



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
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HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM MUNICIPAL NORTH PUBLIC WORKSHOP

DATE: January 12, 2015
TIME: 7:00PM – 9:00PM
LOCATION: Sussex County Vocational Technical School
102 N Church Road
Sparta, NJ

PARTICIPANTS:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Robert	Allen	Resident
Howard	Baker	Resident
Frank	Bennett	Resident
Bev	Bennett	Resident
Robert	Bracken	Resident
Helen	Caren	Resident
Austin	Caren	Resident
Louis	Crescitelli	NJ Legislature
Shirley	Dennis	Resident
Robert	Dennis	Resident
Jeri	Doherty	Resident
Jackie	Espinoza	Resident
Chris	Fitzpatrick	Resident
Ted	Gall	Resident
Bob	Gary	Resident
Christa	Gerry	Resident
Wendy	Goetz	Resident
Greg	Gorman	Resident
Ernest	Hafer	Resident
Helen	Heinrich	NJ Farm Bureau
Michael	Larose	Resident

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Deborah	Larose	Resident
Gary	Larson	Resident
Bill	McGovern	Resident
Dennis	Mudrick	Resident, Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Richard	Murli	Resident
Eric	Obernauer	New Jersey Herald
Allison	Obi	Resident
Sen. Steve	Oroho	NJ Legislature
Gail	Phoebus	Resident, Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Greg	Poff	Resident
Mark	Quick	Resident
Stephen	Shaw	Resident
Matt	Smetana	Resident
Julia	Somers	NJ Highlands Coalition
Parker	Space	Resident
Rick	Sparling	Resident
Jeff	Spatola	Resident
George	Stafford	Resident
Erica	Van Auken	NJ Highlands Coalition
Richard	Vohden	NJ Highlands Council - Member, Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
George	Zacsek	Resident
Margaret	Nordstrom	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Chris	Danis	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Carole Ann	Dicton	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Corey	Piasecki	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Courtenay	Mercer	Regional Plan Association
Janani	Shankaran	Regional Plan Association

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PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of the Highlands Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program and process, receive feedback on draft indicator topics, and collect other general feedback as it relates to the Highlands program areas.

ACTIVITIES:

Participants were invited to visit topic-area stations, facilitated by Highlands Council staff, to vote on indicator topics and respond to targeted questions. For indicators, participants were asked to use up to three dots per topic area to vote on the indicator topic(s) most important for monitoring. Participants were asked to respond to questions using post-it notes. Those with any general comments or questions were invited to speak with any member of the Highlands Council staff.

Topic areas/stations included:

- Introduction: Learn about the Highlands Act, the Highlands Regional Master Plan and the monitoring program.
- Land Owner Equity
- Resident and Business Owner Concerns
- Agriculture & Forest Sustainability
- Land Use
- Water Resources & Lake Management
- Water & Sewer Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Transportation, Transit & Air Quality
- Conformance
- General Questions & Comment

Participants were encouraged to submit additional comments on the online web comment portal.

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RESULTS:

Station: Economic Development

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes	Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Income	3	Household Expenditures/Revenues	
Employment	7	Foreclosures	
Wages	1	School Enrollment	
Labor Force Qualifications	1	Tourism	5
Business	8	Farm Labor	
Population w/characteristics		National Agriculture Statistics	
Households w/characteristics		Scenic Corridors	1
Housing units w/characteristics		Viewsheds	
Building Permits	1	Cultural Resources	2
Property Value	14	Historic Resources	1
Non-residential Lease Rates		Archeological Resources	
Equalized Property Values	1	Recreational Areas & Trails	3
Property Tax Revenue	3	Preserved Open Space	6

How can the Highlands Council improve outreach, planning and education to help attract and retain business in the region?

- Focus on attracting businesses that focus on green alternative energy practices
- Send anyone receiving a water bill a flyer to inform them of the atrocities of the Act
- More outreach to community organizations for education, to local business owners to practice sustainable methods, to citizens; billboards and jobs

How can the Highlands Council assist in the expansion and promotion of tourism in the region?

