



# Appalachian National Scenic Trail Dominion Power Line Crossing Environmental Assessment



The National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Appalachian Trail Park Office  
RE: Dominion Transmission Project  
252 McDowell Street  
Cook Hall  
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425



# Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Dominion Power Line Crossing  
Environmental Assessment



You are  
invited to  
comment  
on a  
proposed  
project

The National Park Service (NPS) is currently soliciting comments from the public regarding the upgrade and reconfiguration of a transmission line within the boundaries of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (the park). The NPS is seeking public comment on the purpose, need, and objectives of an Environmental Assessment (EA), as well as the issues to be addressed in the EA to be prepared for the proposal. The public comment period will begin on June 1, 2009 and end on June 30, 2009.

## Purpose of and Need for Action

In December 2008, the NPS received a draft construction plan from Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) proposing the removal, replacement, and construction of a transmission line on an existing right-of-way crossing the Appalachian Trail. The upgraded line within the park would include the existing 500 kilovolt (kV) line and a new 500 kV line and would require rebuilding of about 1.15 miles within park boundaries. The purpose of this EA is to consider the applicant's construction plan to determine whether to issue or deny a special use permit for construction or whether to issue a special use permit with additional stipulations to minimize adverse impacts to the park. The park must take action at this time because the applicant has submitted a construction plan in accordance with authorization of the right-of-way through the park. The easement agreement between the park and DVP for the existing facilities allows for DVP to "inspect, rebuild, remove, or repair" its facilities within the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and park boundaries and requires consideration of a special use permit for construction.

## Appalachian Trail Background

The Appalachian Trail was initially conceived in 1921 by Benton MacKaye, a U.S. Forest Service employee. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) was established in 1925 in an effort to promote and mobilize the construction of the trail. Today, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail is administered primarily as a footpath providing outdoor recreational opportunities as an extended trail and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources of the areas through which the trail passes. The trail is managed by the NPS in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the ATC, 30 trail clubs, and the 14 states encompassing the trail.

