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Contact: Ernie Reed
(434) 971-1553
info@wildvirginia.org
www.wildvirginia.org

Surveys permitted through national forests for ill-conceived Atlantic Coast Pipeline project

US Forest Service agreed to allow temporary special use permits for surveys along the new route (GWNF-6) proposed for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline although Dominion must still consider an alternative route that does not cross National Forest Service lands.

"Dominion has failed to consider any route that avoids the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests" said Ernie Reed President of Wild Virginia, "even though it is required to do so by the US Forest Service." (USFS Manual 2700 Special Uses Management)

During the comment period last month, the Forest Service received hundreds of letters and thousands of petition signatures from citizens and landowners asking that the survey for this new route be denied. "The people of Virginia see that the Atlantic Coast Pipeline has been an ill-conceived project from the get-go" said Reed.

The USFS shares many of these concerns and has repeatedly voiced criticism itself about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project and the surveys conducted thus far by Dominion LLC. In letters submitted to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Forest Service accused Dominion of misrepresenting "...requirements for protocols and qualifications for field personnel" who carried out soil surveys and went on to say that "the Forest Service cannot use these surveys to evaluate project effects on National Forest Service Lands" and even recommended that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission "not utilize data conducted to date."

Clyde Thompson, the Forest Supervisor of the Monongahela National Forest, met earlier this week with Dave Sligh and Ernie Reed of Wild Virginia along with colleagues from SELC, Sierra Club, Appalachian Mountain Advocates and Friends of Blackwater (WV) and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He vowed to hold Dominion to the same high standards that gave rise to the series of letters targeting the numerous inconsistencies and misrepresentations in previous survey data.

"We agree with the Forest Service that any route that crosses these national forests is problematic and unrealistic given the rare habitat, the steep slopes, the precious waters and the karst geology of these forests" said Reed.

While Dominion says it has adopted this new route to ‘avoid sensitive areas of the forest’ the 14 mile stretch is just, if not more, problematic than previous routes proposed. The new route impacts many sensitive areas of the forests such as Special Biological Areas, Inventoried Roadless Areas, Concentrated Recreation Areas, a Recreational River Corridor, a Scenic Corridor, and the Great Eastern Trail and the Appalachian Trail as it crosses steep, highly erodible terrain.

Documentation Provided by the USFS to Reject Results of Soil Surveys Conducted To Date

November 5, 2015

http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20151105-5194

USFS Comments to FERC on Salamander Impacts

September 17, 2015

<http://wildvirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/National-forest-service-comments20150917-cow-knob-salamander-1.pdf>

Comments of the USFS on Draft Resource Reports, Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project

July 30, 2015

http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20150730-5223

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