November 25, 2019

Morris County Park Commission

**Re: Draft Stewardship Plan for Mahlon Dickerson Reservation**

Dear David Helmer, Executive Director and members of the Morris County Park Commission:

I had the opportunity to hike some of the stands. Thinning the trees and burning the underbrush is not a good management plan. It would be a travesty to approve the Mahlon Dickerson Reservation Draft Stewardship Plan as it now exists.

I wrote a book a few years ago—*Wild Adventures of Running Deer*—© 2017 and in it is a chapter on the *Benefit of a Forest* that I would like to share with the Park Commissioners:

There’s nothing quite like breathing cool, clean forest air, being under the shade of woodland trees, smelling the earth, and listening to the sounds of singing birds. A forest is a place where plants and animals are intimately related to one another, a place where flora and fauna live in harmony with Mother Nature. It is a place where men and women can go to heal the mind and body, and soothe the soul.

Air and water are our most precious resources, for without them there would be no life on Earth. Forests play a critical role in maintaining these resources. Forests and trees are the lungs of the Earth. Trees produce life-giving oxygen. They filter air pollution, help reduce noise pollution, provide shade, and create a scenic, healthy environment for all to enjoy. Forests hold water, help cool the Earth, and regulate the climate.

Forests allow rainwater to seep into the ground and recharge the underground aquifers. Forests act as a sponge to absorb water and hold it in the ground.

Forests provide wildlife habitats. Trees support wildlife—they provide nesting sites for birds, hardwood trees provide feeding sites for squirrels, hollow trees provide wildlife dens, and dead trees provide for the ecology of a forest. A forest is attractive, aesthetic, and environmentally healthy.

Man’s impact upon the Earth is devastating. Our forests are not a disposable or renewable commodity for mankind to clear, manage, and exploit—forests are a resource that must be nourished, respected, and protected.

We must take better care to protect our forests and trees.

… Not cut them and cull them.

*Sierra Club: For Our Families, For Our Future*
In conclusion—

I am glad that the Mahlon Dickerson Reservation Stewardship Plan is a Draft, because, as commissioners, you can consider public and professional comments and amend the plan.

As the Plan is currently written, it is a forester’s plan, not a management plan for a healthy forest ecosystem.

The Mahlon Dickerson Reservation forests are relatively healthy and diverse, without the need for thinning or burning. If anything, the Park Commission may want to consider a plan to remove invasive plant species and forgo the plan to cull trees and open the forest canopy, because clearing trees will only serve to encourage non-native invasive plants to take hold.

We are in the midst of a climate crisis—we lose trees all the time to development, the Park Commission should be planting trees, not cutting trees.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Please add the Sierra Club to your list of objectors and contact us when a MDR Stewardship Plan public hearing is scheduled, and when Park Commission is expected to deliberate and decide on the Plan. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Len Fariello
Morris County Conservation Chairman
Loantaka Group, Sierra Club