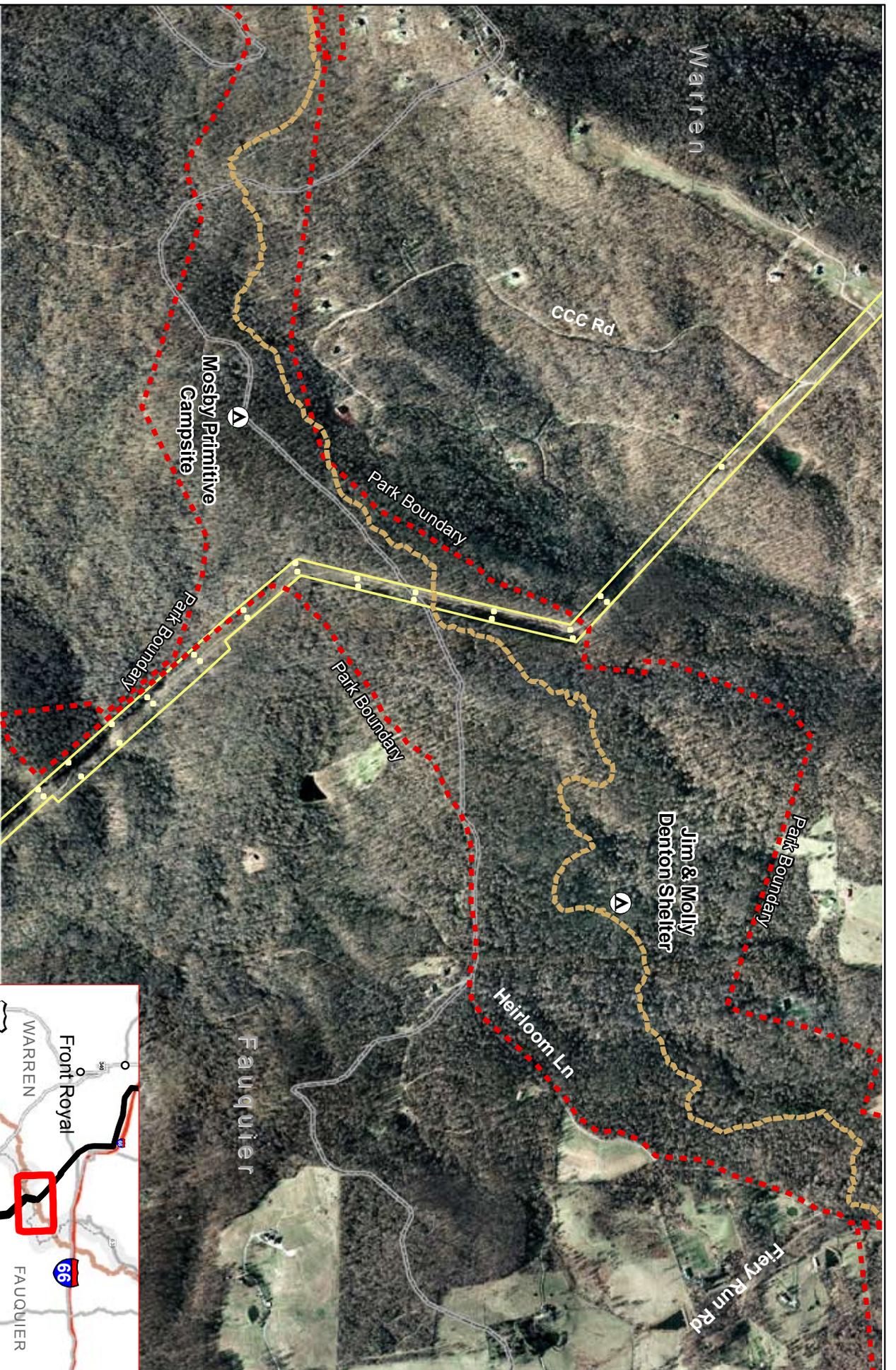
## Proposed Project Description

The proposed project involves a portion of the trail about 6 miles southwest of Front Royal, Virginia, near the border of Warren and Fauquier Counties (see Map 1, enclosed). The existing land for the transmission right-of-way land was acquired in November 1977 by DVP.

The focus of this EA involves the proposed construction plan for the proposed 500 kV electric transmission line that would be built adjacent to the existing 500 kV line crossing the park. The project would involve the deconstruction of the existing 500 kV line and structures, followed by the reconstruction of the old and new lines in a configuration that would completely fit within the existing 150-foot right-of-way through the use of taller structures. The line traverses park property for approximately 1.15 miles and crosses the trail once. The total area of right-of-way through the park is approximately 21 acres (see Map 2, enclosed). All construction activities would stay within the existing right-of-way. An existing access point would be used to bring in necessary materials and vehicles to facilitate the project. Mitigation measures, including a landscape plan and all-terrain vehicle barrier walls, would be used to reduce the effect the upgrade might have on park visitors and trail users.

## Project Background

Currently, the Northern Virginia area, including areas surrounding the park, have experienced a boom in population and development. In a regional transmission expansion plan, PJM Interconnect identified this area of Virginia as needing improvements to maintain a reliable electric grid in the service area. As a result, a 500 kV transmission line was deemed necessary to connect the Meadowbrook substation (Clarke County, VA) with the Loudon substation (Loudoun County, VA). The proposed 500 kV line is a joint effort between Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) and Trans-Allegheny Interstate Line (TrAIL). This line was approved by the Virginia State Corporation Committee on Oct. 7, 2008.



