

COUNTY OF AUGUSTA, VA.

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10-149

October 28, 2010

PATRICK J. COFFIELD – COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

AUGUSTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER

P.O. BOX 590, VERONA, VA 24482-0590

(540) 245-5610 FAX (540) 245-5621

coadmin@co.augusta.va.us

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

Dear Ms. Hyzer:

The United States Forest Service is in the process of revising the George Washington National Forest land and Resource Management Plan, commonly referred to as the Forest Management Plan.

The Augusta County Board of Supervisors is aware of the potential for commercialization and development of energy sources on federal land as the geological features of the land are of such that would support energy sources. Augusta County supports the development of alternative energy sources located on property that is appropriate for its use. However, we are greatly concerned about the need to protect water quality. The National Forest and National Parks provide a source of water for many of the citizens in the Staunton/Augusta County area. Keeping these sources viable is of the utmost importance to Augusta County. With this said, the Augusta County Board of Supervisors does not support hydrofracking in the National Forest or National Parks. Other commercialization in the National Forest or National Parks such as timber sales programs and wind energy would be supported on land appropriate for the use.

Thank you for your continued attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Coffield
County Administrator

PJC:bcw

P.S. Please note the Board's previous position regarding Wilderness (attached).

cc: John C. McGehee, Assistant County Administrator
Dennis Burnett, Economic Development Director
Timmy Fitzgerald, Community Development Director
Ronald H. Sites, Parks and Recreation Director

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08-169

September 25, 2008

VIA FAX

The Hon. James Webb
U.S. Senate
Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. John W. Warner
U.S. Senate
225 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Robert W. Goodlatte
U.S. House of Representatives
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Gentlemen:

The George Washington National Forest occupies approximately 196,000 acres of land in Augusta County, which is more acreage than any other county in Virginia. We also have 16,392 acres of wilderness, which is more than any other county has in Virginia. The George Washington National Forest is in the process of revising its forest plan. The last revision was done in 1993.

On September 21st, our Board of Supervisors received a presentation by the Forest Service concerning the updated plan. The Forest Service is receiving input from the public at this time. The plan maps that were provided to us show another 99,000+ acres as potential wilderness areas in the County. These areas (as shown on the map) are adjacent to private land, adjacent to public roads, and would make up approximately 51% of the 196,000 acres within the county as potential wilderness areas.

There is also a potential wilderness area that incorporates Elliott's Knob. This location contains a major communication facility that a number of different government agencies use to provide coverage for emergency services, public TV, and other communication services.

The Board outlined some concerns about additional wilderness area in Augusta County:

1. In case of a forest fire, there is no way to fight a fire in a wilderness area. If the wilderness area is adjacent to private land, it becomes a real problem to County property owners.
2. Access: In this day and time when the baby boomers are reaching retirement, they may not be able to access the wilderness area by foot. Many individuals enjoy traveling into the National Forest with 4-wheel or other types of transportation that can assist them in enjoying the beautiful mountains and forest.
3. And finally, once an area is designated wilderness, it cannot revert back to any other use.

The decision on wilderness designation is left in the hands of Congress, and Congress needs to understand all the issues involved with wilderness designation.

At its September 24th meeting, the Board of Supervisors took action to send this letter and oppose any additional wilderness designation within Augusta County.

I would like to personally thank you for your service to the Commonwealth of Virginia and, if we can be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



David R. Beyeler, Chairman
Augusta County Board of Supervisors

cc: Elwood Burge, District Ranger
North River Ranger Dist., Harrisonburg VA