- Allow entrepreneurship of land owners impacted by HDC; allow building expansion in Highlands; allow water farms for sale of local product to consumer and commercial
- Encourage green rooftops for all building expansion
- Develop pamphlet to describe various agritourism strategies i.e. farm tours ending in gift shops or activities to generate income
- Encourage organic farming, sustainable communities, permaculture; be a vision of the future

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Station: Water Resources & Lake Management

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes	Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Open Waters	1	Flood Areas	1
Wetlands	3	Conservation lands	1
Reservoirs	1	Contaminants	3
Water Quality	7	Septic Density	4
Water Quantity (flow & levels)	5	Stormwater Management	6
Aquifers	6	Prime GW Recharge Areas	2

What steps can the Highlands Council take to support water quality improvements in the Highlands region?

- Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Township: storm water drain illegal/non-conforming
- Energize a pharmaceutical medicine collection program leading to an experimental testing program. Lake water quality: consolidate efforts/monitor ongoing lake water quality initiatives by NJDEP, NJCOLA, Highlands Council, and others. Establish database files
- Stormwater management needs to be prioritized
- Update information to account for predicted “storm intensities” due to climate change
- Ban pesticides in critical areas to prevent runoff into water supply
- Nitrate dilution model is not based on science. Use more flexible site specific ways to control development
- Cost to users for protection of the water by stealing land rights. Pay those who have made the ultimate sacrifice of loss of development rights.
- Protect water quality by protecting more forests, streams and wetlands by putting them in the public trust. Preserve nature. Increase the protected area from the edge of wetlands/lakes/streams.
- Larger setbacks for all new infrastructure and development. Setbacks from all water sources.

What steps can the Highlands Council take to support lake management in the Highlands region?

- Lake community zone absorbs inaccurate amount of properties. Tax purposes?

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Station: Water & Sewer Infrastructure

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Wastewater Treatment (existing areas served & sewer service areas)	9
Septic Management	5
Water Supply (existing areas served)	9
Wellhead Protection Areas	5

General Comments on Indicators:

- Drop the nitrate dilution model as way to set septic density (=zoning). Use better science, site specific criteria
- Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Township: allow water farm in known aquifers in Highlands to increase point of use and sale of local water. Restore all dams to retain groundwater levels
- Septic systems - management. Forward technology; capitalizing on our waste and turning it into fuel for community, i.e. biroot energy
- Monitor downstream water use: conservation, infrastructure losses

Station: Land Use

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Land use capacity	7
Housing	4
Community Facilities	
Redevelopment	8
Centers	5

How can the Highlands Council better assist communities that wish to promote infill development and redevelopment?

- People need places to live, work, shop and go to school. The government should not be monitoring them
- It will continue to be important to reconcile affordable housing obligations with available resources
- Land use capacity – duality of preservation and desire to preserve if citizens don't in return get what is promised
- Restore the value of farming, repeal NAFTA and CAFTA
- Recognize all centers approved b the State Planning Commission for TDR, for growth, etc.
- Capacity based planning is key

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- The 2008 RMP “global warming” principles need to be expanded to include resiliency and adaptation strategies
- Policy and guidelines for encouraging renewable energy is recommended
- Renewable energy incentives and net zero building incentives

Station: Agriculture & Forestry

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes	Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Important Farmland Soils	1	Preserved Farmland	2
Crop production	2	Right to Farm	5
Livestock production	1	Forests	5
Value added products	3	Riparian Areas	4
Agricultural labor		Critical Habitat	3
Agricultural business	9	Conservation Lands	2

What steps can the Highlands Council take to better support and promote the agriculture industry in the Highlands?

- Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Twp. Reinstate farming in our town
- Adopt a valid and operational TDR program
- Find a method to fund agricultural loans based on business planning
- Develop policy guidelines to encourage renewable energy generation
- Develop programs to encourage relationships with farmers and food industry (restaurants, local stores/grocers)
- Encourage agri/eco-tourism
- Increase/promote our distribution systems for local, organic, non-GMO food/crops; create new market systems shop at farm, no packaging, no transport pollution

What steps can the Highlands Council take to better protect large contiguous forests in the Highlands?

