

November 15, 2022

Dear Commissioner Shawn LaTourette and Fish and Wildlife Assistant Commissioner Dave Golden,

I am writing this letter to express my extreme concern over logging that is planned to commence tomorrow, November 16, 2022 on stand 18a at Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area. This announcement - given less than two days in advance - is not an appropriate window of time to alert the public of planned logging, especially considering that this is scheduled to occur in the midst of the permit bowhunting deer season, and immediately before the firearm deer season in NJ deer management Zone 6.

What is especially egregious is that logging in this stand - which includes a Natural Heritage Priority Site, steep slopes, and an unmarked vernal pool and a C1 stream - would create severe long-term impacts to the local ecology that will take decades to recover. The site is not accessible by any road, and so a road will need to be created to gain access. The creation of this road, and the disturbance caused by mechanized equipment - while will include skidders, mechanical fellers, and tractor trailers - will irreparably disturb soils and cause pollution by introducing oils, fuels, and sediments to the nearby C1 stream and Edison Bog area. This stream and bog form the headwaters of the Passaic River which provides drinking water to millions of New Jersey residents.

Furthermore, logging area in a Natural Heritage Priority site - sites which contain an extraordinary diversity of natural resources and diversity of plants and wildlife - is of special concern. The entire area is listed as critical habitat for at least 30 threatened species, including red-shouldered hawk, wood turtle, and bobcat. Logging this area to create habitat for a single listed threatened species at the expense of all others is not only foolish but irresponsible.

Our mature forests such as those at Sparta Mountain play the largest role in sequestering and storing carbon, which is vital at combatting the worsening effects of climate change. To move forward with this project at a time when our mature forests are most needed represents a huge risk to New Jersey residents who depend on our forests for clean drinking water and recreation. Our management of our forests must be in the best interest of all New Jerseyans, and this project does not represent those interests.

I urge you to abandon the logging plan on stand 18a at Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Our forests and our future cannot be put at risk.

Sincerely,