive natural gas directly from interstate and intrastate pipelines, the smaller users receive it from local distribution companies (LDC), which typically take ownership of the gas once it is received and are located according to geographic regions to serve as delivery points to local users. LDCs are either the property of local governments or investor-owned, and transport gas from delivery points along the larger interstate or intrastate pipeline system and into miles of small-diameter local distribution pipe. There are approximately over 1,000,000 miles of distribution pipes in the United States. The delivery points to LCD are called "city gates", and these serve as important points for determining the market price of natural gas, based on the supply and demand flow.
- Thousands of miles of new pipelines may be built to transport Marcellus Shale gas obtained through the environmentally reprehensible practice of fracking. The new pipeline construction will not likely benefit local communities in need of jobs; the companies generally hire experienced workers to do the building. Many residents and local politicians worry about the environmental impacts, and say the current regulatory structure is ridiculously insufficient.
- The federal government, through the Department of Transportation, regulates the interstate pipeline system. Those are the pipelines that travel across state boundaries. One example would be the Transcontinental Gas Pipeline, or Transco, which travels from south Texas to the major east coast markets of New Jersey and New York City.
- If a pipeline is proposed to run through wetlands or cross waterways, traverse areas that contain endangered species, cemeteries or historical districts, among other things, permits are needed. Sometimes county or local level regulations come into play, but not always. Often there are federal regulations that contradict state regulations, which complicates the process. Stream crossing is one of the most significant impacts of pipeline construction. Small streams are diverted during construction. Drilling under the stream requires space beside the stream for the drilling operation and the right kind of stream bed. For many or most of the larger streams that would be crossed, especially in mountainous terrain, it's likely that a pipeline crossing would be achieved through direct excavation and possibly blasting of the stream-bed.
- To build a pipeline, rights of way need to be secured from private and public landowners. The companies pay for those rights of way and permits are needed. But a confusing network of regulatory bodies handles the permitting process. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has to approve any interstate pipeline. The Public Utilities Commission has to approve any that serve consumers directly. But few of the new gas lines connected to Marcellus Shale drilling fall neatly into either of those categories.
- Any company proposing pipeline construction across multiple states must file an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for approval of an interstate gas pipeline. FERC will conduct a review that includes holding stakeholder meetings, receiving public comments, and preparation of an environmental impact statement. If FERC approves the pipeline, the companies may go to federal court and use eminent domain to acquire the right of way for an easement that landowners are unwilling to grant.
- Landowners are likely to see a decrease in property values due to the restricted use of land on the easement as well as the visual impacts of a 75 to 125 foot wide clear-cut, which is standard in the construction of large interstate pipelines. Some other results from the proximity of a gas pipeline may be: inability to sell, inability to get a mortgage, potential calling in of the mortgage because the owner allowed industrial development and the dangers of fire and explosion (this clause is in almost every mortgage agreement).

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- A private landowner can exclude anyone from their property by posting, fencing or telling them to leave. Unless surveyors have a deed, lease, right of way or some other interest that would include the right to conduct surveys, they likely do not have the rights they say that they do. Any stated right to enter private property must be backed by a legal document. If the surveyor cannot produce a document, a landowner can legally tell them to leave or call local law enforcement.
- Industrial infrastructure like a huge pipeline commits us to increased dependence on fracking for gas, which is an environmentally devastating process that wrecks havoc on the land and local communities, and creates huge obstacles to investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.



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.

**You have a right to clean safe water, soil and air!  
Organize your group with help from BREDL!**