Mr. David Golden, Chief  
Bureau of Land Management  
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
PO Box 402  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0400

Dear Mr. Golden:

The New Jersey State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NJNWTF) is most appreciative and supportive of the efforts put forth by NJ DFW to sustainably manage the forest and wildlife habitat on Sparta Mountain WMA. The goals outlined in the Sparta Mountain Forest Stewardship Plan are 1.) based in science, 2.) cognizant of environmental, social, and economical values and issues, and 3.) directed at improving ecosystem health, function, diversity, and integrity.

Science based management of forest and wildlife resources has proven to be an invaluable tool for managing wildlife populations. For instance, data collection and research on golden-winged warblers (a species of special concern in New Jersey) has allowed managers to identify habitat needs and specific forest stand characteristics required by these migratory song birds enabling managers to replicate these conditions on the landscape. Active management will result in a continued ecological niche for golden-winged warblers in New Jersey as well as habitat creation for other species that require similar habitat conditions. The Forest Stewardship Plan thoroughly addresses the need for science based management and recommends proven management techniques to achieving the desired habitat conditions.

The Forest Stewardship Plan thoroughly outlines the process for minimizing risk of environmental, social, and economical impacts during wildlife/habitat management implementation. The plan follows state guidelines for implementing best management practices and goes above and beyond in providing reassurance to the public trust of natural resource protection on the Sparta Mountain WMA.

Ecosystem health, function, diversity, and integrity are paramount in sustaining wildlife populations for the future. The Sparta Mountain WMA is home to host of different wildlife species, but is primarily an oak/hickory forest type; a forest type that is disturbance-dependent. The lack of active management and various threats from forest pests have impacted the for-mentioned ecosystem qualities to a level where they are limiting wildlife populations. For example, young forest habitat is critical to ruffed grouse, woodcock, wild turkeys and many avian and herptile species, during their annual or life cycle. The lack of management on the Sparta Mountain WMA and the ephemeral nature of young forest habitat, has left the area almost devoid of this important habitat type and low populations of young forest dependent species has resulted. The Forest Stewardship Plan provides great detail on how to strengthen ecosystem services for both recreational and wildlife use through active management.