



State of New Jersey

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The New Jersey Highlands Council

FROM: The RMP Update Committee of the New Jersey Highlands Council

SUBJECT: Response to comments regarding the Draft Procedures for Considering Proposals to Amend the Highlands Regional Master Plan

DATE: February 6, 2017

The Committee responds to the following concerns raised at the January 19, 2017 Council meeting regarding the draft Procedure that the Council approved as a guideline moving forward with the finalization of the Monitoring Program Recommendation Report (MPRR) and any proposals to amend the Regional Master Plan (RMP) arising therefrom.

Public Comment Period

That a public comment period of no less than 30 days on the draft MPRR is not sufficient time for the public to digest and then comment on the MPRR or RMP amendments.

The intention was that the 30-day period would be the minimum duration of any public comment period, and that the draft Procedure would provide flexibility to the Council to provide a longer public comment period. We therefore recommend that the language in the draft Procedure be amended to provide that the public comment would be “for a minimum period of 30 days, unless extended by the Council up to 60 days.” This change makes clear that when the Council approves the draft MPRR to be released to the public for comment, it can stipulate the length of the public comment period, as long as it is at least 30 days long. The Committee believes that the public comment period on the draft MPRR will need to be longer than 30 days and expects that it will recommend a 60-day public comment period to the Council when it recommends that the Council release the MPRR for public comment.

Public Participation- Submitting Recommendations for Amendments to the RMP

That the list of information (on page 3 of the Procedure) required to be provided by a proponent in support of a RMP amendment poses an unrealistic burden on the proponent.

Our intention is that the proponent provide as much information possible to tie the proposal to a specific goal, policy, or objective in the RMP. If the proposal is not clear on

this point, the staff will work to tie the proposal to a specific section of the RMP and/or will attempt to obtain additional information from the proponent. It is not our intention that the Committee will summarily reject a proposal because of the proponent's failure to provide some of the information listed at page 3 of the Procedure.

Prior to final adoption of the Procedures, Council staff recommends the last sentence of the first full paragraph on page 3 be amended to read:

“Anyone wishing to suggest additional or different changes to the RMP than those proposed in the draft Recommendation Report will be asked to provide the information outlined below to support such changes to the best of their ability. Changes will not be rejected or discarded due to a lack of information; rather supporting information will be used by Council staff to provide context for any such amendment to the Committee.”

Public Hearings Outside of the Highlands Region

That the Highlands Council conduct additional public hearings on a proposed RMP amendment outside of the Highlands region.

The Committee appreciates this comment and will discuss the feasibility of conducting additional public hearings in addition to the ones required by the Highlands Act. Some proposed amendments may be appropriate for a hearing outside the Highlands, depending on topic. Council may make a determination on this point when it recommends a RMP amendment go out for public hearings.