



# State of New Jersey

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## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM WATER & WASTEWATER UTILITIES STAKEHOLDER MEETING

**DATE:** November 13, 2014

**TIME:** 3:00PM - 4:30PM

**LOCATION:** County College of Morris  
Davidson Rooms  
214 Center Grove Road  
Randolph, NJ

### ATTENDEES:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Laura	Cummings	SE Morris MUA
Frank	Hadley	NJAW
Andrew	Holt	Suburban Consulting Engineers
Ken	Klipstein	NJ Water Supply Authority
Frank	Marascia	NJAW
Michael	Pucilowski	WTMUA
Nathaniel	Sajdah	Sussex Co MUA
Glenn	Schweizer	MCMUA
Julia	Somers	Highlands Coalition
Daniel	Van Abs	Rutgers University
Casey	Ezyske	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Jim	Hutzelmann	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Rob	Freudenberg	Regional Plan Association
Ellis	Calvin	Regional Plan Association

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## MEETING PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of the Highlands Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program and process; brainstorm topics and data availability for ongoing monitoring; identify potential technical advisory committee members; and discuss next steps.

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Overview of Monitoring Program Process
- 3) Discussion Items:
  - a) Thoughts on opportunities for improvement to the RMP.
  - b) How can outreach and education from the Highlands Council be improved?
  - c) What RMP topics/information are most appropriate for ongoing monitoring?
  - d) Do you have access to and/or relevant information about data that can be used for the ongoing monitoring of the RMP?
- 4) Identification of Potential TAC Members
- 5) Wrap up/Next Steps

## MEETING SUMMARY:

The meeting opened with welcome remarks by Rob Freudenberg, Director of Energy and Environment at Regional Plan Association (RPA), the project consultant. Attendees introduced themselves. Mr. Freudenberg provided background on the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) Monitoring Program and process. Key points included:

- The RMP is continually updated as new factual information is made available, but the Monitoring Program evaluates progress toward achieving the goals of the RMP by identifying and measuring indicators and milestones.
- Stakeholder meetings are being conducted now to identify potential indicators and data sources that may not be readily available. Public outreach stakeholder meetings to follow.
- Two technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings will take place, one in early 2015 and the second after initial research and analysis has been completed.
- The process will result in the Monitoring Program Recommendations Report (MPRR) and a science and research agenda.

Participants then engaged in discussion, facilitated by Mr. Freudenberg, about opportunities for improvement within the Highlands RMP.

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Stakeholders conveyed that characterizations of water supply and hydrological conditions in the RMP were based upon a short timeframe of data. At the time, there was recognition that more data would be required. Participants asked Highlands Council staff whether there have been any efforts since the 2008 RMP to generate updates. Staff responded that a number of steps were taken to update water use information. Previously, 2003 data was used, but 2009 data is now available, with revised estimates for subwatersheds. Results show that some water deficits have disappeared. In response to an additional question, Council staff confirmed that since HUC 14s are analyzed on water balance, the previous analysis does take into account water that is withdrawn from the subwatershed, but not introduced back into it. The refined methodology does include wastewater returns.

Participants conveyed that those making day-to-day decisions about water use and conservation are not necessarily considering RMP implications. The RMP becomes relevant only in certain permitting processes. The RMP does not include any contingency plan if goals are not met, but calls for frequent reevaluation to understand the impacts of policies. Council staff responded to participant concerns about water supply limitations that there is currently no discussion about declaring a critical area for water availability. Current supply allocations will not be reduced, but they can be prevented from obtaining additional allocation. A participant asked if the Highlands Region should/would ever be given the status of an area of “critical water supply concern” if conformance and other milestones are not met. Highlands Council staff responded, while they are aware of precedent for the same in Cape May, the RMP does not include procedures for such an action in the Region.

Participants asked whether there has been coordination between the Water Supply Management Act and the RMP. Highlands Council staff remarked that there is a requirement that the plans align. There is a distinct link between supply and utility service, and many of the RMP goals speak to service extension. Further, the NJ Geological and Water Survey database reflects Highlands Region waters.

