



NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COALITION

ACTION ALERT

Tell Highlands Council Members to live up to their mandate and adopt a strong Regional Master Plan that won't compromise our water supply.

On July 17, the New Jersey Highlands Council will vote to adopt the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The plan is weak in several key sections. It will allow continuing development—in areas with chronic water shortages, on the Highlands most productive agricultural soils, and within the protective buffers of our most pristine waterways. Since the Plan continues to evolve until it is adopted, **it is not too late to take action!**

The New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act was passed to accomplish the singular goal of protecting the water resources of the NJ Highlands, upon which 5.4 million people rely upon. **The current Plan will fail to achieve this goal unless it prohibits development in areas that will put our water supply at risk.**

What can you do? Contact the Council Members who are also your elected officials and attend one or both of the Highlands Council meetings before the Plan is adopted. **Tell them, as your representative on the Highlands Council, that you want a plan that will live up to the Highlands Act, that won't put at risk our water supply, that will prohibit development in environmentally sensitive areas, on prime agricultural soils and in areas of chronic water shortage.**

Let them know that the Plan's concept of equity, which only recognizes landowners, is wrong-headed and a key statement that sets the theme for a weak plan. It should recognize everyone who lives, works or plays in the Highlands, its visitors, and all the people and businesses that rely upon its clean water supply—both in and out of the Highlands, as legitimate stakeholders in the Highlands' resources.

HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MEMBERS/ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elizabeth Calabrese, Freeholder, Bergen County- ecalabrese@co.bergen.nj.us

Bill Cogger, Mayor, Chester Township- mayorbill@chestertownship.org

Erik Peterson, Freeholder, Hunterdon County- epeterson@co.hunterdon.nj.us

Jack Schrier, Mendham Twp. Committee *and* Freeholder, Morris Co. - jgarifo@co.morris.nj.us

Glen Vetrano, Freeholder, Sussex County- gvetrano@co.sussex.nj.us

Tahesha Way, Freeholder, Passaic County- tway@passaiccountynj.org

HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MEMBERS/NOT CURRENTLY IN ELECTED OFFICE- contact as well!

John Weingart (Council Chair)- john.weingart@highlands.state.nj.us

Kurt Alstede – kurt.alstede@highlands.state.nj.us

Tracy Carluccio – tracy.carluccio@highlands.state.nj.us

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Scott Whitenack- scott.whitenack@highlands.state.nj.us

Mimi Letts- mimi.letts@highlands.state.nj.us

HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MEETINGS

July 10, 10:00AM, Highlands Council Offices, 100 North Road, Chester, 07930

July 17, 10:00AM, Haggerty Center at Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 53 E. Hanover Ave, Morristown, 07960

Please see the next page for suggested language to include in your email.

Suggested language to include in email messages to elected officials on the Highlands Council

- Allowing development in water deficit areas puts our water supply unnecessarily at risk when the focus should be on protecting our streams, reservoirs and drinking water. Required mitigation plans are theoretical at best—they are unproven at the scope proposed. There is too much at stake to pursue this dangerous, speculative policy.
- Requiring residential, clustered development on farms will forever reduce the land available for farming in New Jersey and permanently reduce the available fresh produce from New Jersey's farms. It will forever change the unique character of the Highlands and the agricultural lifestyle that the Highlands Act mandates the Council to protect. It will pockmark the landscape with remote hamlets located far from amenities and transportation hubs, encourage automobile dependency at ever increasing fuel costs and additionally load our aquifers, lakes and streams—the sources of our drinking water, with septic system pollutants.
- Allowing both non-conforming and conforming municipalities to petition for adjustments to the Land Use Capability Zones will discredit and undermine the Council's own science. It will discourage conformance to the Regional Master Plan. Allowing petitions to redraw Zones to accommodate development driven requests will reduce the protections the Zones are meant to establish.
- Allowing disturbances within the 300' buffer to Highlands Open Waters does not protect our waterways. Without a clear statement that restoration of existing disturbances is a required goal of conformance, policies of flexible buffers and no required restoration will further deterioration of water quality in the Highlands.
- The Regional Master Plan currently addresses only the equity concerns of landowners. This is a huge injustice to the rest of the population both within and outside of the Highlands who rely upon its resources. These resources are held in the public trust, for residents and businesses throughout our entire state. It is the sole foundation upon which a regional master plan can succeed. The fundamental fact that clean and plentiful drinking water drives our state's economy must be recognized and addressed.
- A strong Highlands Regional Master Plan which is protective of the region's water, forest and wildlife is essential to the current and future fiscal health of the Garden State.

For more information contact elliott@njhighlandscoalition.org or visit our website at www.njhighlandscoalition.org