



CITY OF ROANOKE
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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DAVID A. BOWERS
Mayor

August 31, 2011

Ms. Maureen Hyzer, Forest Supervisor
United States National Forest Service
5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, Virginia 24019-3050

Subject: Revisions to George Washington National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan

The City of Roanoke was advised that the U.S. Forest Service is in the process of examining the George Washington National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and has a workshop scheduled October 5 in Verona to review the status of alternative Forest Plans. The City was also advised that there is potential for commercialization and development of energy sources on the land by means of hydraulic fracturing. Council and administrative staff are unable to attend the workshop but wanted to express concerns regarding the potential impact that this emerging technology could have on our National Forest lands.

The George Washington National Forest is a 1.1 million acre area that stretches from the Alleghany Highlands north through the Shenandoah Valley. The necessity for protecting this land is evident. Policy decisions made regarding "tracking" and other commercial and industrial uses on the George Washington National Forest Land will ultimately impact communities, water resources located upstream and downstream and other natural resources.

There have been increasing concerns that industrial gas development using high-volume hydraulic fracturing, or hydro-tracking, poses inherent environmental and public health risks. Hydro-tracking activities operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during production, posing problems with the storage, treatment and disposal of volumes of toxic, radioactive, and caustic liquid waste by-products. Especially problematic is the lack of federal protection for drinking water, air quality, water treatment infrastructure and landowner liability located near the "tracking" facilities.

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It is our understanding that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is examining potential impacts of hydro-tracking on drinking water resources and is currently addressing the comments provided by the Science Advisory Board (SAB). EPA's initial results are expected by the end of 2012 with a full report sometime in 2014. While City officials realize the significance of natural gas to our nation's energy future, it is imperative that the U.S. Forest Service allow the EPA adequate time for the development of domestic sources of energy that proceeds in a way that controls any adverse effects and protects our environment and health. Communities in Virginia should not have to choose between natural gas and clean water, as both are vital.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the George Washington National Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DAB'.

David A. Bowers
Mayor