

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.

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.

I support the ban on horizontal natural gas drilling proposed in Alternative G and other alternatives, and would like all hydrofracking banned on the Forest. :1

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. :1

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. These areas should be designated as being unsuitable for logging and roadbuilding and protected as research natural areas or special areas (old growth protection)" :

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. 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.

Compared to Alternative G, Alternatives C does a far better job at protecting roadless areas, protecting special biological areas, protecting old growth, protecting water quality, and providing large backcountry area experiences that are very rare in the eastern US.

The Forest Service should pick Alternative C, or a modified Alternative C, particularly one that is modified so that it is consistent with the Friends of Shenandoah Mountain proposal

Sincerely yours,