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MEETING OF THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL**

RMP Program: Forest Resource Management and Sustainability
Version: November 7, 2007

<p>Issue Overview</p>	<p>The Highlands Region contains some of the most important forests in New Jersey. These forests are vitally important to every element of the Highlands Region, including the natural and the built environment. Forests provide essential ecosystem functions, including surface water filtration, which is important to protecting essential drinking water supplies for the Highlands Region and for the state as a whole. Forests serve as habitat for plants and animals and are critically important to the maintenance of biodiversity in one of the most populous states in the nation. In addition, when managed for sustainable use, forests can be as source of renewable wood products as well as alternative forest products. Forests are a defining visible and functional feature of the Highlands and constitute a majority of critical habitat in the Region.</p> <p>Current forest management practices, incentives and regulations are evaluated that will support the continuation and enhancement of science based management of the forest resource for long term societal benefits for future generations. Despite being the most densely populated state in the nation, forests cover 45% of New Jersey’s land mass and 54% of the total of land area (approximately 464,200 acres) of the Highlands Region.</p>
<p>RMP Policies and Objectives Addressed</p>	<p>Policy 1.1.1.2 To limit human development in the Forest Resource Area in order to protect and enhance forest resources, critical habitat and the quantity and quality of water resources in the Preservation Area.</p> <p>Objective 1.1.1.2.3 <i>To prohibit the deforestation of lands within the Forest Resource Area of the Preservation Area for human development except where authorized as an exemption by Section 30 of the Highlands Act.</i></p> <p>Objective 1.1.2.1.3. <i>Implementation of programs which encourage the inclusion of appropriate wildlife and invasive species management techniques in Forest Management Plans adopted by any federal, State, county or municipal government entity.</i></p> <p>Policy 1.1.2.3. To limit deforestation in the Forest Resource Area and forested lands within High Integrity Forest Subwatersheds within the Existing Community Zone to maximum extent practicable.</p> <p>Policy 1.1.2.5. To ensure that forest resources are protected on a site specific basis during site plan or subdivision review.</p>

	<p>Policy 1.1.2.6. To establish standards and criteria for sustainable forestry activities in order to conserve and enhance the Forest Resource Areas and forested lands within High Integrity Forest Subwatershed within the Highlands Region.</p> <p>Policy 1.1.3.1. To require that conforming municipalities and counties address the protection of forested portions of Forest Resource Areas and High Integrity Forest Subwatersheds in their master plans and development regulations.</p> <p>Objective 1.1.3.1.1 <i>Maintain forest cover to the extent possible in the Highlands Region in natural as well as built environment.</i></p> <p>Policy 1.1.3.2. To develop technical guidelines and procedures to assist municipalities and counties in the development of forest mitigation and community forestry plans for inclusion in municipal and county master plans and development regulations.</p> <p>Objective 1.1.3.2.1. <i>Technical guidelines and procedures for development and implementation of low impact development best management practices to protect, enhance, and restore forest resources.</i></p> <p>Objective 1.1.3.2.3. <i>A model municipal tree ordinance for municipalities that allows active forest management with approved Forest Management Plans.</i></p>
<p>Program Summary</p>	<p>This program seeks to balance the need to protect the forest resource, biodiversity and water resources with the economic use and continued sustainable management of forests while promoting active stewardship to provide/optimize the multiple benefits and services forests provide including clean air, clean water, soil protection, recreation, wildlife habitat and forest products. The foundation has been set for continued scientific management and long term sustainability of the forest resource in the Highlands Area.</p> <p>A forest is far more than trees. It is a complex ecosystem – ever changing and defined by the interactions of living organisms and the surrounding environment. A native, healthy and diverse forest cover is the preferred land use to protect water quality and quantity. The multiple benefits and values provided by these forests are realized by society as a whole while the individual landowners are responsible for the care and stewardship of this resource.</p>
<p>Forest Sustainability</p>	<p>Program Description</p> <p>For long term sustainability of the forest resource in the Highlands there must be proactive management of deer populations, non-native invasive species and reductions in the rate of forest fragmentation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Criteria and indicators are needed to measure the sustainability of the forest resource. Data need to be collected to assess long term sustainability. 2. Incentives must be developed for invasive species control and management of White tailed deer populations. 3. Low impact development principles must be adopted to prevent further fragmentation of forest habitats. 4. Valuation methods are needed for carbon sequestration, invasive species control, and management activities tied to forest health improvement and the intrinsic societal values of forests including water quality protection.
<p>Develop a Model Municipal Tree Ordinance</p>	<p>Program Description</p> <p>A model tree protection ordinance that provides protection of the water resource, maintain forest cover and regulate forest loss associated with land use change, while exempting forest management activities conducted in conformance with New Jersey’s Best Management Practices, will be developed by the Highlands Council. This ordinance will provide consistency in municipal regulation across the Region. The following standards should apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Municipalities should adopt an ordinance which meets the intent of the

	<p>Highlands RMP as far as exempting forest management activities conducted under a forest management plan approved by the State Forester.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Ordinances should be consistent, to the extent possible, to provide equal protection of the resource throughout the Region. 3. Ordinances should include methods to protect trees and forest cover during construction.
<i>Develop Community Forestry Plans for Highlands Municipalities</i>	<p>Program Description</p> <p>Community Forestry Plans are used to maintain and improve forest cover in developed areas. Increased urban forest cover will improve storm water retention, water quality, air quality, community character and quality of life for residents of Highlands communities. They will be encouraged municipalities during Plan Conformance. Grants are currently available from the New Jersey Forest Service to fund a portion of these Plans.</p> <p>Many Highlands municipalities are operating under tree deficits where they are removing more trees than are planted. In many communities the Community Forest resource is nearing the end of its life expectancy and replacement trees have not been planted in advance in anticipation of mass loss of the resource.</p> <p>Community Forestry Plans are adopted as components of Municipal Master Plans and address portions of these plans.</p>
<i>Develop Forest Conservation and Mitigation Plans</i>	<p>Program Description</p> <p>Forest Conservation and Mitigation Plan criteria would be developed by the Highlands Council and distributed to all municipalities for use in the site plan review process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forest Conservation Plans would be completed to protect existing trees on development and redevelopment sites to maintain the maximum forest cover long term. 2. Forest Mitigation Plans would be developed for all areas from which forests are cleared resulting in an alteration in land use (deforestation). Mitigation banks (planting focus areas) can be designated by municipalities and monitored by the Council. If a developer clears one acre of forest they can replant an acre in the proximate area or contribute financially to a municipal or regional mitigation bank from which municipalities can apply to implement planting projects designated in Community Forestry Plans.
<i>Develop Forest Stewardship Plans for Preserved Lands</i>	<p>Program Description</p> <p>Forest Stewardship Plans should be developed for all preserved lands within the Highlands. This includes non-profit, municipal, county and State owned lands. Stewardship of the lands will provide and optimize the multiple benefits and services forests provide including clean air, clean water, soil protection, recreation, wildlife habitat and forest products.</p> <p>There is currently a funding mechanism for Forest Stewardship Plans for non-profits but funding will run out at the end of 2007. A funding source for implementation should be developed including grants.</p> <p>Active management on preserved lands could reinvigorate the local forest product markets and create a critical mass for forest products industries to repopulate the region.</p>

<i>“Green” or Third Party Certification for Highlands Forest Products</i>	Program Description The Highlands Council will pursue as a long term goal the use of certification programs for Highlands forest products. Such programs would require that baseline data are collected, criteria and indicators established and Forest Stewardship Plans are completed on preserved land before products can be certified.
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