
CHAPTER VI. IMPLEMENTATION

Part 4. Highlands Council Implementation Programs

Subpart a. Highlands Council

Implementation program priorities are presented in three categories:

1. **Immediate Priority** – As soon as possible after adoption of the RMP in order to support local government preparation of modified master plans and development regulations for conformance review.
2. **Intermediate Priority** – As soon as possible without delaying completion of Immediate Priority implementation actions. Many of these actions are no less valuable than the immediate priorities, but either will take longer or are somewhat less time sensitive.
3. **On-going Priority** - As soon as possible without delaying completion of Immediate or Intermediate Priority implementation actions. Many of these actions are no less valuable than the immediate and intermediate priorities, but either will take longer or are somewhat less time sensitive.

Immediate Priority

1. **Grant Programs for Plan Conformance.** The RMP requires the Council to establish and administer grant programs to cover the reasonable costs of local government Plan Conformance activities. These programs are a matter of immediate priority to encourage and support plan conformance, particularly in the case of Preservation Area jurisdictions required to submit revisions to local government master plans and development regulations within 9 to 15 months of the effective date of the RMP.
 2. **Minimum Requirements for RMP Substantive Programs.** The RMP calls for the preparation of minimum substantive requirements for RMP programs, *e.g.* the minimum requirements for a Community Forestry Plan. The minimum requirements are of the highest priority in order to guide local government efforts with regard to plan conformance.
 3. **Technical Assistance, Model Ordinances and Guidance Manuals Related to the Jurisdiction of Local Government Master Plans and Development Regulations.** The RMP programs call for the preparation and distribution of various technical assistance documents, guidance manuals and model ordinances which will be essential to modifying local government master plans and development regulations for Plan Conformance. These documents are anticipated to incorporate by reference existing resource materials from the literature and other agencies of government, supplemented with specific guidance for their use in the Highlands. Preparation of these documents is matter of very high priority because these documents must be available for local governments during their preparation of amendments to local government master plans and development regulations.
 4. **Highlands Development Credit Program.** The RMP anticipates that the Highlands Development Credit Program (“HDC”) will be initiated immediately upon adoption of the RMP. Implementation of the HDC program requires the creation of the Highlands Credit Bank, formal
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adoption of governing documents and rules of procedure and early capitalization of the Highlands Credit Bank. The Council should immediately and actively seek funding from the State of New Jersey and any other appropriate sources to facilitate the operations of the Highlands Credit Bank.

5. **Highlands Council Petition for Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission.** The Highlands Act requires that the Council submit the RMP to the State Planning Commission (SPC) within sixty days of its adoption, for Plan Endorsement with respect to the Planning Area. The Act further provides that upon SPC endorsement of the RMP, any Highlands Council grant of Plan Conformance to a local government entity shall be deemed equivalent to receipt of Plan Endorsement from the SPC. It is in the best interests of the Council and its constituent counties and municipalities that a petition be prepared and filed with the SPC as quickly as possible after adoption of the RMP.

Intermediate Priority

1. **Highlands State and Federal Agency Coordination.** The Council shall continue to work with State and federal agencies to ensure coordinated agency action and establish interagency teams, where necessary, to provide cooperation with regard to implementation of the RMP.
2. **Coordination with State Agencies.** The RMP recognizes that the activities of State agencies directly affect implementation of the RMP. The RMP provides that the Council will actively seek to coordinate with State agencies with regard to matters which affect resources in the Highlands and to promote implementation of the RMP. Where appropriate, the RMP provides that the Council should seek the formation of interagency working groups or other forms of multi-agency action in support of implementation of the RMP.
3. **Educational Programs.** The RMP requires the Council to develop and implement educational programs for public officials, other stakeholders, interested persons and the general public with regard to a variety of subjects. Education is critical to the success of the RMP in terms of local government plan conformance and long term implementation of the RMP.
4. **Research Initiatives.** The RMP identifies a number of research initiatives which would enhance implementation of the RMP. The RMP requires the Council to develop work programs for such research and encourages the Council to coordinate with other agencies with regard to the conduct and funding of the research.

