CQ297

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To: <ceq_nepa@fs.fed.us>
cc:
Subject: NEPA Works

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Dear Mr. Greczmiel

Given that the most prominent recent mention many of us have of the Corps is its resistance to Administration decisions to restrict its wasteful and environmentally destructive programs, those of the sort documented by the Washington Post last year, I would think it could do with some good publicity. Here's a chance to stand up to special interests in favor of the environment--and save money, too.

The National Environmental Policy Act is one of the most important environmental laws of the United States. NEPA guarantees that environmental impacts are identified and considered in projects involving federal funds or a federal permit, and that there is an opportunity for public participation and comment.

One of the best examples of how NEPA should work is an environmental review undertaken by the Corps of Engineers of the King William Reservoir project proposed by Newport News, VA.
At the beginning of the process Newport News claimed it needed the reservoir because it required another 39 million gallons of water per day to accommodate growth.

After public comment challenged Newport News' claimed water need, a Corps of Engineers analysis lowered the need to 15-17 mgd. Confronted with these facts, Newport News lowered its own estimated need to 22-27 mgd.

The Corps' environmental analysis also identified significant environmental harm to wetlands and environmental justice impacts to local Native Americans and found that these harmful impacts could not be adequately mitigated. As a result, Corps' Record of Decision held that the permit should be denied.

The Corps' decision in this case has been elevated to the North Atlantic Division as the result of an objection from then Governor James Gilmore. The underlying NEPA analysis and the decision by the Norfolk District of the Corps of Engineers, however, still stands as an outstanding example of the way the National Environmental Policy Act works.

Please do nothing to weaken NEPA or its environmental analysis and public participation process requirements which are essential to protecting America's environment and special places like the Mattaponi River.

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