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Threats Only Increase with New Pipeline Route through the George Washington National Forest

Last week, Dominion changed its plans and rerouted part of the proposed path of the 450-mile Dominion Southeast Reliability Project pipeline. This new route through our public lands in the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) promises to be even more destructive than the first.

This more northerly route cuts through national forest lands traversing areas of outstanding ecological integrity here in Virginia, including Camp Ridge, Sulfur Springs Hollow, Signal Corps Knob, and Brushy Mountain. The entire route west of Staunton in Augusta County slices through the Calfpasture/Jennings Branch watershed, wherein lies Staunton's primary drinking water intakes, reservoirs and headwaters.

In recent presentations throughout Virginia, Dominion offered scant promise of economic benefit to communities along the line, alluding to only slight increases in local employment and sales during construction. Construction, Dominion noted, will “move swiftly”.

While Dominion was unable to demonstrate any substantive benefits to Virginia, the negative impacts to our communities, properties and ecosystems from this project are certain.

The Southeast Reliability Project pipeline will:

- Create a 150'-wide path of cleared and degraded land during construction.
- Leave a permanent 75'-wide swath of cleared land indefinitely.
- Destroy habitat of the Cow Knob Salamander, currently at a high risk of extinction.
- Create soil disruption and sediment that can contaminate our streams and drinking water.
- Permanently fragment the GWNF, the largest intact, contiguous forest remaining in the East.
- Provide a corridor for invasive species to enter our remote wild lands.

- Blast through our mountains and dig trenches through our farmlands and private properties.
- Create enormous, unpredictable and perpetual risks of explosions and leaks to communities along the line.
- Stall development of clean alternative energies.
- Increase pressure on the George Washington National Forest for further industrialization and hydrofracking activities.

At recent meetings in Highland and Nelson Counties, Dominion promised to abide by all regulations as they move forward with the project. Yet just last year Dominion was forced to pay \$3.4 million in civil penalties and spend \$9.8 million on environmental mitigation projects to resolve Clean Air Act violations. (EPA.gov) How can we put our precious natural resources into Dominion's hands with a record like that? Given its track record, why should we expect Dominion to abide by federal or state regulations in this project?

Accidents will inevitably happen, and regulations will not always be adhered to. Given the unique attributes of the GWNF, these risks are unacceptable. Our lands, communities, drinking water and ecosystems are simply too valuable. Old route or new route, this pipeline has no place in our national forests.

Wild Virginia continues to fight to ensure that the moratorium on fracking in the GWNF is maintained or strengthened in the new forest management plan due out this summer. We are working to ensure that Dominion is not granted a special use permit from the Forest Service to survey and build the pipeline through our national forests.

Wild Virginia is a grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving wild forest ecosystems in Virginia's national forests. For more information, contact info@wildvirginia.org or visit www.wildvirginia.org.

Upcoming meetings: On Thursday, August 28th, at 7:30 at Staunton City Hall, Dominion representatives will speak and take questions from the City Council.

Please sign our petition at Change.org:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/sen-tim-kaine-stop-dominion-s-plan-to-cut-a-fracked-gas-pipeline-through-the-george-washington-national-forest>

Attachment: New route map

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