

## Environmentalists furious over Governor's Highlands Appointees

*BOB THOMAS Staff Writer Recorder Community Newspapers*

**CHESTER TWP.**--Environmentalists are charging that Governor Chris Christie is gutting the Highlands Act by the process of appointing outright foes of the measure as members of the Highlands Council.

Christie nominated seven new members to the council on Tuesday, Nov. 23. If confirmed by the state Senate, they would replace several of the Highlands Council's staunchest environmental protectionists.

"The Governor is trying to repeal the Act, not through the legislature, but by appointing members to the council that undermine the Act itself," said Jeff Tittle, the New Jersey director of the Sierra Club. "The Governor is putting out water supply at risk by turning the council over to folks with extremist views."

Among the appointees singled out by the New Jersey Highlands Coalition for their opposition to the Highland Act is Sam Race, a White Township Committee member known for having an anti-Highlands Act sign on his property.

Also targetted is Roxbury Township Mayor Jim Rilee who has opposed his own municipality's conformance with the Highlands Act.

If all seven appointees are approved, interim chairman Jack Shrier of Mendham Township, Chester Township Mayor William Cogger and the council's strongest environmentalist, Tracy Carluccio of Warren County, are among those headed out the door.

It's not immediately clear whether Christie has anyone in mind for the chairmanship of the council or if he intends to draw from his appointees for the position.

**"These appointments will significantly weaken and may even deliberately prevent the Highlands Council from achieving the resource protection goals established under the Highlands Act," said Julia Somers, executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.**

The Highlands Council has 15 membership slots, comprised of representatives from each of the seven counties in the region, as well as a mandatory mix of Republicans and Democrats, and public and non-public members.

Also nominated on Tuesday were Timothy P. Dougherty of Morristown, Robert G. Walton of Hunterdon County, Robert Vohden of Andover, Michael Sebetich of Hawthorne, and Michael Tfrank of West Milford.