



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Northeast Region  
United States Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2878

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L6015 (NERO-PFCA-NWSR)

**JUN 29 2015**

Kimberly A. Prisco-Baggett  
Acting Chief, Regulatory Branch  
Department of the Army  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Norfolk District, Fort Norfolk  
803 Front Street  
Norfolk VA 23510-1011

**US Army Corps of  
Engineers  
Norfolk District Regulatory  
Office  
Received by: RLS  
Date: June 29, 2015**

Re: Potential Impacts NRI listed James River, VA; Dominion Virginia Power's Surry – Skiffes Creek – Whealton Project; James City County, Surry County, & Hampton County, VA

Dear Ms. Prisco-Baggett:

We are writing in response to your letter dated May 29, 2015, in which you requested National Park Service (NPS) assistance in determining potential significant adverse effects to Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) associated with the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) listed James River in the vicinity of the proposed Dominion Virginia Power's Surry – Skiffes Creek – Whealton 500kv electric transmission line project.

The NRI is a listing of rivers that have been considered by NPS under the criteria of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542, as amended). Included on the list are rivers and river segments that meet the minimum criteria for free flow, water quality and the presence of outstandingly remarkable resource values, and therefore may warrant further study and/or potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

A presidential directive issued in 1979 requires each federal agency, as part of its normal planning and environmental review processes, to take care to avoid or mitigate adverse effects on Rivers identified in the NRI. Further, all federal agencies are required to consult with the National Park Service prior to taking actions which could effectively foreclose wild, scenic or recreational status for rivers listed in the inventory.

The proposed project will be directly visible from all of the National Historic sites, which formed the basis for listing the James on the NRI. A major, unscreenable, modern development such as is proposed would significantly contrast with the setting, feeling, historic landscape and natural landscape features associated with each of these historic properties.

The result would be highly diminished historic integrity to each of these outstandingly remarkable historic resources, as well as, the visitor experience of these resources.

The presence in the project area of five federally listed endangered fish and plant species including: Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*), Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*), and Sensitive Joint Vetch (*Aeschynomene virginica*) is also of concern to the NPS given that these species are considered natural Outstandingly Remarkable Values for Wild and Scenic River purposes. The presence of 17 proposed James River crossing transmission towers of the size and scale of this project, with multiple support columns in the bed of the river for many of the towers, will certainly alter the "free flow" of the James River and could significantly impact migrating fish, along with the federally endangered Atlantic Sturgeon.

Land based transmission towers in the riparian zone of the James River may also impact nesting bald eagles, sensitive joint vetch or the small whorled pogonia. The NPS recommends further analysis in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to properly assess the significance of these potential impacts on the natural ORVs.

It is the opinion of the National Park Service that the Surry-Skiffes Creek-Wheaton Project could have a significant adverse impact on the free flow of the James River; the undeveloped scenic character of the area, as well as associated historic and natural outstandingly remarkable values of this NRI listed segment of the James River.

Given the potentially significant impacts to free flow, along with natural and cultural ORVs for this project the NPS recommends that the Army Corps of Engineers follow the Council on Environmental Quality procedures which prescribe preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) if the effects on a NRI-listed river could be significant.

Thank you for consulting with this office on the NRI aspects of this project. If you have any other questions about the NRI aspects of this project, please contact Charles Barscz at (215) 597-6482 or by email: [Charles\\_Barscz@nps.gov](mailto:Charles_Barscz@nps.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Hays". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Frank Hays, Acting Regional Director  
Resource Stewardship and Sciences  
Northeast Region