

## CHAPTER VI. IMPLEMENTATION

### **Subpart c. Federal, State and Regional Agency Coordination**

#### **Issue Overview**

The Highlands Act requires a coordination and consistency component which details the ways in which local, State, and federal programs and policies may best be coordinated to promote the goals, purposes, policies, and provisions of the RMP, and which details how land, water, and structures managed by governmental or nongovernmental entities in the public interest within the Highlands Region may be integrated into the RMP.

For a regional planning initiative to succeed, a substantial amount of participation and coordination is required from all levels of government. In addition to the 88 constituent municipalities and seven Highlands counties that will play a large role in implementing the RMP, it is necessary for the Council to incorporate thorough and effective interaction and coordination with federal and State agencies. Coordination with the seven county planning departments in support of both county and municipal Plan Conformance as well as RMP data management and data sharing is also a critical component.

This extraordinary degree of cooperation is vital in order to achieve the most positive, sustainable outcome for the environment and economy of the Highlands Region, and thus the quality of life for all who live and work within it or otherwise benefit from its resources. Establishing a process based on the consistent treatment of factors at all levels of government is key to the success of regional policies and initiatives.

State level coordination between the Council and the Department of Environmental Protection will be particularly important due to the requirements of the Act that establish stringent regulatory standards for development in the Preservation Area administered by the Department and the provisions in NJDEP regulations at N.J.A.C. 7:38-1.1(g) though (l), which require that consideration and weight be given to this Plan.

The Highlands Act provides that any municipality or county located entirely or in part in the Preservation Area shall be exempt from the State Planning Commission's Plan Endorsement process and provides that the Council must consult with the State Planning Commission before approving, rejecting, or approving with conditions the revised plans and associated regulations of Planning Area municipalities and counties for lands in the Planning Area. Further, the Act provides that upon the State Planning Commission's endorsement of the RMP, any municipal master plan and development regulations or county master plan and associated regulations that are found by the Council to be in conformance with the RMP shall be considered the equivalent of having those plans endorsed by the State Planning Commission.

Finally, regional coordination between the Highlands states (Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania) is necessary in order to address and implement comprehensive conservation measures, since regionally significant resources do not neatly follow political boundaries.

#### **Program Summary**

The purpose of this program is to establish a process based on the consistent treatment of factors at all levels of government to ensure the success of RMP policies and initiatives. Towards this end, a fundamental goal of this program is to establish or enhance interagency coordination to address critical issues such

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**RMP Policies and  
Objectives Addressed**

as environmental review procedures, land use regulation, affordable housing, land acquisition, agriculture, TDR, and Smart Design practices. Additionally, through this program, the Highlands Council will establish regular lines of communication and exchange technical information with representatives of the broader Highlands Region in Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Through proactive coordination with federal, State and county agencies the Council will promote the use of the RMP policies and standards to ensure the consistent protection of resources in the Highlands Region. Consistency is particularly important with those federal or State programs related to water supply availability, water quality, biodiversity conservation, and infrastructure capacity needed to handle growth.

Policy 1H4. To advocate for the establishment of dedicated sources of funding for the preservation and stewardship of open space lands in the Highlands Region including, but not limited to:

1. Dedicated sources of State revenue to be used for open space preservation in the Highlands Region, such as coordination with the NJDEP Green Acres Program for re-authorization of the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund, including a dedicated fund for the anticipated land acquisition needs of the Highlands Region, and enactment of a water user fee.
2. Dedicated sources of State revenue for a reserve fund to capitalize the Highlands Development Credit Bank.
3. An on-going program to secure significant federal funding in support of land acquisition and stewardship efforts in the Highlands Region including, but not limited to, additional appropriations under the Federal Highlands Conservation Act.
4. An on-going program to seek funding for land acquisition and stewardship from unique sources such as gifts, endowments and donations, and federal and state court-imposed fines for natural resource damages.
5. A dedicated source of revenue for the preservation and stewardship of open space through a surcharge on public water supply system rates for any system that directly or indirectly relies on Highlands water resources for more than 5 percent of their annual needs.
6. A Highlands Conservation Trust to secure monies from alternate sources of funding to assist in land acquisition and stewardship.

