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**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 03:58:46 PM EDT

**Subject:** APLNJ Comments, New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force

Sent by Email

Animal Protection League of New Jersey Comments, "New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force"

Re: New Jersey's forests are not "working" for out- of -state manufacturers. Nor is our wildlife up for sale.

Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

The Animal Protection League of New Jersey opposes the slippery nature of this entire exercise. It's stacked.

A task force dissenter put it this way:

"Since the framework as written will not protect New Jerseys public forests from industries, agencies, organizations and individuals who seek to profit from them or misuse them, I cannot support it."

Sharon Wander, B.S. Wildlife Management, Cook College;  
Ph.D., Ecology, Rutgers University

Making Dr. Wander's point, just the other day, the Division of Fish and Wildlife was caught [clear-cutting 21 acres](#) of an intact forest in the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area. The cut was for woodcock, a hunted bird, and in violation of wetlands rules. Your recommendations are sending everything their way.

Frustrated by the Legislature, gunning, timber, and related "stewardship" businesses are attempting to portray "young forests"--- a uniquely inventive way of describing logging -- as a government edict.

From conflict of interest to weighted votes to weighted membership; from unelected leaders changing the rules as they go to "out of the limelight" firearms industry architects and a veritable geyser of taxpayer grants, the contrivance offends basic tenets of fair play and transparency.

- The Legislature did not request or appoint the forestry task force.
- The sponsor of unpopular logging and deer kill legislation that for thirteen years failed to become law created the task force.
- The unelected leaders of the task force are the same parties that lobbied for the failed legislation.
- The task force recommends that the Legislature vest untrammled power over forests and deer to the offending Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) by "directing" the DEP to assess, test, and carry out a range of logging, burning, and deer killing proposals that could not be obtained by democratic, legislative means.
- The DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and Fish and Game Council (FGC) represent hunters, whose national trade association created the logging initiative to produce more wild turkeys, grouse, bobwhites, woodcocks, rabbits, and other "small game." There is a snowball's chance in hell that the DEP process will be fair. Public comment is a chimera: DFW ignores public comments over 90 percent opposed to its proposals.
- Audubon's former vice-president for stewardship (logging and fire) and logging promoter is now assistant commissioner, director of parks and forestry for the DEP.
- We are to respond to the stacked task force "recommendations" as we would an administrative rule: the public has "three weeks" to file responses with Office of Legislative Services.

- In effect, the sponsor of the unpopular legislation will weigh the comments.
- Consensus of what, exactly? Virtually any interest in New Jersey could cobble together its supporters to produce a consensus.
- The pre-determined “consensus” and recommendations are the same, self-interested parties, businesses and their clients, even a meat market, that lobbied unsuccessfully for the legislation.

Sparta Mountain logging pitted the New Jersey Audubon Society and its partner, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, against every environmental group, local municipalities, and residents.

Despite thirteen years of sustained and broad opposition, objections that Audubon had a commercial interest, Senator Smith listened to no other parties, swatting away environmental leaders, municipalities and national and state wildlife protection organizations as so many gnats.

Under his myopic chairmanship, not a single piece of legislation to protect hunted or trapped animals has been released from the Environment and Energy Committee for nineteen years. This, in the metropolitan state of New Jersey. Hunting and trapping deregulation and bills that expand the activities glide through. The Senate Environment and Energy Committee belongs to the people of the State of New Jersey, not Bob Smith and wise-use lobbyists.

Enabled for nearly two decades by brazen favoritism, the Audubon-Division of Fish and Wildlife regime has consolidated its *de facto* ownership of New Jersey public land and wildlife. They are behind the bold move to further privatize and monetize these precious resources.

The shooting industry (Wildlife Management Institute) and its hoary, good ole boy alliances in Washington, D.C., have given us a whole new lexicon, if we let them pull it off.

They’ve decided that our forests are longer just forests, unto themselves; they are “working forests,” working, it turns out, to provide timber and blood sport recreation (and sales) for a shrinking minority, and favored species for others.

Outmoded game management, devalued as harmful to many forest interior species, has been rechristened “stewardship.” Taxpayer dollars are siphoned off to pay for it, laundered through private “stewardship” conservation entities who manage forest habitat for shootable woodcock and quail, and using “species of concern” moneys to do it.

We will be forwarding other materials related to this matter. Given the past nineteen years, we do not expect, nor will we obtain, fair consideration. Our chief concern, in this letter, is process, and the facade that this is anything but another lobbying gambit.

New Jersey’s forests are not “working” for out of state manufacturers. Nor is our wildlife up for sale.

Sincerely,

Susan E. Russell  
Wildlife Policy Director  
Animal Protection League of New Jersey

Pg 97, “Forest Stewardship Task Force Report.”

For thirteen years, the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club was a stalwart opponent of logging, fire, and extreme measures that expanded boorish poaching practices to kill deer. A task force member wrote:“(I hope NJ Sierra Club under new leadership remains last true group & refuses to sign off on this)” – “Larry Baum minor in mathematics; BSc. in conservation biology, biology and physics; Ph.D. in Theoretical Physics (& worked with forest conservation. . .“ Unfortunately, Dr. Baum’s fears appear to have been realized: the new leadership backed the plan, and not without controversy.

The Assembly twice passed the CR to redress a rogue NJDFW regulation allowing a modified leghold trap. A majority of senators committed to supporting the resolution; Senator Smith refused to hear or release the bill.