

Sparta Mountain WMA, located along the Greenway way extending along the westernmost ridge of the New Jersey Highlands, is home to a variety of threatened and endangered flora and fauna and a source for water for Sparta, Newton, Ogdensburg, and lake communities. Under “Forest Stewardship Council guidelines, this area is considered a “high conservation value” forest and should be managed to maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. The current Forest Stewardship Plan for Sparta Mountain WMA calls for a variety of “low intensity” Silva culture techniques suitable for use in a high conservation value forest.

The goal of any forest stewardship plan is to restore ecosystem balance. NJ DEP changes to the forest stewardship plan involve a commercial tree harvesting approach. Implementation requires heavy equipment to harvest timber and to build/improve access roads. Herbicides to control invasive plants are envisioned. Timber sales may offset the costs for the project, but will not compensate neighboring communities for their road repairs, water treatment, and emergency services. Considering Sparta Glenn flood, Irene caused dam breach, and Walkill River’s recent discovery of intersex bass; anything can happen. Ecosystem balance by less intensive measures is achievable.

This plan may be suitable in other portions of the Highlands, but not on Sparta Mountain.

Overall, the LTE is good. There are a couple of simple corrections, such as quotation marks, etc but, the last sentence is one I would suggest omitting

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(Just my opinion - I don't want to verbalize at all that commercial tree harvesting is good anywhere in the highlands)

Perhaps use something to the effect of: High Intensity, Commercial Tree Harvesting Protocol is not appropriate for Sparta Mountain and all the municipalities dependent upon it for their water, recreation, fishing, etc.