Policy 1H5. To support legislation to extend the dual appraisal methodology used by the Garden State Preservation Trust for lands in the Highlands Region beyond the June 30, 2009 expiration date to a minimum of five years beyond adoption of the RMP.

Policy 1J1. To promote the creation of a Forest Preservation Easement Program for the Highlands Region, eligible for use through the State Agriculture Development Committee or the Green Acres Program.

Policy 1N1. To develop innovative financing and administrative mechanisms for the maintenance and operation of public and private dams and lakes, where those dams and lakes provide a continuing public or private purpose.

Objective 2B6b. NJDEP Water Allocation decisions and Highlands Project Reviews shall ensure that any new or increased water allocation permits within the Highlands Region are in conformance with the policies and objectives of the

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RMP policies and objectives and do not result in significant reductions in safe yields for any water supply facility with an existing water allocation permit and NJDEP-approved safe yield.

Policy 2E2. To coordinate programs, funding and activities among public and private entities to encourage regional ground water recharge protection, restoration and enhancement activities consistent with the Plan.

Policy 2F2. To coordinate with NJDEP regarding a unified water quality assessment and the development and implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads, where necessary, for all surface waters within the Highlands Region.

Policy 2F3. To coordinate with NJDEP regarding a unified ground water quality assessment, monitoring and attainment program.

Policy 2F4. To coordinate with NJDEP regarding efforts to monitor areas of known contamination to ground water resources within the Highlands Region and activities to remediate and restore water quality.

Policy 2F5. To coordinate with NJDEP and other agencies to identify impairments and implement improved regulatory actions and management practices that will also support the water quality goals of the Highlands Act.

Objective 2H1a. Coordinate with NJDEP to establish and maintain an inventory of Wellhead Protection Areas in or affecting the Highlands Region.

Objective 2J9b. Coordinate with NJDEP, water purveyors and water utilities to ensure that service areas and franchise areas are supplied by and consistent with sustainable yields from their designated sources.

Objective 3A7a. Coordinate with the NJDEP State Forester and conservation experts to provide guidance for the development of Forest Management Plans that improve the maintenance of ecosystem and water resource values of the Highlands Region.

Policy 3B4. To support incentives and funding opportunities for the control of invasive species, white-tailed deer reduction programs, and the water value of well-managed agricultural lands.

Policy 3D1. To work with the State Agriculture Development Committee and the Garden State Preservation Trust to establish incentives for any landowner in the Highlands Region seeking to preserve land under the farmland preservation program that would be provided in exchange for the landowner agreeing to permanently restrict the amount of impervious surface and agricultural impervious cover on the farm to a maximum of five percent of the total land area of the Farm Management Unit.

Policy 4A6. To coordinate the Highlands Council's activities with regard to historic and cultural resources with the New Jersey Historic Trust and the State Historic Preservation Office.

Policy 5C2. To coordinate with NJDOT, NJTransit, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), counties and municipalities with regard to transportation planning and implementation strategies within both the Highlands Region and the larger 13-county metropolitan planning region.

Policy 5C8. To evaluate the existing and proposed Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) in the context of the RMP and develop

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recommendations for amendments that would minimize detrimental environmental impacts resulting from new residential developments while maximizing utility efficiency in a manner that addresses community and landscape character.

Objective 6K1a. Establish interagency teams as necessary to support and expedite redevelopment and development activities that conform to the Plan.

Objective 6K1b. Encourage and support the use of planning and financing tools that are available through state agencies and programs for appropriate redevelopment.

Objective 6M1a. Coordinate with NJDEP on Highlands Brownfield designations and in support of a mechanism that facilitates remedial activities within the Highlands Region.

Objective 6O1b. An interagency partnership with the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) in support of the achievement of both the resource protection requirements of the RMP and the municipal constitutional obligation, in “growth areas”, to provide a realistic opportunity for the construction of a fair share of affordable housing for low and moderate income households.