- Minimize intrusion of pipelines and power lines; ban oil pipelines
- Not government’s role
- As well as not allowing pipelines, not allowing compressor stations either, or any infrastructure for fossil fuels
- Fund TDR to adequate level
- Do not allow gas pipelines through the Highlands Region
- Must have easement purchase program for woodlands
- If we preserve, we should not allow the targeting of energy infrastructure to “take” our preserved land through any means
- Manage the forests for water quality and supply, instead of “hands off only”

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- Simply protect them. Don't let people cut them down or interrupt them for any reason.
- Take advantage of forest stewardship Council recommendations

Station: Transportation, Transit & Air Quality

Indicator Topic	Number of Votes
Commuting Patterns	4
Transit Options	11
Freight Rail Connections	2
Air Quality	6
Health Impacts	6

What public transportation improvements would you like to see in the Highlands in the near and long term?

- Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Township: Restore damns, fix water delivery infrastructure, storm drains require a relook relative to runoff directly to protected areas
- Smart streets
- Encourage shared rides and carpooling options: encourage carpooling with parking lots for meeting and drop-offs. Mobile app to share rides. Website to find others.
- Air quality – i.e. NE upgrade (gas transport): No infrastructures that pollute or could contaminate our water. Wendy W. Goetz
- Encourage intensive development in communities and business centers. These would become transportation nodes.
- Petroleum pipelines should be banned.
- Pipelines are the safest way to move oil.
- Safety aside, pipeline construction is highly detrimental to water supply – especially across steep slopes in the Highlands
- Transit options: more community based transit to the four major commuter rails, carpool local efforts
- Change to the lane lines on Route 15 to make it 3 lanes throughout the divided byway
- Health impacts: monitor more aggressively through community programs and doctors
- Train down Rt 80, solar canopies over highway, transit links to surrounding towns via bus and other, carpool incentives. Matt Smetana
- The air quality in the Highlands region Is excellent
- The air quality in the Highlands region is adversely affected by the pipeline, the Minisink Compressor Station, the Milford (soon-to-be-expanded) Compressor Station

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Station: Resident & Business Owner Concerns

How could communication between the Highlands Council, and residents and business owners be improved?

- R. Sparling Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Township: active Woodland Management Plan in effect since 1999; Jefferson Township removed our Q-farm status 2007; forest stewardship; active tree farm not recognized; DEP/Jefferson Township does not approve of barn construction
- Explain to the public the economic value of clean drinking water and how the Highlands Act protects NJ's drinking water
- The State Plan identifies 143 centers in the Highlands towns. To date only 11 centers have been approved but have not been fully implemented. Why?
- Provide an analysis of how much money the resource of clean water for NJ is saving taxpayers
- Highlands Council should view the film "Blue Gold" and tell residents to watch – educate residents on the value and importance of protecting our valuable resource, water! It is life! We need to focus on preserving nature – to prevent drastic climate change – and the Council should be encouraging residents to do as much as they can to support this valuable Act!

What would you change about the Highlands landowner equity policies?

- Lot 8 Block 387 Jefferson Township: return our constitutional right of the property owner or pay for taking at or above market rate; not pay residential tax rate for unusable property; subsidize HDC funding (a joke) via water levy
- I think we should be paid today. IT has been 10+ years.
- Is there going to be a solution that the towns and counties can receive financial assistance in the future for the loss of ratables, or do the real estate taxes continue to escalate?
- Exemption for family member to build on lot existing before Highlands. Fine but if land was not sub-divided before Highlands, family is out of luck. Eight grandchildren cannot build on my 50+ acres.
- Do you think that the RMP was widened the inequities between the rich and the poor? Do you think that 7 counties and 88 towns will thrive under the RMP?
- Does the unlimited and untamed growth happening on the Gold Coast of Hoboken, Jersey and others, with rents that only the top 3% of our population can afford, going to close the gap between the rich and the poor?
- The RMP has a future land use component for the guidance of smart growth. The Highlands Council to date seems to avoid this portion of the RMP.
- The Council should explore ways to assist development within the principles of resource management. One house on 25 acres. Why not one \$5 million on 25 acres instead of 50, \$200K houses?

