



**File Code:** 1920

**Date:** November 13, 2014

Dear Planning Participant:

We have completed the revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the George Washington National Forest (GWNF). In the Final Environmental Impact Statement, we analyzed two new alternatives and selected Alternative I as the Revised Forest Plan. Alternative I is largely based on the preferred alternative (Alternative G) in the Draft EIS, but incorporates changes based on public comments received during the comment period and additional analysis.

Alternative I provides a balance of management direction that addresses the long-term ecological sustainability of the GWNF and fulfills the Forest Service's mission of managing national forests for multiple uses. In contrast to the 1993 GWNF Plan the new plan increases protection of riparian areas, increases the area managed for remote habitat and remote recreation experiences, increases the level of prescribed burning, increases the area suitable for timber production, and increases the level of timber harvest. In addition, the plan recommends for congressional designation a new National Scenic Area on Shenandoah Mountain, two new Wilderness areas and four additions to existing Wilderness areas.

The decision on availability of lands for oil and gas leasing has also been made. With the exception of existing leases, no lands are available for federal oil and gas leasing. This decision is based on a number of factors described in the Record of Decision and includes: the low amount of estimated gas reserves under the GWNF compared to the entire Marcellus shale formation; the lack of interest in any gas development on GWNF lands or surrounding private and state lands; and expressed concerns, particularly from our local governments and communities.

The Record of Decision (describing the rationale for selection of Alternative I), the Final Revised Forest Plan, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Appendices, the Summary of the FEIS and Forest Plan, and maps are posted on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj>). These documents are also available for viewing at our Ranger District offices and the Supervisor's Office. You may also request a compact disc or hard copy of any of these documents. The decisions on the Final Revised Forest Plan and the availability of lands for oil and gas leasing are subject to administrative review and appeal. The appeal procedures are described in the Record of Decision.

The Final Revised Forest Plan is the result of deeply committed individuals, organizations, and communities working closely with each other and with us to balance competing interests and uses. Our work does not end with the approval of this Plan; we are looking forward to working together with you to develop and implement site-specific management activities that move toward the vision in the Plan.

If you have any questions regarding these documents, please contact Karen Overcash, Forest Planner, at (540) 265-5175.

Sincerely,

H. THOMAS SPEAKS, JR.  
Forest Supervisor