Policy 7E4. The Highlands Council shall seek and support priority allocation of available State and federal funding for Highlands municipalities which have established TDR Receiving Zones for Highlands Development Credits.

Policy 8A3. To identify and pursue state and federal programs that offer financial and/or technical assistance for sustainable economic development in the Highlands Region.

Objective 8B1a. Coordinate activities with the NJ Department of Agriculture and other entities to maximize the potential benefits of existing programs that sustain agriculture.

Objective 8B2a. Coordinate activities with the NJ Department of Agriculture and other entities to ensure a sustainable agricultural industry and agricultural operations that improve farm incomes and the long-term viability of farming.

Policy 8C5. To advocate for state and federal funding of recreation and tourism initiatives in the Highlands Region.

Policy 9A4. To encourage and support state and federal air quality monitoring for the Highlands Region and regulatory action to reduce levels of air pollutants including but not limited to: ozone, carbon dioxide, sulfur compounds, volatile organic compounds, methane, and fine particulate matter pollutants in the Highlands Region.

Policy 9A6. To support State and federal initiatives that will reduce air pollution emanating from power plants, incinerators and landfills within and affecting the Highlands Region and particularly in Warren County due to out-of-State power plant air pollution.

Policy 10A1. To ensure that programs and policies are effectively coordinated to promote the purpose and provisions of the RMP, through efforts with all levels of government, including local, county, regional, State and federal agencies.

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**Creation of  
Interagency  
Committees**

The Highlands Council will work with State and federal agencies as needed to develop Interagency Teams to assist in implementation of the RMP. The Interagency Teams will reflect the multiple modes of coordination that are required and will change as needed, based on the nature of the issues at hand. The Interagency Teams may address critical coordination measures such as environmental review procedures, land use regulation, affordable housing, land acquisition, agriculture, Brownfields, TDR, historic and scenic resources, transportation and Smart Design practices. The Teams will serve in support of RMP policies, Plan Conformance reviews, and Project reviews and will act as technical and planning partners in the implementation of RMP policies. The role of the Interagency Teams is to provide local and regional support to all stakeholders on issues and concerns of the Highlands Region.

**Coordination with  
Regional Agencies**

The Highlands Council will establish or enhance regular lines of communication and exchange technical information with representatives of the Federal Highlands Region in Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. The Council will also ensure consistent coordination with relevant federal departments and agencies including the United States Departments of Agriculture (including the Natural Resources Conservation Service), Interior, Commerce, Transportation, and Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as any federal departments and agencies that engage in activities that affect the Highlands Region. The Council will maintain a liaison with each federal department or agency that administers or funds programs that affect the use of lands or protection of resources in the Highlands. These coordination efforts will encourage each federal entity to rely upon the RMP when their actions or decisions about programs, projects, or funding have the potential to affect the Highlands Region.

**Coordination with  
State Agencies**

The Highlands Council will ensure consistent on-going coordination with State agencies and between the Council and NJDEP. The Council will work with NJDEP to actively encourage use of the RMP as the basis for establishing regulatory thresholds and standards. The Council will also work with NJDEP to develop a coordinated land use permitting strategy for lands subject to the NJDEP's Highlands Rules and the RMP's Preservation Area requirements. In addition, the Council will develop a process to ensure consistent coordination with the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture, Law & Public Safety, Community Affairs (including the Office of Smart Growth and the Council on Affordable Housing), Education, Health and Senior Services, Treasury and Transportation, and the NJ Commerce, Economic Growth and Tourism Commission on issues appropriate to each of their jurisdictions.

In order to aide municipalities where they seek appropriate opportunities for development, redevelopment, and/or preservation within the Highlands Region, the Council will coordinate with the Economic Development Authority, New Jersey Redevelopment Authority, the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust, the New Jersey Historic Trust, and the Garden State Preservation Trust to facilitate funding and to institute policies that help to implement the RMP.

To help ensure that new infrastructure and State funded public development is guided to appropriate locations in the Highlands Region, the Council will work with the Board of Public Utilities, New Jersey Transit, the New Jersey School Construction Corporation, Department of the Treasury, New Jersey Building

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**Specific Coordination  
with State Planning  
Commission**

Authority, and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority.

