

Fairfax Healthy Communities Network

Sierra Club Great Falls Group * Coalition for Smarter Growth *

Friends of Holmes Run * Nature Forward

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling * Washington Area Bicyclist Association

*** Friends of Dyke Marsh * YIMBYs of NOVA**

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance * Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

NoVA New Leaf, CCAN's Northern VA Chapter

March 28, 2025

Joseph A. Woomer
SVP, Electric Transmission
Dominion Energy
PO Box 26666
Richmond, VA 23261-6666

Dear Mr. Woomer:

The above 11 organizations, as part of the Fairfax Healthy Communities Network, envision a Fairfax County where people can live, work, and play in connected communities that are healthy, sustainable, and inclusive. **We are writing to ask Dominion to re-evaluate its plans for tree cutting on the W&OD Trail in order to minimize tree loss and take a more thoughtful approach.**

The W&OD Trail is an active transportation and ecological gem

The W&OD Trail is one of the most popular parks in northern Virginia, with nearly 3 million visitors annually. The 45-mile trail provides a vital bike and pedestrian route for recreation and transportation. The tree canopy lining both sides of the trail has significant environmental benefits, providing green infrastructure to naturally absorb stormwater, and reduce flooding and erosion; absorbing greenhouse gas emissions; and providing native wildlife habitat. It also provides quality of life benefits for trail users, as well as residents and businesses along the trail, including shade and buffering between the trail and nearby neighborhoods.

Since 2005, Dominion and NOVA Parks have coordinated tree practices on the W&OD per a Memorandum of Understanding on vegetative management which has both moderated cutting and assured replanting. This has been a win-win solution for all concerned, with the growth of tree canopy and continued reliability of power.

Dominion's current tree-cutting plans are devastating

The plans to cut almost all of the trees on the section of the W&OD from Shirlington to Leesburg mark a radical departure from these practices that have worked so effectively for the past twenty years. Dominion has also provided inadequate remediation and restoration plans. This 33-mile section encompasses hundreds of acres of land, of which Dominion has only promised to cover a limited number of acres with remediation to restore native habitat, generally with meadow plantings which provide far less ecological, stormwater, and shade benefits than mature native trees. In addition, Dominion has now announced a severe limit to the height of replanted trees to a 10' maximum, drastically reducing the amount of shade for users of the trail.

This swath of the trail runs through the most urbanized areas in the corridor in Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Loudoun. The millions of visitors every year attest to how much the area's residents value this recreational greenway. Removing almost all the trees would have devastating impacts for trail users and the environment.

Please retain prior approach of selective tree cutting

We ask that Dominion end its plans to cut most of the trees on this 33-mile section of the trail, and continue its practices of selective pruning of trees that pose a direct impact to transmission lines. Where tree cutting is necessary, Dominion should replant those areas with a mix of native species designed to support birds, bees, butterflies and other pollinators, and manage these and other areas of the park for invasive species for enough years to allow native species and related habitat to establish themselves. Dominion should also adopt a vegetation height limit that allows for a wider variety of native trees.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Bonney
Sierra Club Great Falls Group

Sonya Breehey
Coalition for Smarter Growth

Whitney Redding
Friends of Holmes Run

Renee Grebe
Nature Forward

Joy Faunce
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Kevin O'Brien
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Glenda Booth
Friends of Dyke Marsh

Mostafa ElNahass
YIMBYs of NOVA

Tom Blackburn, Advocacy Committee Chair
Northern Virginia Bird Alliance

Ting Waymouth
NoVA New Leaf, CCAN's Northern VA Chapter

Christopher Topoleski
Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Cc:

Hon. David Bulova, Virginia House of Delegates

Hon. Holly Seibold, Virginia House of Delegates

Hon. Irene Shin, Virginia House of Delegates

Hon. Marcus Simon, Virginia House of Delegates

Hon. Jennifer Boysko, Senate of Virginia

Hon. Barbara Favola, Senate of Virginia

Hon. Russet Perry, Senate of Virginia

Hon. Saddam Salim, Senate of Virginia

Hon. Jeffrey McKay, Chair, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Hon. Walter Alcorn, Supervisor, Hunter Mill District

Hon. Andres Jimenez, Supervisor, Mason District

Hon. Dalia Palchik, Supervisor, Providence District

Hon. Kathy Smith, Fairfax County Supervisor, Sully District

Hon. James Walkinshaw, Fairfax County Supervisor, Braddock District

Hon. James Bierman, Fairfax County Supervisor, Dranesville District

Hon. Rodney Lusk, Fairfax County Supervisor, Hunter Mill District

Hon. Daniel Storck, Fairfax County Supervisor, Mount Vernon District

Hon. Pat Herrity, Fairfax County Supervisor, Springfield District

Hon. Letty Hardi, Mayor, City of Falls Church

Hon. Linda Jane Colbert, Mayor, Town of Vienna

Hon. Keven LeBlanc, Mayor, Town of Herndon