



September 10, 2013

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to express my concerns related to horizontal drilling in the George Washington National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Located in the watershed containing the headwaters for the Potomac River, The George Washington National Forest plays a vital role in protecting and preserving downstream water quality. The Potomac River is the sole water source for the more than 600,000 residents, 17.8 million annual visitors and 700,000 people who are employed in the District of Columbia. The United States Army Corps of Engineers, Washington Aqueduct draws water from the Potomac River and is responsible for treatment to meet safe drinking water standards. DC Water purchases water from the Washington Aqueduct and is responsible for its delivery to critical facilities such as the White House and the U.S. Capitol.

Uncertainties exist about the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the District's source water and treatment process. Changes in source water quality can directly affect our customers, including increased costs for drinking water treatment, monitoring and compliance. It is a challenge to know what exactly the risk may be to our water supply and what steps may be necessary to address those challenges for the health and safety of our customers. It is my hope that U.S. Forest Service will prohibit horizontal drilling in the George Washington National Forest until it can be proven that the practice will not negatively impact water quality. We do not believe that sufficient proof exists at this point to support horizontal drilling in such an important part of the watershed.

DC Water encourages the preservation of the natural characteristics of the watershed, so that our residents and customers will not have to bear the potential public health impacts and financial burden if our drinking water source is contaminated. Thank you for the opportunity to communicate our strong interest in protecting the District of Columbia public water supply.

For information or inquiries regarding DC Water's support for the prohibition of horizontal drilling in the George Washington National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, please contact Sarah Neiderer at [sarah.neiderer@dcwater.com](mailto:sarah.neiderer@dcwater.com) or (202) 531-1654.

Sincerely,

George Hawkins  
General Manager

c: Tom Jacobus, Washington Aqueduct  
Stuart Freudberg, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments