



JON S. CORZINE
Governor

State of New Jersey

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Subject: Highlands Regional Master Plan

As you may know, the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) was approved Friday by Governor Jon S. Corzine. On behalf of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council), it is my pleasure to provide you with the RMP and supporting information to initiate the implementation of the plan.

In addition to an electronic copy of the RMP, enclosed please find Executive Order 114 which was signed by Governor Corzine on September 5th. The Executive Order will assist in the implementation of the RMP through the protection of the region's water supply and other natural resources, the clarification of the interaction of the RMP and affordable housing obligations, and the prioritization of additional funding initiatives for open space preservation.

The Highlands Council is distributing information to municipalities and counties in the Highlands Region to help them prepare for the upcoming process of Plan Conformance. Plan Conformance with the RMP is mandatory for lands in the Preservation Area, and voluntary for lands in the Planning Area. Municipalities and counties with lands in the Preservation Area have 15 months to bring their master plans and development regulations for those lands into conformance with the RMP and to submit them to the Highlands Council. For lands in the Planning Area, municipalities and counties may voluntarily conform at any time.

The Highlands Council presently has over \$21 million in grant funding to offset the reasonable expenses of Plan Conformance. In order to initiate the examination of the RMP at a local level, the Highlands Council created a \$1.5 million grant program to provide Initial Assessment Grants. Municipalities and counties can apply to the Highlands Council for up to \$15,000 in initial assessment grants to assist them in determining the local implications of the RMP.

Enclosed please find:

- A compact disc containing the Highlands RMP. We are in the process of printing hard copies of the RMP and a bound edition will be sent to your office next month;
- A copy of Executive Order 114;
- The Highlands Council resolution approving the RMP;
- An application for the Initial Assessment Grant program; and
- Information regarding Basic Plan Conformance (immediate requirements for conditional Plan Conformance) and full Plan Conformance for municipalities and counties.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please contact our office. More information also can be found on our Web site at <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/>. In addition, we would be pleased to come to your municipality at your convenience to present the RMP and answer any questions from your councils, land use boards, or members of the public. We have found that these sessions help provide additional clarity regarding the RMP and the Plan Conformance process.

We look forward to continued collaboration with you in this important effort to protect and preserve the natural resources of the Highlands Region.

Very truly yours,

Eileen Swan
Executive Director