



## **ABRA Update #5 – November 18, 2014**

### **GW Forest Releases Management Plan, Limits Oil & Gas Drilling**

The George Washington National Forest (GWNF) released this morning its long awaited revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Forest. Of particular interest to ABRA members is the decision regarding oil and gas leasing in the GWNF. The Plan's Record of Decision states:

*7. A separate decision is made concerning lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing [36CFR 228.102(d)]. The approximately 51,000 acres that are congressionally withdrawn from mineral entry (i.e. Wilderness and the Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area) will continue to be legally unavailable for federal oil and gas leasing. The approximately 10,000 acres of mineral rights under current federal oil and gas leases will continue to be available for federal oil and gas leasing (although none of these are currently active). All other areas of the GWNF are administratively unavailable for federal oil and gas leasing at this time. In total, about 1,056,000 acres are unavailable for federal oil and gas leasing. This decision does not affect the approximately 167,000 acres (or about 16 percent of the GWNF) of subsurface mineral rights owned by private parties (also called outstanding r reserved) that are available by law.*

In his cover letter releasing the Plan, GWNF Supervisor H. Thomas Speaks, Jr. explained that the decision on oil and gas leasing was based on a number of factors, including: “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 complete documentation of the decision is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/gwjef/index.php>.

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