**Legend**

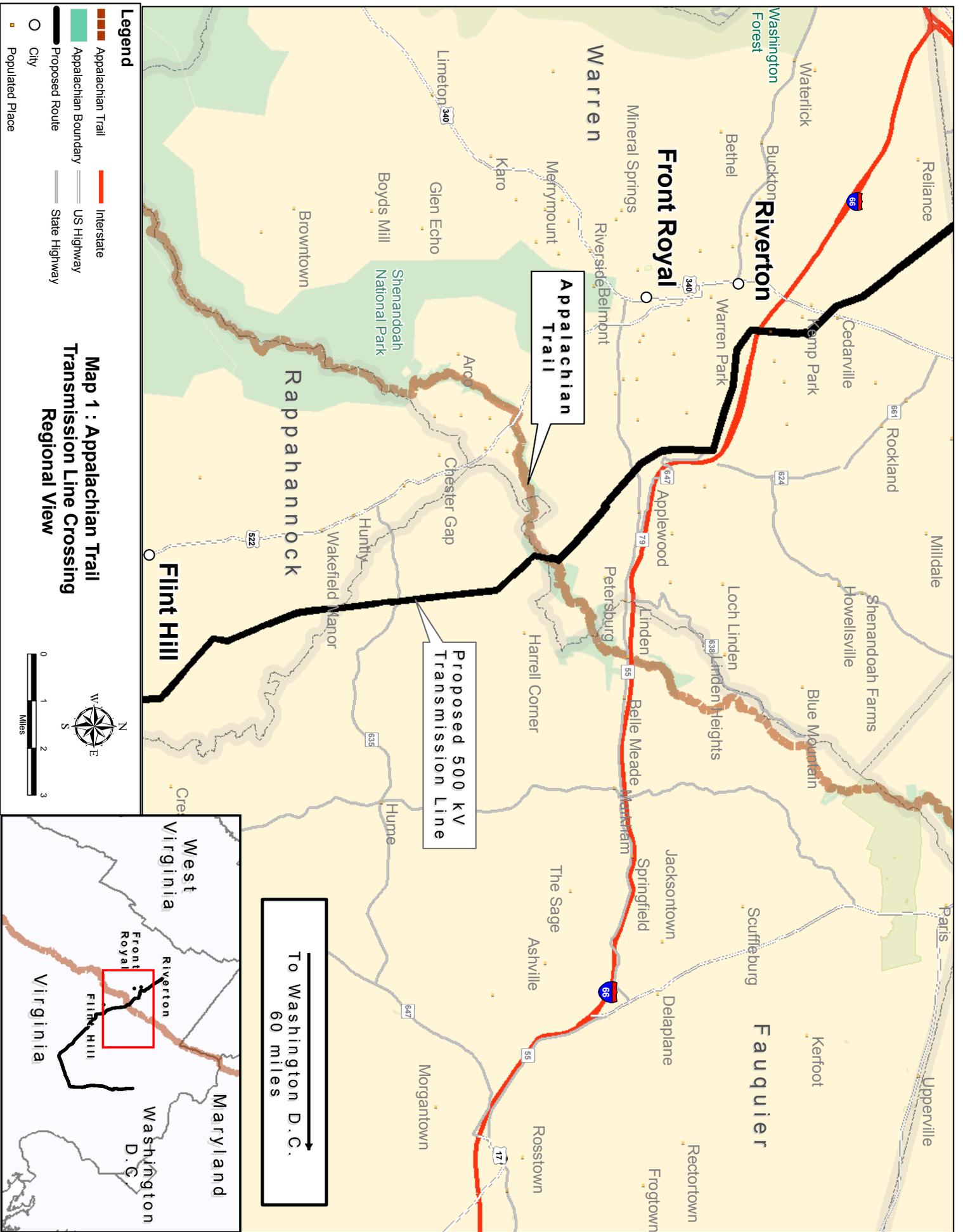
- Appalachian Trail
- Park Boundary
- Proposed Area of Construction
- Structure Location
- Road
- County Boundary

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

**Map 2 : Appalachian Trail  
Transmission Line Crossing**

Geographic Coordinate System:  
 Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM),  
 Datum: North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83),  
 Zone: 17N  
 Projector: Transverse Mercator,  
 Linear Unit: Meter,  
 Ellipsoid: Geodetic Reference System 80

