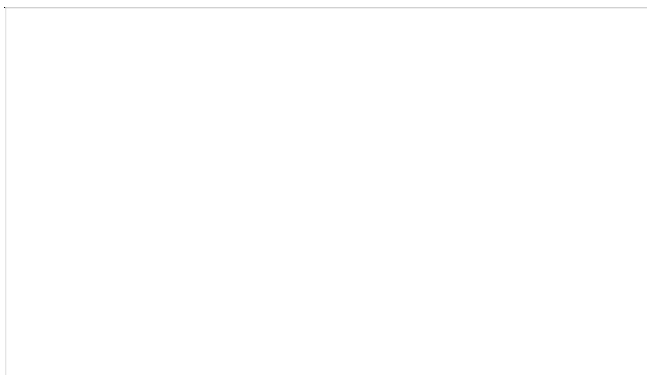




Pipeline Still Set to Go Through National Forests

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Last month 5 News told you about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline that would bring natural gas from our area to Virginia and North Carolina. But the details of exactly where it may go are still being worked out. That's because Dominion Resources wants to put it through some national forests.

The U.S. Forest Service just released that they're looking for public comment on whether to let surveys through the George Washington National Forest. As for the Monongahela National Forest, the pipeline is so far still set to go through it, but will avoid certain areas.

The alternate route avoids Cheat Mountain and Shenandoah Mountain. The Forest Service rejected the proposed route for the second time due to these areas being home to sensitive species. The pipeline is still set to go through almost 20 miles of the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests, just over 10 miles less than the original plan.

The Forest Service called the species that would've been impacted "irreplaceable" in a letter to Dominion. 5 News reached out to the Forest Service for comment, but no one was available. 5 News was able to talk to a local environmental consultant. He says disturbances range from fragmenting the forest to things that might seem smaller but still cause big changes, such as affecting how much sunlight or rain an ecosystem gets. He also worries about soil disruption and native trout streams.

"The majority of biological interactions and what supports plant life is actually just in the top few inches [of the soil]," said Marc Glass, Principal at Downstream Strategies and the head of the Environmental Monitoring Remediation Program. "That these routes could disturb some of the few remaining pristine trout habitats is a major impact."

But all of the re-routing isn't something Dominion didn't expect. Just last month, their Local Affairs Senior Policy Advisor called the process a "give and take."

"It's a normal part of the process. It doesn't end the project," said Bob Orndorff, Senior Policy Advisor of State and Local Affairs at Dominion Resources Services, Inc. "So we come back, go back to the drawing board, our engineers get together, people get out there in the fields and try to survey a different route."

Orndorff is optimistic they'll find a good route. Glass says no matter the route, there will be an environmental impact to deal with.

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