

New Jersey Sierra Club
A Resolution Opposing Draft Stewardship Plan for Mahlon Dickerson

The Morris County Park Commission, in partnership with New Jersey Audubon, has prepared a Forest Stewardship Plan (the “Plan”) for Mahlon Dickerson Reservation to be approved by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The Plan was drafted with the support of the US Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation.

WHEREAS: The Plan divides MDR into 14 stands and calls for partial logging in 7 of those 14 stands. A total of 530 acres would be subject to thinning over an 8-year period out of a total of 2,513 acres, representing approximately 20.7% of the total acreage. In actuality, in stand #9 the acreage to be thinned is 54.3% and in two other stands (#1 and #11) the acreage is greater than 30%.

WHEREAS: The Plan’s stated purpose, to “improve the forest,” is at odds with the Plan’s own data and with the information from the Commission’s report, “Mahlon Dickerson Reservation Botanical Survey and Stewardship Assessment, 2015.” The Plan itself documents that the MDR forest is healthy and diverse, as does the MDR Botanical Survey.

WHEREAS: The Plan itself documents minimal invasive plants in nearly all of the 14 stands. Rapid expansion of invasive plants would reasonably be anticipated wherever the forest is thinned.

WHEREAS: From an environmental protection viewpoint, the purity of the Highlands watersheds would be diminished under the proposed Plan, potentially negatively impacting the millions of people who depend on water from those watersheds.

WHEREAS: The enjoyment of MDR by the public, from both within and outside of Morris County, would be ill served by extensive destruction of vast sections of the forest.

WHEREAS: The Plan as currently written is viewed as a forester’s plan, not a management plan for a healthy forest ecosystem.

WHEREAS: The world is in the midst of a climate crisis. Large trees produce life-giving oxygen; they filter air pollution, and help regulate the negative effects of climate change.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter hereby urges the Morris County Park Commission to reject the draft Stewardship Plan for Mahlon Dickerson Reservation, as currently written, and urges the protection of the existing intact natural forest.

Adopted by the NJ Chapter Executive Committee January 11, 2020