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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Information for review for the 2018 planning process

Dear planning team,

I submit for your review the records of decision (ROD) for the Bridger-Teton National Forest and the George Washington National Forest making significant portions of both national forests unavailable for leasing for oil and gas exploration. In the case of GWNF, all lands not currently leased were made unavailable for leasing. Both decisions were made under a rigorous process of new environmental impact studies, EIS's, and attention to the overwhelming opposition by citizens opposed to fracking or any oil and gas exploration in their national forests. The lands made unavailable for leasing by these RODs had been previously made available in earlier forest plans. The decisions not to lease were made within the discretionary authority of the regional forester or the forest supervisor. The RODs were signed off on by the Regional Forester in the case of the GWNF and the Under Secretary of Agriculture in the case of the Bridger Teton NF, as recommended by the district ranger.

Thousands of Ohioans have stated over and over in the 12 years since the 2006 plan was implemented that the leasing of federal mineral rights is unacceptable. The planning process must undergo the rigorous examination through up-to-date research and studies of the effects of fracking throughout the United States and the harm it does to our communities. The most up-to-date information must be used in completing a new EIS for the new plan. It is also in the best interest to all to make available to the public the studies being used by the planning team before the draft assessment is completed for review by the public. It has been our experience that when the public is asked to comment after a document has been completed, even on a draft of a document, our chances to refute information is greatly curtailed and by and large ignored. I have included a letter to Kathleen Atkinson written in 2016 expressing the grave concerns that citizens had (and continue to have) on public lands being made available for oil and gas exploration in our only national forest . The letter was written in response to the Region 9 office refusing to communicate with citizens about our concerns.

Existing leases until they end or privately held minerals can be honored. It is possible then to choose an alternative of no leasing in the new Wayne NF Plan by making all parcels unavailable for leasing. I encourage public discussion of the concerns of fracking in our forests during the writing of the assessment plan.

Sincerely,

Roxanne Groff

Chair, Buckeye Environmental Network