



March 2016

Key Talking Points to share with state officials

A comprehensive planning process for all preserved public forestlands in the Highlands Region should:

- **Protect** the Highlands water, which supplies nearly 70% of New Jersey's population;
- **Identify** substantial natural areas to be kept as "forever wild";
- **Inventory** natural, historic, cultural, scenic and recreational resources, including rare plants and animals, that exist on our public forestlands;
- **Protect** the broad range of Green Acres preservation values, including historic, cultural, scenic and recreational resources;
- **Ensure** the public's use and enjoyment of the Highlands public forests;
- **Use** scientific principles of ecology for forest management plans on public lands;
- **Create** a team of ecologists, park and trail planners and other experts to advise on a management plan for public forest land;
- **Seek** public comment and participation on the management plan from local officials, environmental commissions, local residents, interested organizations and the general public.

Background

The New Jersey State Division of Fish and Wildlife recently proposed a Forest Stewardship Plan for the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area, located in Sussex and Morris Counties. This 3,400 acre site lies in the heart of the Highlands' most mature and unfragmented forests. The proposed plan would harvest or log up to 715 acres, or one-fifth of the Wildlife Management Area, within the next ten years.

Over the last 25 years, New Jersey citizens like you fought to keep Northern New Jersey's forests preserved and unfragmented for their public recreational benefits, wildlife habitat and drinking water for over two-thirds of the state's residents. Because of your passionate advocacy, many important forestlands have been purchased with public and private funding. Now, native plants and animals, water, historic, scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment are at risk.

Comprehensive ecological planning is needed to protect native plants and animals. Careful and strategic forestry projects can be beneficial if they are part of comprehensive plans based on sound science and publicly-supported conservation goals. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection should undertake a comprehensive planning process for all preserved public forestlands, starting with the Highlands Region, including lands managed by both the Divisions of Fish and Wildlife, and Parks and Forestry.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and ask them to suspend the proposed 10-year Forest Stewardship Plan for the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area until comprehensive natural resource planning is completed.

Send your comments by March 31, 2016 to:

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Share this message with your friends and neighbors.

Thank you for helping to protect New Jersey's public forests!