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Comments: On behalf of Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action (VCCA) and our nearly 500 Virginia health professional members, we oppose the proposed Forest Service rule changes that would enable construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in the Jefferson National Forest. It has been estimated that the Mountain Valley Pipeline would contribute greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 26 coal plants or 19 million passenger vehicles. At a time when the health impacts of climate change are increasingly apparent, the Forest Service should reject the eleven proposed amendments and exceptions in the revised environmental impact statement and chose Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative.

Climate change is associated with far-reaching adverse health impacts. Worsening extreme weather events place residents of affected communities at risk of injury, death, disrupted medical services and mental health effects. Longer and more intense heat waves increase the risk of heat-related illness, particularly in the elderly, outdoor workers and student athletes. More severe allergy seasons worsen exacerbations of asthma, chronic lung disease, and allergic diseases. Infectious disease patterns shift in response to changing climate conditions.

In addition, the harm to people and the environment in the vicinity of the pipeline, including in the Jefferson National Forest, must be considered in your decision. Forest fragmentation and degraded water quality are inevitable consequences of pipeline construction.

The climate and local environmental impacts of this pipeline are simply not in the public interest. We respectfully ask you to protect the integrity of the forest and adopt the No Action Alternative.

1. Oil Change International, The Mountain Valley Pipeline: GreenHouse Gas Emissions Briefing. February 2017. Accessed 1/28/2023.

http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2017/02/mountain_valley_pipe_web_final_v1.pdf

2. USGCRP, 2018: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II [Reidmiller, D.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock, and B.C. Stewart (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 1515 pp. doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018