The Highlands Council will take the following steps related to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, consistent with its Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Smart Growth and the State Planning Commission:

- Within sixty days of adoption of the RMP, the Council will, as required by the Highlands Act, submit the RMP to the State Planning Commission for Plan Endorsement for the Planning Area of the Highlands Region;
- Coordinate with the State Planning Commission to clarify the policies and use of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and Map and the Highlands RMP and Land Use Capability Map;
- Maintain a cooperative planning process with the State Planning Commission to reconcile conflicting land use policies that municipalities may encounter when seeking Plan Endorsement by the State Planning Commission or Plan Conformance by the Highlands Council;
- Coordinate with the State Planning Commission to ensure the sharing of all reports, petitions, recommendations and/or reviews generated for the State Plan Cross Acceptance and Plan Endorsement processes by Highlands municipalities and counties as well as those prepared as part of the Highlands RMP and Plan Conformance process with local Highlands governments;
- Streamline the State Plan and Highlands processes for municipalities and counties by providing for simultaneous agency reviews as well as joint meetings, whenever possible;
- Coordinate with the State Planning Commission to ensure consideration of any written comments provided by the Council concerning petitions before the Commission prior to any action approving, rejecting, or approving with conditions the petition for Plan Endorsement; and
- Coordinate with the Department of Community Affairs' Office of Smart Growth to ensure the sharing of all relevant documents and data concerning the review and coordination of State infrastructure capital investment, community development, and financial assistance for local governments with lands in the Planning Area.

**Specific Coordination  
with Regional,  
County, and  
Municipal Planning  
Agencies**

The Highlands Council will ensure consistent, on-going coordination with regional, county, and municipal planning agencies in support of Plan Conformance and State agency coordination. The Council will work with these agencies to allow for coordination and consistency in support of County and municipal planning, project reviews and long term planning and funding programs. With particular reference to agriculture, these will include County Agricultural Development Boards, County Soil Conservation Districts, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service. The regional and county planning agencies serve as a critical interface between State, regional and local knowledge to ensure that RMP policies and initiatives are coordinated throughout the Region. The data sharing and management practices with regional, county, and municipal planning agencies will continue to be refined and enhanced to ensure that timely updates are achievable, quality assurance measures are in place and innovative approaches may be realized.

**Subpart d. Local Participation**

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**Issue Overview**

The local participation requirements in the Highlands Act call for the “maximum feasible local government and public input into the council’s operations, which shall include a framework for developing policies for the planning area in conjunction with those local government units in the planning area who choose to conform to the regional master plan” (Section 11.a.(3)). This includes the establishment of opportunities for public input in the regional planning process, including coordination with county and local governments, stakeholders and the general public. Section 6 of the Highlands Act additionally authorizes the Council:

*j. To appoint advisory boards, commissions, councils, or panels to assist in its activities, including but not limited to a municipal advisory council consisting of mayors, municipal council members, or other representatives of municipalities located in the Highlands Region; and*

*k. To solicit and consider public input and comment on the council’s activities, the Regional Master Plan, and other issues and matters of importance in the Highlands Region by periodically holding public hearings or conferences and providing other opportunities for such input and comment by interested parties.*

Local participation is a critical aspect of any planning process and has been a priority for the Highlands Council in the development of the RMP. This type of public participation is frequently used in land-use planning in order to involve citizens in the decision-making process, enhance outcomes, and establish a better sense of stewardship. Moreover, citizen participation may add knowledge to the planning process regarding local conditions, needs, and concerns that might otherwise go unaddressed.

To be successful, specific public participation strategies should be tailored to the needs of the individual planning effort and the relevant stakeholder groups. The Highlands Council has used a multi-faceted approach to involve stakeholders and interest groups in the development of the RMP. The Council will continue to encourage and enhance local participation in the implementation and refinement of the RMP, which in turn will enhance and maintain the natural, cultural and economic resources of the Highlands Region for years to come.

**Program Summary**

The Local Participation Component provides for a variety of approaches to meet the requirements of the Highlands Act. Various outreach and communication efforts have taken place since the adoption of the Highlands Act. Since its inception, the Highlands Council has coordinated outreach programs and events for a variety of audiences. The overall effort can be categorized into three separate programs: the Partnership, the Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), and the Network. The approaches that the Highlands Council uses to deliver information to the public and addresses constituent matters include: regular public meetings, public presentations, and the provision of individual outreach and constituent services. The Highlands Council website will continue to serve as a communication tool – one that reduces the need for physical production, distribution, and/or packaging of Highlands Council documents.

The Highlands Council has taken advantage of a variety of outreach approaches in order to provide details regarding the RMP, disseminate technical information, address individual comments and concerns, and meet the constituents of the Highlands Region. The Council operates in a transparent

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environment and will continue to promote and maximize public participation and stakeholder involvement.

The existing outreach components will continue to be utilized to encourage local participation. Additional strategies will include the development of training and educational programs on various subjects, resources and technical support on specific issues, and assistance in coordinating with other government entities in promoting regional goals.

To promote understanding and support for the various RMP policies and objectives at the local level, and in support of Plan Conformance, the Highlands Council shall take actions that include the following:

Resource Protection

- Develop or utilize existing educational programs on water conservation measures to reduce consumptive and depletive uses of water supplies;
  - Develop or utilize existing training and educational programs on methods for incorporating water capacity thresholds into land use decision-making;
  - Provide educational and technical training programs to promote understanding and implementation of consistent standards for the protection, restoration and enhancement of Prime Ground Water Recharge Areas;
  - Provide educational and technical training programs on Prime Ground Water Recharge Area protection measures applicable through municipal planning, zoning and land use regulation;
  - Provide training and educational programs on ground and surface water quality protection and restoration methods;
  - Develop a training and educational program on concepts, approaches and methods to achieve wellhead protection;
  - Develop training and educational programs on septic system design and maintenance and the protection of water quality;
  - Review information with counties and municipalities regarding areas of ground water quality impairment known to exist, or that are suspected to exist (e.g., lake communities with failing septic systems, public community water systems) and determine how best to protect or restore these resources;
  - Develop educational and technical training programs to promote consistent standards for the protection, restoration and acquisition of important waters and riparian areas of the Highlands Region;
  - Develop educational and technical training programs on resource protection standards, restoration and mitigation practices, and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices to minimize impacts from land development activities on Highland Open Waters and Riparian Areas;
  - Coordinate with municipal Environmental Commissioners and watershed organizations to encourage a comprehensive stream monitoring and riparian area assessment program within the Highlands Region;
  - Develop an educational program on methods to identify and protect steep slopes;
  - Develop an educational program on methods to develop a forest stewardship plan;
  - Establish an educational program on sustainable forest management
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practices;

- Educate the public on the ecological, economic, cultural and recreational value of maintaining healthy forests in the Highlands; and
- Develop educational program on methods to develop Habitat Conservation and Management Plans.

Land Preservation

- Educate the public on the economic, cultural and resource value of preserved open space in their communities;
- Assist municipalities and counties in gathering open space information in order to update and track existing data; and
- Develop educational and technical assistance on funding opportunities for land preservation, restoration and enhancement, and stewardship activities within the Highlands Region.

Agricultural Sustainability

- Develop educational and technical training programs to promote a viable and environmentally sustainable agricultural and horticultural industry in Highlands communities and in the Region overall;
- Educate the public on the economic, cultural and resource value of maintaining a viable and environmentally sustainable agricultural and horticultural industry in the Highlands; and
- Promote, establish and use an Agriculture Advisory Committees as a resource to meet the goals of the RMP.

Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources

- Provide educational and technical assistance to municipal and county officials regarding methods to identify and preserve the historic, cultural and scenic resources of their communities; and
- Provide assistance to counties and municipalities interested in developing a heritage tourism program, to complement historic preservation and/or recreation planning efforts.

