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April 1, 2020

Submitted electronically at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=57708>

Mr. Joby P. Timm, Forest Supervisor
George Washington and Jefferson National Forests
5162 Vallepointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019

Dear Mr. Timm,

I write on behalf of the organizations represented by the signatories below regarding the proposed rebuild of the Virginian Electric and Power Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Virginia (Dominion) Mt. Storm to Valley 500 kV electric transmission line project across a portion of the George Washington National Forest (GWNF). The project area is located on the North River Ranger District in Rockingham County, Virginia, and Pendleton County, West Virginia.

We applaud the Forest Service's desire to continue to locate the transmission line upgrade within the long-standing designated utility corridor. However, we have not had enough time to analyze together the impacts of the project on the National Forest because of the limitations imposed upon us all by the Covid-19 virus and consequent social distancing.

This includes the declaration of a national emergency, beginning March 1, 2020, by President Donald J. Trump. By the authority vested in the President by the laws of the US, including sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) he proclaimed that the COVID-19 outbreak constitutes a national emergency, beginning March 1, 2020.

Consequently, we respectfully request that you extend the 30-day deadline for comments on the GWNF's scoping letter and description of the electric transmission line replacement project. We are concerned that the social distancing required by the coronavirus has limited the ability of individuals and organizations to comment on the proposed activity in the following ways:

- limiting their ability to access or acquire the legal notice of the proposed project published in the Daily News Record, especially individuals requiring hard copies of the same, in a timely manner;
- preventing individuals from consulting with each other and the Forest Service in a timely manner in order to generate specific comments; and
- prohibiting organizations from bringing individuals together in public forum to discuss the benefits and costs of the proposed project in order to provide timely and specific comments to the Forest Service.

Therefore, the undersigned do request that you, Joby P. Timm, Forest Supervisor, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, extend the 30-day comment period on the proposed rebuild of the Virginian Electric and Power Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Virginia (Dominion) Mt. Storm to Valley 500 kV electric transmission line project across a portion of the George Washington National Forest to a 90-day comment period or until such time as the coronavirus ceases to limit the ability of individuals and organizations to comment on the proposed activity.

Sincerely,

Katherine Wofford
Executive Director

Signatory Organizations:

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
P.O. Box 746
Woodstock VA 22664
David V. Brotman, Executive Director

Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
P.O. Box 1014
Harrisonburg, VA 22803
Kyle Lawrence, Executive Director

Southern Environmental Law Center

201 West Main Street, Suite 14
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Kristin Davis, Senior Attorney

Valley Conservation Council
128 West Bruce Street
Harrisonburg VA 22801
John D. Hutchinson V, Executive Director

Virginia Wilderness Committee
119 Madison Place
Staunton VA 24401
John D. Hutchinson V, Executive Director