

L. Daniel Mouer, Ph.D.
600 W 30th Street
Richmond Va. 23225

(804) 233-2825
danmouer@fastmail.fm

11/09/2014

To: County Administrator and Board of Supervisors,
Fluvanna County, Virginia and County Administrator,
Louisa County, Virginia

cc: Roger Kirchen, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Re: James River Water Project

Dear Sirs and Madam,

I have recently learned of the development of a water treatment and pumping station proposed to be located at the confluence of the James and Rivanna Rivers. I am a retired professor of anthropology and archaeology from Virginia Commonwealth University, former director of the VCU Archaeological Research Center. I devoted much of my early research and my doctoral dissertation to studying the prehistoric Native American occupations along the James in the Outer Piedmont region. My James River Survey research project lasted primarily between 1978-1983, and it revealed that the James floodplain and adjacent terraces in this region are potentially very rich in unstudied archaeological sites.

As we know from early historical documents such as John Smith's history of Virginia, published in 1618, Point of Fork is the likely location of the Monacan Indian town known as Rassawomeake or Rassawek. It is almost certain that there are also numerous earlier habitations at and surrounding the Point dating back thousands of years. While I was working on a collection of sites dating from approximately 3-4,000 years old on Elk Island just downstream, I noticed construction activities associated with the Colonial Pipeline at Point of Fork. By the time my students and I got to the site to take a look, there had already been very substantial damage to a major late prehistoric town or village site in the right of way of the pipeline. I had neither the time nor the authority to conduct a detailed study, but was able only to determine that the site dated generally to sometime in the Late Woodland period, ca. 900-1600 a.d.

There is no doubt that this was but one part of a single archaeological site: a

site that had been well buried by flood deposits. Point of Fork is in a perfect situation to gather deposition from normal seasonal flooding. My own testing on adjacent areas just below the Point revealed the presence of stratified archaeological occupation zones. I am convinced that the floodplain and lower terraces in this area are potential treasure troves of highly significant archaeological remains sealed below potentially deep flood deposits. These are not the sort of archaeological resources that can be appropriately studied hurriedly if discovered during or just prior to imminent construction. Very similar locations along the Roanoke River in the outer Piedmont of North Carolina were studied by Dr. Joffre Coe of the University of North Carolina back in the 1950s and early 1960s, and deep, complex sites were found. Detailed long-term studies of sites of this sort are crucial for our understanding of thousands of years of prehistory in our region here in the James Valley.

Of course, I don't need to tell any of you about the well-known historic sites at Point of Fork, with its state arsenal remains and the plantation home and grounds, deservedly listed in the National Register of Historic Places. While the standing structures are on higher ground than would be *directly* impacted by the proposed water facility, the project could certainly have undesirable effects to the pristine setting of these sites. There could also be remains of related structures on the shoreline, underwater, and on the frequent floodplain. Any planning for construction at Point of Fork must necessarily involve extensive archaeological and historic sites survey and impact assessment. Floodplain archaeological testing must not be superficial, but should be adequate to plumb the depths for potential buried occupation surfaces that could be thousands of years old. Sites located by such survey could result in relocation of the project or the requirement of long-term, complex archaeological excavations. Therefore, these preliminary studies should be conducted as early as possible.

I am writing this not out of any personal involvement beyond my lifelong professional interest in the vast and largely unstudied archaeological resources along the James and Rivanna floodplains. I feel it is highly likely that the proposed water treatment and pumping facilities and associated pipelines could impact critical archaeological remains if construction takes place anywhere on the floodplain on or just below Point of Fork. I encourage you to consider such impacts early in the planning process and with a realistic understanding how they could eventually effect the timing, the cost, and even the viability of the James River Water Project.

Sincerely,