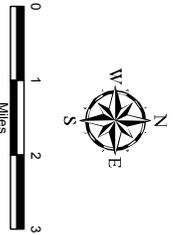




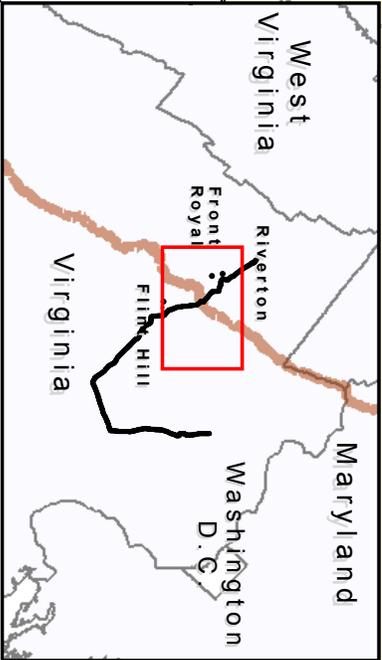
**Legend**

- Appalachian Trail
- Interstate
- Appalachian Boundary
- US Highway
- Proposed Route
- State Highway
- City
- Populated Place

**Map 1 : Appalachian Trail  
Transmission Line Crossing  
Regional View**



To Washington D.C.  
60 miles





**Appalachian Trail Crossing**



**Meadowbrook – Loudoun  
500 kV Transmission Project  
DVP**

Source: Trinity Animation, Inc.  
Structure placements as shown are for photo simulation purposes only. Actual structure placement will be determined during detailed design and engineering of the route selected and approved.

**Visual simulation of proposed structure.**  
*This figure was taken from the Appalachian Trail looking south down the existing transmission line corridor.*

## Objectives

An objective is a statement of goals to meet the purpose and need for action. The objectives of a plan must be achieved to a large degree for the action to be considered a success. The following objectives were identified for this project:

### Trail Management

Minimize the impact on park and volunteer staff time related to this project.

### Natural Resources

Minimize impacts to the natural resources within the park including sensitive species and wildlife habitat.

### Cultural Resources

Preserve and protect the cultural values of the trail.

### Health and Safety

Protect the health and safety of park employees, volunteers, and visitors from exposure to construction activities when the line is upgraded.

### Trail Experience

Minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on visitor experience and visual quality.

## Issues and Impact Topics

Based on an internal review of the project and an initial assessment of issues and concerns, the NPS has identified the following preliminary impact topics to be addressed in the EA. These topics will be finalized based on additional field review, surveys, and public input.

- Soils
- Vegetation (Including Rare Species)
- Wildlife and Habitat
- Cultural Resources
- Visitor Use and Experience/Recreation Resources
- Soundscapes
- Water Quality
- Land Use



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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Place Stamp Here

The National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Superintendent  
RE: Dominion Transmission Project  
The Appalachian Trail Park Office  
252 McDowell Street  
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Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

## Providing Comments

Your participation is vital to our planning process. Because of your interest in The Appalachian National Scenic Trail, we are requesting your input in developing the Dominion Virginia Power Transmission Line Trail Crossing EA. If you would like to provide comment in another form, you can still participate by submitting comments through the following methods:

- Electronically through this website:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/appa>
- Sending back the pre-addressed comment card provided
- By mail with all comments addressed to:  
Superintendent  
The Appalachian Trail Park Office  
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Please be sure to include your full name and address with the comments so we may add you to our mailing list for information on the planning process. Please submit comments by June 30, 2009. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Updates on the planning process will be provided at:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/appa>



Comments regarding Dominion Virginia Power Transmission Line Trail Crossing Environmental Assessment

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive a hard copy of this EA? Yes  No

Would you like email notification of the availability or an electronic version this draft EA? Yes  No

Email Address (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_