Future Land Use

- Develop educational and technical training programs for innovative/alternative development and redevelopment initiatives in support of the RMP's policies for development, infill development and redevelopment;
  - Support stakeholder understanding of the need to incorporate smart growth principles in development and redevelopment planning efforts in order to protect and restore resources and create parks and green spaces, while at the same time providing opportunities for housing, employment, and maximum use of high-efficiency modes of transportation;
  - Support economic improvement of the Highlands Region through development and redevelopment initiatives that balance housing, employment and quality of life;
  - Provide programs and materials to educate stakeholders regarding the vast array of affordable housing options;
  - Provide educational programs regarding residential green building features and rebates available for utilizing energy efficient construction elements for
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- new development and home renovations; and
- Provide educational opportunities for Highlands Region stakeholders to learn about innovative design concepts related to natural resource protection, smart growth principles, green building practices and other strategies to enhance quality of life in the Highlands.

Water Resources and Utilities

- Develop educational programs on water conservation, low impact development, recycling and re-use measures and methods to reduce demand on existing water supplies;
- Develop training and educational programs for municipal utilities and public works departments to identify the adequacy or limitations of infrastructure for existing and future demands;
- Develop educational programs on water conservation, recycling and re-use measures and methods to control infiltration and inflow to maximize available wastewater treatment capacity; and
- Develop training and educational program for municipal and county planning boards and environmental commissioners on methods for using the RMP to revise and develop Wastewater Management Plans and in support of wastewater system maintenance.

Transportation System

- Provide resources, technical support, education and outreach in order to implement the RMP's transportation, transit and related air quality protection policies.

Recreation and Tourism

- Assist with tourism inventories to identify both public and private tourist attractions, such as historic, cultural, scenic and recreation opportunities, as well as facilities to support tourism, such as bed and breakfasts, inns, restaurants, bicycle rentals, and provisioners of outdoor equipment; and
- Assist municipalities in working cooperatively with counties and neighboring towns to approach tourism from a regional perspective.

Land Owner Equity

- Provide detailed guidance on Highlands Exemptions and Waivers;
- Provide public outreach and education for the Highlands TDR Program;
- Establish a process for designating voluntary receiving zones within the Highlands Region and the seven Highlands counties, which process shall allow for significant public input; and
- Develop and implement a Voluntary TDR Receiving Zone Feasibility Grant Program to encourage and support municipalities interested in identifying and evaluating opportunities to create TDR Receiving Zones.

Regional Economic Sustainability

- Provide a summary of the Cash Flow Timetable to the public on a periodic basis informing constituents regarding progress and expenditures related to implementation of the RMP.
  - Assist municipalities in maximizing the efficiency of land development practices and opportunities for economic development and redevelopment in support of a sustainable regional economy.
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Conformance and Implementation

- Assist municipalities, counties and stakeholders in understanding the nature and extent of Plan Conformance and Project Review requirements.

**RMP Policies and  
Objectives Addressed**

Policy 10A1. To ensure that programs and policies are effectively coordinated to promote the purpose and provisions of the RMP, through efforts with all levels of government, including local, county, regional, State and federal agencies.

Policy 10A2. To ensure sufficient local participation in the development of the RMP and on-going work of the Highlands Council.

Objective 10A2a. Engage stakeholder groups and individuals in public participation opportunities that provide meaningful input in the Highlands Council planning process.

Policy 10A3. To ensure maximum RMP Conformance by municipalities and counties to achieve the highest level of protection for all important natural systems and resources of the Highlands.

Objective 10A3a. Provide benefits and incentives to municipalities and counties that conform to the RMP.

**Partnership Program**

The Partnership is a consortium of government representatives of the 88 municipalities and seven counties of the Highlands Region. It was formed to provide a forum for disseminating information on the RMP and implementation process, as well as to create a direct line of communication between the Highlands Council and its constituent governments.

This program was created to make certain that local and county representatives and officials continue to have an active role in shaping the future of their communities. Representatives of the constituent towns and counties provided information on local issues and planning efforts that related to elements of the RMP. Subjects of importance were identified and prioritized based on feedback from local and regional officials, including environmental protection, open space and land preservation, agriculture and forestry, economic development, tax rates, affordable housing, infrastructure capacity, transfer of development rights, developing model ordinances, and potential legal issues and challenges. Partnership meetings also took place with Highlands municipalities on an individual basis. Workshops, luncheons and other meetings were also held with municipal representatives.

