

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
ROBERTA A. LAMBERT
MONTEREY, VIRGINIA

HIGHLAND COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

P. O. BOX 130
MONTEREY, VIRGINIA 24465
Phone: 540-468-2347 Fax: 540-468-3447
E-mail: hcboard@htcnet.org
Website: www.highlandcova.org

BOARD MEMBERS:

DAVID W. BLANCHARD
MONTEREY, VIRGINIA

HARRY B. SPONAUGLE
DOE HILL, VIRGINIA

JOHN L. MOYERS, JR.
MCDOWELL, VIRGINIA

February 19, 2022

Joby P. Timm
Forest Supervisor
5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019

RE: Scoping Comment: GWJNF Proposal to Issue Permits to Locate
Forestwide Fiberoptic Telecommunication Lines

Dear Mr. Timm:

Highland County contains significant portions of the George Washington National Forest on our western border with West Virginia, and our eastern border on Shenandoah Mountain with Augusta County, Virginia. We have Roadless Areas of the Forest, as well as environmentally sensitive areas of the Forest like the Laurel Fork area. As the Highland County Board of Supervisors, we believe we are obligated to protect these areas of our natural resources from degradation. This has been an important objective of this Board.

The Highland County Board of Supervisors has also made it an important objective of this Board to expand broadband coverage throughout the County. Broadband coverage and fiber optic cable placement increases the speed and reliability of internet service for our government, businesses, residents, visitors, and public safety organizations.

Highland County is a member of the Bath-Highland Network Authority, which recently received a Virginia Telecommunication Initiative grant for close to \$7,000,000.00 to support this universal broadband effort. The County has already committed over \$300,000.00 to this project, along with countless man hours.

As usual, any development in the National Forest must be adequately planned so that the maximum mitigation of negative consequences occurs. The

Highland County Board of Supervisors finds it difficult to comment on this proposed project without specific additional information including:

1. A map showing the proposed route of fiber optic lines.
2. The identification of any long-term maintenance needs for disturbed areas, specifically tree and brush clearing.


In addition the Board suggests that the "avoid" areas of the National Forest be expanded to include Roadless Areas and Special Biological Areas to further protect sensitive flora and fauna.

The Board also suggests that the Forest insures adequate public notice regarding drilling operations or temporary trail closings.

Finally, the Board recommends that specific mitigation measures need to be identified so that any fiber optic cable placement avoids deer hunting or bear hunting seasons, if possible.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this matter and trust the Forest Service will balance these competing interests with specific mitigation measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberta A. Lambert". The script is cursive and fluid.

Roberta A. Lambert
County Administrator

cc by email: Melissa Ann Dowd, County Attorney
Virginia DEQ Office of Environmental Impact Review