



GEORGE WASHINGTON FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN RESOLUTION FOR DRINKING WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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 U.S. Forest Service's agency-wide strategic plan seeks to achieve six goals, including "Improve watershed condition;" 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, approximately 44 percent of the land in the George Washington National Forest lies within watersheds that provide public drinking water to more than 260,000 Virginia residents in 22 adjacent communities, by means of reservoirs and surface water; and

WHEREAS, drinking water sources within the George Washington National Forest serve an estimated 20,124 residents in Augusta County and the City of Staunton, 52,635 residents in Rockingham County, the City of Harrisonburg and the towns of Bridgewater and Broadway, 8,452 residents in the Shenandoah County towns of Strasburg and Woodstock, 12,500 residents in Front Royal and 41,840 residents in Frederick County, the City of Winchester and Middletown; and

WHEREAS, the watersheds of the five reservoirs in the George Washington National Forest provide drinking water for almost 100,000 people, including the Staunton and Elkhorn Lake Reservoirs, serving the City of Staunton and some Augusta County residents, and the Switzer Lake Reservoir; serving the City of Harrisonburg and some Rockingham County residents; and

WHEREAS, the watersheds of surface waters that flow from the George Washington National Forest, such as the North River and the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River, provide drinking water to an additional 165,000 people in communities including Bridgewater, Broadway, Front Royal, Harrisonburg, Middletown, Strasburg, Winchester and the surrounding counties; 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; and

WHEREAS, under the 1993 George Washington National Forest Management Plan, most of the land in drinking water reservoirs watersheds (72 percent) is managed without ground disturbing activities and the U.S. Forest Service reports that water quality in the reservoir watersheds is substantially better than in surface watersheds in other parts of the George Washington National Forest; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the undersigned hereby support the following revisions to the George Washington National Forest Management Plan to ensure the quality and quantity of drinking water sources within the forest boundaries:

- The U.S. Forest Service shall formally identify all the drinking watersheds serving reservoir and surface water resources within the George Washington National Forest.
- The U.S. Forest Service shall establish management objectives that encompass the health of the entire drinking watershed, in order to ensure that conditions within the watershed will maintain, protect and enhance drinking water quality.
- The U.S. Forest Service shall 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 shall 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 shall 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 Augusta County Board of Supervisors recommends that, the U.S. Forest Service retain all management techniques and options in the approved Forest Management Plan that are necessary to protect the drinking water quality; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Augusta County Board of Supervisors recognizes that trail-based recreational activities in the George Washington National Forest are available and wholly compatible with water quality management.

Adopted: March 25, 2009


Chairman, Augusta County Board of Supervisors