Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/14/2022 9:13:05 PM
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Comments: This is in response to the letter seeking comments for the fiberoptic telecommunication lines across the GWJNF. The Clinch Coalition is very supportive of improving telecommunication services in the more remote parts of Virginia, especially in the often underserved areas of southwest Virginia. However, we do have some concerns and questions about how the project will be implemented.

The Clinch Coalition would like the Forest Service to consider the following comments:

*The Forest Service stated in the scoping letter that the fiberoptic lines would mainly co-locate in existing utility or DOT road rights of way. It sounds like there could be some potential for new disturbance outside of rights of way. If such areas exist, can a map of these locations be provided? What is the width and distance of such areas? Will the clearing of vegetation and/or other disturbance be necessary?

*These two statements from the scoping letter below are contradictory. Can this be clarified?
oAs much as possible drilling pads (if needed) would be located off National Forest Systems (NFS) lands.
oNo staging areas or bore pads (pits) would be located on NFS lands.

*Saying that the HDD machines to be used for this project should be small and sit on the ground surface within the right of way is ambiguous. What will the dimensions of the machines and drill pads be, and will they be within the right of way in all cases? Is it necessary to use excavation equipment to level the pads? If so, will there be a larger area of disturbance needed for the equipment to construct the drill pads?

*When HDD machines are drilling, will water or additives be used? What measures will be taken to eliminate the discharge of water, drilling mud, and cuttings to nearby waterways. What will be the water source for drilling?

*The information provided in the scoping letter about sensitive areas that require directional drilling is vague. A map showing the routes of the fiberoptic lines, the locations of sensitive areas and the locations of the drilling pads needs to be provided so that the public can submit meaningful and site specific comments.

*Especially where the fiberoptic lines do not follow existing utility or road right of ways, will there be a need for long term maintenance of the line after installation? If so, how will the maintenance be done (herbicides, mechanical vegetation control, etc.)?

The Clinch Coalition respectfully submits these comments and looks forward to working with the Forest Service on this and future projects.