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Title: Director of Policy
Comments: North Carolina Economic Development Association

January 30, 2023

Dr. Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary

U.S. Department of Agriculture

c/o Jefferson National Forest

MVP Project

5162 Valleypointe Parkway

Roanoke, VA 24019

Subject: The Mountain Valley Pipeline and Equitrans Expansion Project, Supplemental EIS #50036

Dear Dr. Wilkes:

For over 50 years, the North Carolina Economic Development Association has championed the recruitment of new investments in North Carolina's economy and supported the growth of the state's existing businesses. NCEDA is composed of 600 economic development professionals and is governed by a volunteer board dedicated to sharpening the state's global competitive edge.

The purpose of the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline project is consistent with these objectives, as its completion is necessary to increase North Carolina's access to low-cost domestic natural gas through the separately certificated MVP Southgate project. In 2018, NCEDA's board voted unanimously to support the MVP Southgate project because it would increase the region's supply of fuel needed to meet North Carolinians' current and future energy demands.

However, the MVP Southgate's construction and operation are contingent on the Mountain Valley Pipeline

securing the necessary federal permits and authorizations for MVP's completion. We understand work on the MVP is nearly 94 percent complete and that the company is working with federal agencies to obtain its outstanding permits and authorizations, with the project scheduled for completion in the latter half of this year. Mountain Valley's request for a permit to complete work along a 3.5 mile corridor in the Jefferson National Forest is appropriate and warranted, and we respectfully ask that it be approved.

In recent years, natural gas has proven to be a preferred source of energy for modern manufacturing, industrial and commercial operations, and residential use. It is affordable and reliable; in fact, the U.S. Energy Information Administration has reported that using natural gas to heat the average home costs about half as much as the cost of using propane. North Carolina has enjoyed tremendous growth, which is anticipated to continue.

The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management has projected the state's population will increase by nearly two million residents by 2035. This will create significant new consumer demand for natural gas, which the state's existing natural gas transmission system will be incapable of providing. Residential, commercial and industrial demand for natural gas in the state is expected to grow, making it necessary to build new infrastructure in order to maintain North Carolina's status as a leading destination for companies, jobs and people. Moreover, by transitioning more of North Carolina's electricity generation from coal to natural gas, our state's public electric utilities will be better able to reduce carbon emissions and provide affordable, reliable energy that complements renewable generation sources like solar and wind.

For these reasons, NCEDA strongly encourages the U.S. Forest Service to approve Mountain Valley Pipeline's permit to complete work in a small section of the Jefferson National Forest so this important energy infrastructure project can serve public demand. If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Chris

R. Christopher Plat[eacute]

NCEDA President