The Council adopted data-sharing agreements with all of the seven Highlands Counties in order to facilitate the production of the RMP. These agreements allow the Council to collect and share data, such as parcel data, which will be helpful to other agencies and the individual municipalities. These agreements facilitate contact between the Council and the seven Counties and assist the Council and staff in creating a sound, data-rich plan. The data sharing agreements will provide updated information and resources on a continual basis. This process will benefit the participating entities as well as the Council.

The Council will conduct constituent forums in support of the RMP and stakeholder understanding. In addition, it will provide education and training sessions covering a variety of topics integral to RMP implementation, including natural resources, housing, economic development, land stewardship,

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**Technical Advisory  
Committees**

innovative technologies, and waivers and exemptions, .

The Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), consisting of technical experts and practitioners from a variety of relevant fields, including but not limited to planning, science, engineering, agriculture, transportation, real estate appraisal, and business, were convened to serve as resources to the Council and Highlands Council staff on specific subject matters. This outreach program was developed by the Highlands Council in order to gain a range of expertise in areas related to the development of the RMP.

The 18 committees focused on subject matters that the Highlands Act mandated the Council to address as part of the RMP. Topics included water resources; land use planning; ecosystem management; land preservation; green construction; sustainable agriculture and forestry; eco-tourism; recreation; housing; community investment; regional development; brownfields; redevelopment; transportation; cultural, historic, and scenic resources; utility capacity; and transfer of development rights.

The TACs, acting in the capacity of "volunteer consultants," met to discuss and provide input on individual issues pertinent to development of the RMP. Where information pertaining to the scientific and technical basis for sections of the RMP was at issue, TAC members exchanged expert opinions with Highlands staff and offered a course of action for each topic. A two-day workshop forum (or charrette) was held by the Highlands Council to allow Highlands Council staff and TAC participants to freely discuss and consider a spectrum of approaches and strategies for addressing the goals of the RMP.

The Highlands Council plans to continue outreach with specific TACs, particularly in the development of the TDR Program and economic development and redevelopment initiatives. This process will allow the Highlands Council to gain different perspectives and will keep the TAC members informed of the Highlands Council's program approaches. In some cases, multiple TACs will be combined to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the process. The number, focus, membership and meeting schedule for TACs will vary over time based on Council information needs.

**The Network**

The Network was created in order to open the door to stakeholders, including the general public, to share information about progress on the RMP, gain local insight and comments on significant issues, address individual questions of concern, host special stakeholder events, conduct public information sessions and provide web access.

To address stakeholder concerns, the Council has provided programs to inform citizens and business interests about the process surrounding the RMP and accept comments on any issues that arise. The Council has participated in constituent meetings and responded to all inquiries, whether made in person, or by telephone, e-mail, or letter. Highlands Council staff members have also made numerous presentations to municipal boards, commissions, and committees, to interest groups and at various conferences on planning and the environment. Several times throughout the planning process, the Council proactively reached out to the Network in order to provide notice of the availability of new and updated information in the form of draft RMP data releases.

Repositories containing hardcopies of the RMP are be located at County libraries, several local libraries and community colleges in order for the public to

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have enhanced public access to the documents for review. Currently, a repository for all hardcopy data released exists at the Highlands Council Headquarters in Chester, New Jersey and is available for public viewing upon request.

The Highlands Council will continue outreach to the general public in order to inform the conformance process and implementation of the plan as well as to benefit stakeholders.

**Regular Public Meetings and Presentations**

The Highlands Council meets on a regularly scheduled basis at the Highlands Council Office in Chester, New Jersey. Committees of the Council meet on an as-needed basis. These meeting forums are open to the public and include opportunities for public comment. In fulfillment of the requirements of the Highlands Act, the Council held numerous hearings regarding the draft RMP to receive public comments, and also held Council meetings in each of the seven constituent counties to inform the public about the goals of the Highlands Council.

