



Botetourt County, Virginia
Board of Supervisors

September 2, 2011

1 West Main Street, No. 1
Fincastle, Virginia 24090
Phone (540) 473-8223
Fax (540) 473-8225

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

Board of Supervisors

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Chairman

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Dear Ms. Hyzer:

There are 82,400 acres of Forest Service land in Botetourt County, including 13,400 acres which are in the James River District of the George Washington National Forest. The County is in the process of conducting a staff review of the August 8, 2011, revised George Washington National Forest Resource Land and Resource Management Plan.

The County is aware of the potential for commercialization and development of energy sources on federal land and recognizes the fact that a majority of the land encompassed by the James River District is underlain by Marcellus shale formations which may contain natural gas deposits. Further, the County has reviewed research involving the process of hydraulic fracturing, which is utilized to release and subsequently capture natural gas. The process appears to be linked to numerous cases of surface and drinking water contamination as well as to air pollution and soil contamination.

Botetourt County harbors significant concerns with the potential for significant adverse environmental impact, specifically with regard to protection of critical groundwater aquifers and byproducts of the hydrologic fracturing process. As such, the County supports the Forest's revised position, which removes consideration for horizontal drilling, effecting a moratorium on hydrologic fracturing. The County supports such a position until the process can be verifiably proven to pose no significant risk to the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment. If you require additional detail or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gerald A. Burgess
ICMA Credentialed Manager
County Administrator

cc: Spencer Suter, Assistant County Administrator