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- Land owner equity: when a landowner preserves and protects water through an organization who does not complete their part of interaction – our citizens will not want to preserve more. We must compensate.
- Let the people vote; either pay for their protected water to compensate landowners or eliminate Act/law. No law should be passed without getting a legitimate funding source first!

Station: Conformance

Has plan conformance been a positive or negative experience in your municipality? Please explain.

- Negative: family owned land at Cranberry Lake for 180 years (since 1834). Now cannot be subdivided by sixth generation family members to live on. No financial compensation given. Tax bills unchanged. Land taken by NJ.
- Nonexistent in Jefferson Township.
- Positive: Sparta, NJ
- The “checklist method” leaves the entire region in total limbo. Nobody wants to invest in one area where their property in a short time period could go from Planning to Preservation.
- Positive: Thank you! For all that you do to protect our treasured drinking water and beautiful forests, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Do you have any suggestions to improve the plan conformance process?

- If Jefferson Township resigns to RMP implementation the rules apply in conformance to all
- From my experience, these are my biggest complaints: compensation for HDCs is intentionally undervalued (one-third of actual \$), HDCs should not expire, process is too lengthy, major Highlands development should not include existing development or impervious as original Act was written, HDC compensation should not be affected by environmental value
- Mitigate the impact on landowners by continuing TDR
- Recognize all the good planning from the State Plan process
- The RMP has defined methods for the conformance of the Plan. Why is the Highlands Council using the “checklist method” which is not part of the Act or RMP?
- The Act in 2004 was 414,936 acres in the Preservation and 444,422 acres in Planning. Most property owners in the original Preservation Area have not been paid for the “lost value”. The “checklist ordinance” keeps expanding the acreage in the Preservation Area.
- Implement tax stabilization so that counties and townships can recoup list revenue that Act should have
- Pick your properties. IF close to developed areas, allow some development for economic growth. But not in farmlands or forests.
- In establishing a lot’s former potential development and new structures, location should not be considered

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Station: General Comments & Questions

General Comments & Questions:

- Why are fully developed lake areas like Hopatcong, Musconetcong and Mohawk designed as conservation and planned areas while equally developed Cranberry Lake is Preservation Area? Any open land at Cranberry Lake cannot be subdivided although the lake shore is fully developed same as above lakes.
- Water from the NJ Highlands provides clean drinking water for over 50% of NJ's residents
- Preservation of the Highlands has saved NJ taxpayers 30 billion dollars since 2004.
- We must continue to protect and preserve the NJ Highlands for the sake of all NJ residents, despite protests from a small number of landowners.
- If over 50% of NJ residents depend on water from the Highlands, why can't they pay the Highlands land owners for giving up use of their property?
- The Highlands Council is treating this update as a "report card". They should be looking to make needed substantive changes for the economic stability of the region.
- Investigate science of Act. Prove that 88/25 acres is necessary.
- Highlands Council should be honest with property owners in the RMP region and just tell them that the 1996 RPA report titled "A Region at Risk, The Third Regional Plan" states that the Highlands region is New York City greenfields. They should have informed everyone the RPA's primary function is to make sure that NYC stays viable.
- Why is the Highlands Council using HUC 14? This method most of the time leaves a town with a "water deficit", when using a different method, the result would better represent truer calculations.
- There needs to be a greater focus in promoting economic development that creates jobs for area residents.
- Our greatest glory is not in never failing but in rising up every time we fail...R.W. Emerson
- More attention should be made toward finding incentives for towns to want to compensate land owners – seek public ideas
- Matt Smetana: leave an open category on each board to allow for other options not included on the board.
- Thank you! Please talk more and educate people about the value in protecting trees, lakes, biodiversity, etc. All of these are critical for our lives. The Highlands Act is an excellent protective Act and I love it!
- Need to give brief definition of item that is blue dotted so we understand what your intentions are. Also some dots should come with the ability to add comments as to why you are voting for it. Our reasons may differ from yours.
- Who's going to get the water rights and own them?