



# State of New Jersey

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## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM INTERAGENCY STAKEHOLDER MEETING

**DATE:** October 22, 2014  
**TIME:** 10:00AM  
**LOCATION:** NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
Room 5E003  
401 E. State Street  
Trenton, NJ

### ATTENDEES:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Steven	Bruder	NJDA/SADC
Jane	Engel	NJDEP
Jeff	Flatley	NJDLWD
Bruce	Hawkinson	NJDOT
John	Hutchison	NJDEP
Alan	Miller	NJBAC - OPA
Monique	Purcell	NJDA
Ben	Witherell	NJDEP
Richard	Vohden	NJ Highlands Council – Member
Margaret	Nordstrom	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Christine	Danis	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Andrew	Davis	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Corey	Piasecki	NJ Highlands Council – Staff
Courtenay	Mercer	Regional Plan Association
Janani	Shankaran	Regional Plan Association

# HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



## MEETING PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of the Highlands Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program and process; brainstorm topics and data availability for ongoing monitoring; identify potential technical advisory committee members; and discuss next steps.

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Overview of Monitoring Program Process
- 3) Discussion Items:
  - a) Thoughts on the current state of RMP utilization and collaboration by the agencies.
  - b) Thoughts on opportunities for improvement to the RMP.
  - c) What RMP topics/information in your particular area of expertise are most appropriate for ongoing monitoring of the RMP?
  - d) Do you have access to data that can be used for the ongoing monitoring of the RMP?
- 4) Identification of Potential TAC Members
- 5) Wrap up/Next Steps

## MEETING SUMMARY:

The meeting opened with welcome remarks by Courtenay Mercer, NJ Director at Regional Plan Association (RPA), the project consultant. Attendees introduced themselves. Ms. Mercer provided background on the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) Monitoring Program and process. Key points included:

- The RMP is continually updated as new factual information is made available, but the Monitoring Program evaluates progress toward achieving the goals of the RMP by identifying and measuring indicators and milestones.
- Stakeholder meetings are being conducted now to identify potential indicators and data sources that may not be readily available. Public outreach stakeholder meetings will follow.
- Two series of technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings will take place, one in early 2015 and the second after the indicator analysis has been completed.
- The process will result in the Monitoring Program Recommendations Report (MPRR), and a science and research agenda.

Participants then engaged in discussion, facilitated by Ms. Mercer, regarding agency interaction and collaboration with the NJ Highlands Council.

Regarding NJ Department of Agriculture's (NJDA) interaction with the Highlands Council, participants relayed that NJDA has great interaction with the Highlands staff, including regular meetings and joint brainstorm sessions around agricultural grants. NJDA also

## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



interacts with the Highlands Council frequently about farmland preservation. There is a lot of data sharing. With regard to individual farm issues, municipal planners have been helpful.

Ms. Mercer asked NJDA participants about dual appraisal, as well as data sharing with regards to HDC sales and farmland preservation. In response, participants remarked that there is a registry, but not a GIS layer of HDC sales. The dual appraisal process is no longer available (per sunset in Act). Appraisal data exists and can be shared. Ms. Mercer remarked that the appraisal data could be useful for the Fiscal Impact Assessment (FIA), a research process that will occur concurrently with the Monitoring Program to evaluate the economic impacts of the Highlands RMP.

The NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDLWD) commented that unemployment is high and the department has pursued many grants to train and employ more people. Economic impacts are pertinent to every Master Plan. A lot of data is available to share.

Participants discussed Office for Planning Advocacy's (OPA) involvement with the Highlands Council. The Office of Smart Growth (OSG) interacted regularly with the Highlands Council. Since adoption of the Highlands RMP, the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) became OPA and moved from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to the Business Action Center (BAC). OPA is not currently engaging in plan endorsement. The State Strategic Plan (SSP) process explored strategies to implement plan endorsement, but the SSP has not yet been adopted. OPA has very limited staff resources, but is nevertheless open to increasing interaction with Highlands Council staff and reengaging in a plan endorsement or similar recognition of the RMP.

The NJ Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) is interested to see how NJDOT interaction with Highlands compares to the Pinelands. Current interaction between NJDOT and the Highlands Council is primarily related to permitting and authorization of NJDOT capital projects. It seems like the process is too long and there is too much duplication between NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Highlands Council review.

Regarding NJDEP's interaction, they are "connected at the hip" with the Highlands Council. There are regular and frequent meetings on broader policy issues, as well as site specific issues. Communication between the entities is very effective. There is opportunity for improved collaborative outreach to the broader Highlands community.

Ms. Mercer asked about the efficacy of the exemption review delegation to municipalities from the NJDEP standpoint. In response, participants asked about the fees that municipalities charge around the program. Highlands Council staff remarked that the ordinance authorizes municipalities to charge fees for the process. Small municipalities often use consultants to process the reviews, and thus collect the fee as part of the development

## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



review escrow. Another participant asked about whether municipal staff are properly trained to complete the exemption process. Highlands Council staff replied that there is a training process as part of the approval to participate in the exemption review delegation program.

Ms. Mercer then steered the group to discuss potential indicators and data sources, asking about what information will be most important to monitor. Participants commented that the provided list is very extensive, but added the following comments:

- Most of the environmental indicators are already being monitored, but to monitor additional indicators, new data sources and research may need to be produced.
- Transfer of development rights (TDR) should be monitored.
- With regards to transportation, NJ Transit should be engaged.
- Transportation and air quality issues should be tracked. DOT may be interested in exploring whether there is a correlation between freight rail and freight road usage.
- NJ Travel & Tourism and NJDOT Scenic Byways group may have some important data related to tourism.
- From the future land use perspective, OPA has worked with municipalities to discuss potential redevelopment opportunities.
- In terms of brownfields and redevelopment, there is the Brownfields SiteMart, but it might not be accurate. Interns will be working to verify and refresh the data. Counties and municipalities, in collaboration with ChooseNJ, could develop techniques to uniformly inventory brownfields and vacant land. The Highlands Council could also be involved in such an effort.
- NJ Department of Community Affairs (NJCA) should be engaged regarding indicators such as building permits.
- NJCA should consider an internal meeting to discuss Agriculture Census data. Potential indicators to track include retention plans, agriculture development projects, and value of agricultural products.
- NJDEP compiles an annual trends report on environmental indicators.
- Many indicators fall under the umbrella of sustainability. It will be important to look at them collectively.
- County tax data will be helpful.

Ms. Mercer asked participants about NJDEP contaminated sites, and whether GIS data includes sites once they have received a no further action (NFA) letter. Participants responded that it is tracked and can be made available.

Highlands Council staff discussed the importance of studying indicators in a two-fold manner; not only in the absolute sense, but in the comparative sense. For example, the study will look at how the Highlands region compares to other regions. Ms. Mercer remarked that there are multiple research efforts related to indicators in NJ and the region, and it will be helpful to align the analysis.

## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



As the meeting concluded, Ms. Mercer remarked that participants are encouraged to send further feedback on indicators and data via email. Participants are also encouraged to identify potential TAC members. The TACs will meet only twice, the first meeting in January/February 2015 and the second pending release of NJDEP land use/land cover data and associated project team analysis. Over the next few weeks, Highlands Council staff and the project team will be meeting with other state agencies, as well as additional government and non-government stakeholders.

### Next Steps/Action Items

- Participants should submit additional feedback on indicators and data sources, and TAC member suggestions via email.
- The project team and Highlands Council staff will follow up with individual participants regarding indicators and data sources.