Participants commented that the outreach conducted by the former director and deputy director of the Highlands Council was especially helpful. It kept the Highlands in the forefront, and compelled politicians to hear what they needed to hear. Other participants remarked that for stakeholders newer to working in the Highlands region, it is difficult to become familiar with all of the intricacies. Council staff replied that this concern had also been shared at other meetings. Staff liaisons deal with top municipal officials, but disconnects exist at one level below. As such, Council staff may be open to revising the municipal outreach process. Other participants expressed the desire for better training for “non-planning types”, perhaps even having a similar

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liaison program with utilities in addition to towns. Further, a steady flow of outreach is necessary to ensure people do not disengage during long gaps in outreach. In one case, a local stakeholder's pub crawl was very effective in building support.

As an aside, one participant commented that there should be a bi-state commission to deal with the Ramapo River.

Mr. Freudenberg then asked participants to provide feedback on potential indicators and data sources. Comments are described below:

- Water and wastewater data is very geographic in nature, which presents an analysis limitation. It is important to understand surface areas and remaining capacity. Demand for wastewater indicates how water is being managed.
- Utilities are required to report monthly and can provide detailed data.
- NJDEP tracks water demand against water allocation. This data is readily available. Monthly data provides insights on peak vs. normal demand.
- The Highlands Council has some (potentially outdated) data on estimates of private wells regionwide and by HUC 14s. There are nuanced details regarding which properties are entirely off of the public system; which are on public water, but private septic; and which are on private wells, but public sewage.
- There should be a net water availability milestone.
- Wastewater management plans – including their status, last update, and permit approvals – should be monitored.
- Main extension permits can indicate where wells have failed, but it might be hard to tease out this nuance.
- Utility companies may be able to provide data on connections and number of meters.

Participants engaged in a discussion regarding non-revenue water. Non-revenue water, or water that is lost in transmission, should be measured as an indicator of efficiency. Utilities often do not understand where they are losing water. Larger utilities will likely be able to report this data, but smaller utilities may not have this data readily available. Is there an acceptable level of loss? Some systems in Pennsylvania have losses at 80%. However, non-revenue water is very dependent on geographical and environmental considerations (like topography). Should infrastructure funding be directed to big systems with small percentage losses, or small systems with big percentage losses? Non-revenue water monitoring is gaining traction among utilities.

Proper asset management is important to minimizing non-revenue water, and requires knowledge of the entire system and its integrity, as well as a capital improvement plan.

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Asset management is not necessarily a reliable measurement, but capital management is measurable.

Participants also conveyed the following thoughts on indicators:

- Density indicators can reflect system efficiency.
- Contamination and well contamination should be monitored. Data from the Private Wells Testing Act is only available as people sell their properties. The USEPA has the ability to specify that certain contaminants will be monitored in certain areas, in addition to those listed in the law. The list of contaminants should be updated.
- Septic management should be monitored.
- County health departments may have data on failing septic systems. However, counties are reluctant to declare failed septic systems.
- Data can be gleaned from real estate transfers, as some property information regarding water and wastewater is required during the transfer
- Septic approvals are tracked, but are inconsistent by municipality.
- Septic management ordinances can be tracked. Further, it will be important to educate municipal leaders on the value of such ordinances.
- There should be an inventory of failing or inadequate stormwater systems. The Highlands Council is developing an application for municipal workers to identify outfalls, amongst other related items.

As the meeting concluded, Mr. Freudenberg remarked that participants are encouraged to send further feedback on indicators and data via email and through the online comment portal. Participants are also encouraged to identify potential TAC members. The TACs will meet in two series of meetings, the first set of meetings in January 2015 and the second pending release of NJDEP land use land cover data and associated project team analysis. Interested stakeholders should send resumes.

Over the next few weeks, Highlands Council staff and the project team will be conducting additional stakeholder meetings, meeting with county and municipal staff, and holding public workshops.

## Next Steps/Action Items

- Participants should submit via email: additional feedback on indicators, additional feedback on data sources, and TAC member suggestions.
- The project team and Highlands Council staff will follow up with individual participants regarding indicators and data sources.