

A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT REVISIONS TO THE GEORGE WASHINGTON FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THEREBY IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF DRINKING WATER SOURCES.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service is in the process of revising its 1993 Land and Resource Management Plan for the George Washington National Forest; and

WHEREAS, the provision of clean safe drinking water is one of the primary benefits that the George Washington National Forest provides to the communities that surround it; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service's agency-wide Strategic Plan for 2004 – 2008 seeks to achieve six goals, including "Improve watershed condition," and

WHEREAS, approximately 44 percent of the land in the George Washington National Forest is within watersheds that provide public drinking water to more than 260,000 residents of western Virginia in 22 communities surrounding the national forest by means of reservoirs and surface waters; and

WHEREAS, drinking water sources from within the George Washington National Forest serve an estimated 5,000 residents and many businesses and institutions in and around the Town of Amherst; and

WHEREAS, the greatest threats to water quality within the George Washington National Forest are ground disturbing activities, such as timber harvesting and road construction, which result in erosion and sedimentation if not managed by the Forest Service staff or its contractors; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 George Washington National Forest Management Plan addresses riparian areas (narrow corridors bordering rivers and streams) and narrow areas bordering reservoirs, but does not provide management objectives for lands within the larger watersheds that determine the health of the water resources in these streams and rivers; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 George Washington National Forest Management Plan permits ground disturbing activities on most of the land (64%) in the surface watersheds that provide drinking water through river intakes; and

WHEREAS, a 2008 report by the National Research Council (part of The National Academies) states that a sustainable supply of clean water is the most important product or commodity produced by our forests; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Amherst works closely with the Robert E. Lee Soil & Water Conservation District and Amherst County to establish a watershed protection program and watershed protection ordinance, participates in a local incentive grant to assist landowners with installing conservation measures to protect the Buffalo River and its surrounding tributaries at the source to provide clean drinking water, and shared the Environmental Protection Agency's 2003 Clean Partner Award with these partner organizations;

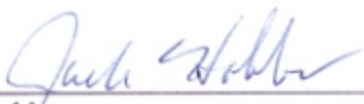
NOW, THEREFORE, in order to ensure the quality and quantity of drinking water sources within the national forest boundaries, be it resolved that the Town of Amherst hereby supports the following revisions to the George Washington National Forest Management Plan:

- The U.S. Forest Service should formally identify all the drinking watersheds serving reservoir and surface water resources within the George Washington National Forest. The rivers and streams within these watersheds should be considered public water supplies.

- The U.S. Forest Service should establish management objectives that encompass the health of entire drinking watersheds, in order to ensure that conditions within the watersheds will maintain, protect and enhance drinking water quality.
- The U.S. Forest Service should gather more information to describe and assess watershed conditions, develop a plan to systematically monitor water resource programs and obtain all data pertinent to water quality and watershed conditions, in cooperation with other agencies, organizations, local communities and volunteers.
- The U.S. Forest Service should seek to communicate more effectively with the localities that obtain drinking water from sources within the George Washington National Forest in order to ensure that the drinking watersheds are managed effectively, appropriately and for the public good.
- The U.S. Forest Service should work with local communities, agencies and the larger public to establish policies and develop management plans for the drinking watersheds to permanently maintain, protect and enhance drinking water quality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk is instructed to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the U.S. Forest Service, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors, Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District, and Wild Virginia in order to advise each of this action and to request support on this issue.

I certify that the above resolution was adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Amherst during its meeting on March 11, 2009.



Jack Hobbs
Clerk of Council