On-going Priority

1. **Funding for On-going Highlands Programs.** The success of the RMP will be defined to some considerable degree, by the funding which is available for implementation, both in the short term and the long term. The RMP contemplates that the Council will actively and aggressively pursue funding for implementation of Highlands programs from any and all potential sources, including adoption of new state and federal legislation.
 2. **Establishment of a Highlands Water User Fee.** The equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of the implementation of the RMP
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requires that all beneficiaries, including water users should share in the cost of implementation. The RMP identifies the establishment of a Highlands Water user fee which would be used for RMP implementation, as an equitable and vital means by which to ensure long term implementation of the RMP.

3. **Technical Assistance Documents and Guidance Manuals.** The RMP provides for the preparation of technical assistance documents and guidance manuals for resource management programs, like stream restoration (e.g., design guidelines for restoration of channel profiles, floor and sediment control, bank stabilization and restoration of aquatic habitat and ecological function) which involve programs in addition to local government development regulations. The RMP provides that the Council coordinate the preparation of technical assistance documents and guidance manuals with other agencies of government.
4. **Resource Planning and Management Initiatives.** The RMP calls for the Council to promote various long-term substantive resource planning and management programs, *e.g.* the development and implementation of Forest Stewardship Plans for all preserved lands within the Region or the restoration of open waters including streams and riparian areas in conjunction with development and redevelopment. The Council should develop these programs and over time, promote their implementation by appropriate public and private agencies. In addition, the Council should actively seek funding from public and private sources for the development and implementation of long-term resource planning and management programs.
5. **Monitoring Programs.** The RMP provides for the establishment of a variety of monitoring programs in order to improve the quality of data available for resource planning and management decisions and to better understand Highlands resources. The RMP contemplates that many monitoring programs will be conducted in cooperation and coordination with other agencies of government at the local, regional, state and federal levels.
6. **Award Programs.** The RMP provides for the establishment of award programs to recognize exemplary examples of RMP implementation programs.

Subpart b. Local Governments

The local governments within the Highlands Region are responsible for land and water resource planning and management at the local level and will be responsible for regulating the land and water resources within each community under the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

1. **Initiate Amendments to Local Government Master Plans and Development Regulations.** Local government entities seeking Plan Conformance must review existing planning programs and submit any amendments to master plans and development regulations necessary to achieve conformance with the Highlands RMP.
 2. **Petition Highlands Council for Plan Conformance.** Local governments within the Preservation Area shall submit revisions to local government master plans and development regulations to the Council for Plan
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Conformance review and determination within 9 to 15 months of the adoption of the RMP. With respect to Planning Areas, local governments may choose whether or not to align planning programs in conformance with the RMP and may submit petitions relating thereto, at any time.

Subpart c. State Government

Implementation of the RMP will require the active assistance and support of numerous state agencies including the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture, Department of Community Affairs, and the Department of Transportation.

1. **Coordination with State Planning Commission.** The Council shall submit the RMP to the State Planning Commission, for the Planning Area, and coordinate with the Commission to implement both the RMP and the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
2. **Coordination with State Agencies with Regard to RMP Implementation.** The Council shall work with State agencies to coordinate implementation of the RMP.
3. **State and Federal Agency Coordination.** State agencies shall continue to work with the Highlands Council and relevant State and federal agencies to ensure coordination and cooperation with regard to implementation of the RMP.
4. **Funding of RMP Implementation Programs.** The RMP anticipates that RMP implementation will require significant funding through existing state programs as well as new funding initiatives, e.g. a Highlands water use fee.

Subpart d. Federal Government

Implementation of the RMP will be enhanced through coordination and cooperation with federal agencies and financial assistance and support from existing and new programs.

1. **State and Federal Agency Coordination.** Federal agencies shall continue to work with the Highlands Council and relevant State and federal agencies to ensure coordination and cooperation with regard to implementation of the RMP.
 2. **Funding of RMP Implementation.** The RMP anticipates that RMP implementation will require significant funding through existing federal programs and, if necessary, through adoption of new legislation. Grants-in-aid in support of implementation of the RMP, for example, would be consistent with historical federal funding of other water resources bills.
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