

YOUR LETTERS

Save the scenic Rappahannock

Why the second-class treatment for the Rappahannock?

Take a close look at many of Virginia's beautiful river crossings and you will notice something missing: power lines. Cross the Nice Bridge on the Potomac, or the Coleman Bridge at the York River, or the bridges that cross the Pamunkey, Chickahominy, and the Piankatank rivers and what do you notice?

Yep, that's right—no power lines. At each of these crossings, the electrical cables were run underwater or under the riverbed itself. As a result, these crossings offer unobstructed views of the great

natural beauty of Virginia's waterways.

This natural beauty attracts some people to visit and others to live in the area. Some even come to start or expand their businesses. The long-term economic development plans of Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck counties are based in large part on preserving and promoting this natural beauty. Dominion's plan to build industrial-style transmission towers across the Rappahannock will destroy the beauty of that crossing. This string of concrete and steel power lines would look right at home along the New Jersey Turnpike, but it has no place here on the Rappahannock.

Unlike the Potomac, York, Pamunkey, Chickahominy and Piankatank, which all were treated with great respect, the Rappahannock is going to get the equivalent of an industrial slap in the face. This second-class treatment should offend all residents and visitors to this area. It is bound to hurt, not help, our local economy.

Come on Dominion—quit being a corporate bully and treat us and our river with respect. Don't spoil one of the most beautiful river crossings in the Commonwealth. Keep the power lines out of sight—you know how to do it.

**Carol E. Rushing,
Kilmarnock**

Don't spoil the first impression

As the director of the Center of Development in the Northern Neck, I direct visitors from Washington, D.C., to come across the Norris Bridge so they get that breath-taking great first impression of the area. The last thing we need is to degrade this "gateway" to our area with industrial power lines.

Power lines erected now will be a scenic blight over the Rappahannock River for 40+ years. As one drives over the Norris Bridge, or sails toward it, a beautiful, clear day in spring would be eclipsed by a set of 180-foot power lines in the middle of your view.

Stop this short-sighted alternative. Other options may cost more, but this is a long-term investment we must make to take care of our river and the economy of the Northern Neck. We know Dominion can, and has, upgraded with underwater power lines on other rivers in our area of Virginia. They can do it here just like other utilities do all over the country.

"We followed the permitting application," Dominion Rep Mathe said. "They don't require visual impacts. We filled out the application to its fullest. We followed the rules and regulations involved." There is your sign.

There is no going back. Once installed, they will be there for good. What a regrettable outcome for us and our children.

**John May,
Weems**

Usurping power

The three most important words in the single most important political document ever written are: "We The People." They constitute the cornerstone of our democracy by establishing that all power held by the government derives from The People. There is no other source of governmental power in our country.

We The People elect those who will represent us. They in turn make and implement laws, some of which empower commercial entities such as Dominion Power to operate as a monopoly to supply electrical power.

Virginia's campaign finance laws, perhaps the most liberal in the country, impose no limits on individual or corporate contributions to state political campaigns. You read that right—no limits. Not surprisingly then, Dominion Power donates generously to the campaigns of those who are empowered to oversee

and regulate Dominion's rate policy, and therefore its profitability. In fact, Dominion has for the past 15 years been the top corporate donor to Virginia state campaigns. No other corporation even comes close to matching Dominion's handouts, hence its reputation for being the "800-pound gorilla" of political donors.

Given the apparent symbiotic relationship between our elected state representatives and a powerful, monopolistic corporation like Dominion, all Virginians should be concerned about the proposed Dominion construction projects on the Rappahannock and James rivers. In both cases, it appears overwhelming public opposition is being brushed aside while Dominion pursues its corporate objectives. Regrettably, preserving the irreplaceable beauty of the Rappahannock and the colonial appearance of the James do not appear to be among those objectives. In both cases, Dominion would despoil what is both an aesthetic treasure and a vital eco-

nomonic asset to the surrounding communities.

James Madison's gift to all Americans—the Constitution—appears to be imperiled. Who wields the ultimate power now—We The People or Dominion Power?

**Carl M. Smith,
president, DCEPA,
White Stone**

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Con-veal: "To keep from being discovered, secrete, or hide." Definitely a term that fits Dominion Power's plan to build huge transmission towers across the Rappahannock River. According to Dominion, adequate notification was given and the affected counties' Boards of Supervisors were fully briefed on the project—not just once, but numerous times. That may have taken place in some other locale or before some other board, but it did not happen in Lancaster County. Dominion Power representatives met with two Supervisors along with the county administrator last September to alert them to the proposed upgrades. No details—other than the disclosure that there would be an overhead line—were discussed; and no visual depictions of the project were provided. The two Supervisors present told the Dominion representatives that overhead towers would be problematic. Dominion assured them they would keep the County informed as planning began.

The next briefing—the first official briefing of the Lancaster Board of Supervisors by Dominion and my first exposure to the project—occurred on May 28. Dominion appeared with no visuals, only schematic drawings detailing the 10 huge towers—all of which would exceed the bridge height—marching all the way across the river. It was at this point that the Board became truly aware of the devastating impact the transmission towers would have on our scenic river, a vital economic driver for the area. Immediate discussions began on the Board, which led to the passage of a unanimous resolution opposing the towers at the very next Board meeting in June. Other counties and towns followed suit as they discovered the full implications of Dominion's proposal. No further briefings were held as Dominion proceeded to obtain the necessary permits, while ignoring the growing opposition to the towers. In an effort to inform our community, I organized a stakeholder summit in late August and invited Dominion and VDOT officials to brief the leaders of the Northern Neck. Even at that meeting few details or any useful visuals were presented.

This project has been conceived and planned with no local input or knowledge. The citizens of the affected counties have been kept in the dark while Dominion has proceeded with plans that would plunder the most precious aesthetic and economic asset in our area. The incomparable—and irreplaceable—beauty of the Rappahannock belongs to all Virginians. It does not belong to Dominion Power. It is not theirs to take. It is time to halt construction of these towers and work collaboratively to avert this needless destruction.

Jason Bellows,
Chairman, Lancaster County Board of Supervisors