

To Maureen Hyzer, Forest Supervisor, and Planning Staff; George Washington & Jefferson National Forests; 5162 Valleypointe Parkway; Roanoke, VA 24019

Dear Supervisor Hyzer:

Please consider the following comments while you develop and approve a final plan for the George Washington National Forest plan

As you know, the George Washington National Forest is one of the most important collections of federal lands in the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed. It is not only incredibly important for the health of our planet but is also a treasured destination for many in Virginia and the surrounding region.

(A) I applaud you for the ban on horizontal natural gas drilling proposed in Alternative G (the agency's preferred alternative) and other alternatives, and would like all hydrofracking banned on the Forest. In addition, I support the stronger forest-wide riparian standards in Alternative G that were developed as part of the Fish and Mussel Conservation Plan.

(B.) Alternative C (the Conservation Alternative) is a well-crafted alternative proposed by Virginia citizens. Alternative C should have gotten the thorough analysis and attention that it deserves, but so far has not. I ask you to incorporate the following aspects of Alternative C into the final plan, regardless of which alternative is chosen

Please plan for climate change by protecting core wilderness areas, reducing forest fragmentation and decreasing and eliminating non-climate stresses such as logging, road building and oil and gas leasing.

Protect all areas identified in the Virginia's Mountain Treasures publication to the degree possible by designating them as unsuitable for timber harvest, new road building, and surface-occupying oil and gas drilling

Protect all roadless areas to the greatest extent possible. The Forest Service should identify all qualified roadless areas and protect all roadless areas, whether previously inventoried or recently identified, consistent with the provisions of the 2001 Roadless Rule.

Designate More Wilderness Areas. Only 4% of the George Washington National Forest is permanently protected Wilderness, far less than the national average of 18%. More wilderness (and national scenic area) acreage should be recommended!

Protect all existing Old Growth forest. Of particular importance are the sizeable old growth tracts at Peters Mountain North and Frozen Knob areas identified by the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage. All old growth areas should be designated as being unsuitable for logging and roadbuilding and protected as special areas (old growth protection) or as research natural areas.

No Natural Gas Leasing and Hydrofracking. The full cycle of natural gas development and hydraulic fracturing (or hydrofracking) brings roads, pipelines, and noise to national forest lands and disrupts groundwater. There should be no hydrofracking or federal natural gas leasing in the forest. Strong protective measures should be applied to ensure that privately-owned mineral developments do not destroy other values on the Forest

(C.) Friends of Shenandoah Mountain proposal. I support the Friends of Shenandoah Mountain proposal ([www.friendsofshenandoahmountain.org/](http://www.friendsofshenandoahmountain.org/)), which would protect roadless areas in the Shenandoah Mountain, Big Levels, and Laurel Fork areas under a combination of designations, including recommended wilderness and recommended national scenic area designation.

Sincerely yours,