

NEW JERSEY  
HIGHLANDS**Undermining  
the council**

The reservoirs of the New Jersey Highlands, with a combined capacity of 76 billion gallons, is the water supply to 5.4 million people in 244 municipalities. This water is essentially free — we pay only the costs associated with its storage, transportation and delivery.

It remains cheap, plentiful and largely taken for granted because the watersheds that feed the Highlands reservoirs are regulated. That is, unless Gov. Chris Christie has his way ("A high priority: Some council appointees are a concern," Dec. 5). By nominating appointees to the Highlands Council who are vocal opponents to the Highlands Act, the gover-

nor will undermine the council's ability to continue in its mission to protect the Highlands water supply.

A 2004 study by the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission concluded that if the Highlands were to be developed, it would cost us an additional \$50 billion to treat our water.

If the governor were to exercise true leadership, he would support the work of the Highlands Council and urge our legislators to identify a permanent source of funding for open space and farmland preservation. Only then will the Highlands water supply remain protected, and there will be permanent funding to compensate Highlands landowners who wish to sell their land or its development rights.

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