The Council also provides information to the public about a variety of topics related to the RMP at public meetings of its constituent municipalities and counties. Local concerns and comments are received at these meetings and will continue to be addressed on an individual basis.

**Individual Outreach and Constituent Services**

Outreach is also provided by the Highlands Council on a case-by-case basis. Beyond the larger meeting forum, citizens may have general concerns, questions, or request a follow-up after Highlands Council meetings by either visiting, writing to, or calling the Council offices. Depending on the subject matter and availability of information, Highlands Council staff will offer an immediate response or acknowledge the request and provide a reply within a reasonable timeframe. Additionally, the Council is bound by the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and has an established procedure for responding to requests submitted via this procedure.

The Highlands Council staff is also available to meet with representatives of constituent municipalities and counties regarding aspects of the Highlands Act, the RMP and Plan Conformance process, and any local concerns or information that these entities may wish to bring forward. There have been numerous meetings organized and/or attended by Highlands staff to interact and engage with property owners to provide specific information related to individual properties. Meeting handouts and other written documents have been prepared and distributed in an effort to educate the general public about the Highlands Region, the role of the Council, the RMP, and NJDEP's Highlands Preservation Area Rules. Highlands Staff will continue to provide this important outreach component to individuals and organizations in need of such assistance.

**Special Stakeholder Events**

Open meetings and special events geared toward addressing individual topics and/or stakeholder groups are another avenue for disseminating information to groups of constituents. This format was employed to inform Highlands landowners, particularly those in the Preservation Area, about the Highlands Act in order for them to make educated decisions regarding the future of their land. The "Landowner Forum" convened early in the RMP development process, provided this special stakeholder group important information about landowner rights and available options. More than 100 participants attended the forum which included presentations by Highlands Council staff, the State

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**DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL  
AT THE JUNE 12, 2008 COUNCIL MEETING**

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Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), and NJDEP's Green Acres Program. The public was afforded the opportunity to meet with the various state, county and non-profit land preservation entities, including Morris Land Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, Passaic River Coalition, Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, as well as representatives from Morris, Passaic, and Warren Counties to discuss preservation opportunities. Another special stakeholder event was a bus tour for Highlands Council members and staff to view a variety of farms in the region with members of the New Jersey Farm Bureau and Highlands farmers to learn about local farmers needs.

Educational programs and technical training which will be developed as part of the plan implementation will be presented at the Highlands Office. The dates for these meetings are available at the Council's website.

**Web Access and data sharing**

The Highlands Council has maintained a website since shortly after adoption of the Highlands Act (<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/>). The site contains document releases, maps, Frequently Asked Questions, legal requirements of the Act, and other information for stakeholders including the Council's calendar, agendas, meeting minutes, public comments, and press releases. Summary reports from the initial TAC meetings as well as the TAC Charrette Workbooks are available at the Highlands Council website. The Highlands Council website is a rich source of information, as many of the public releases and all relevant documents provided by the Council have been posted there, including the RMP.

The "Stakeholder" page on the website provides specific information for many groups including homeowners, landowners, municipalities, counties, grassroots organizations, and farmers. A "hot topics" section contains timely issues and recent public information. There are also links to other State websites that deal with Highlands issues or that might affect the stakeholders in the Highlands Region. An important tool for stakeholders is the interactive mapping application which allows the public to determine if their property - by street address or specific block and lot designation - is in the Highlands Preservation or Planning Areas. The property search tool has been enhanced with Land Use Capability Zone Map data and Highlands resource data. It will continue to be improved as more information becomes available and as software capabilities expand.

**Training and Education for Municipal and County Officials and Staff**

The RMP includes requirements and recommendations for municipal and county implementation through the Plan Conformance process, many of which require specialized knowledge regarding technical, scientific and planning fields. The Highlands Council will prepare and provide technical training and education for elected and appointed officials and their staff to ensure that Plan Conformance activities are implemented with the greatest possible understanding of the issues, thus ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. In most cases, these training and education opportunities will be provided at the regional level, and may be provided in cooperation with professional and municipal organizations.

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