



# State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council  
100 North Road (Route 513)  
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322  
(908) 879-6737  
(908) 879-4205 (fax)  
www.highlands.state.nj.us



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*Governor*

**KIM GUADAGNO**  
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*Executive Director*

## HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM NJDEP STAKEHOLDER MEETING

**DATE:** October 22, 2014

**TIME:** 1:00PM

**LOCATION:** NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
Room 6E002  
401 E. State Street  
Trenton, NJ

### ATTENDEES:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Tim	Bartle	NJDEP – Site Remediation Program
Scott	Brubaker	NJDEP – Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste
Tom	Byrne	NJDEP – Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste
Lou	Cattuna	NJDEP – Division of Land Use Regulation
Steve	Ellis	NJDEP – State Park Service
Jane	Engel	NJ Div. of Law - Deputy Attorney General
Jennifer	Feltis Cortese	NJDEP – Water Resources Management
Andrew	Gale	NJDEP – Division of Land Use
Madhu	Guru	NJDEP – Division of Land Use
Robin	Heston	NJDEP – Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste
Barbara	Hirst	NJDEP – Division of Water Monitoring & Standards
John	Hutchison	NJDEP – Deputy Commissioner’s Office
Steven	Jandoli	NJDEP – Green Acres
Colleen	Kokas	NJDEP – Water Resources Management
Bob	Longcor	NJDEP – Division of Fish & Wildlife

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Armand	Perez	NJDEP – Land Use Enforcement
Rick	Reilly	NJDEP – Division of Land Use Regulation
Dan	Saunders	NJDEP – Historic Preservation Office
Mark	Texel	NJDEP – State Park Service
Margaret	Nordstrom	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Keri	Benscoter	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Christine	Danis	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Andrew	Davis	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Casey	Ezyske	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Corey	Piasecki	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Courtenay	Mercer	Regional Plan Association
Janani	Shankaran	Regional Plan Association

## 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 are most appropriate for ongoing monitoring?
  - d) What are the relevant indicators to be monitored? *e.g. level of development encroachment, increases/decrease in forest integrity score, etc.*
  - e) Do you have access to and/or relevant information about 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:

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- 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 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) interaction and collaboration with the NJ Highlands Council.

Regarding the Division of Land Use, there is good interaction with the Highlands Council. Municipalities were not initially involved with Highlands' exemption, but nine or ten municipalities now have certification.

The State Park Service (SPS), manages lakes in Highlands Region, and monitors water quality and aquatic invasives. The indicator list should include lakes. Data exists to monitor them. Princeton Hydro completes analysis periodically on the improvement to lake quality based on invasives removal by the SPS. Recreation – including swimming, camping, biking and hiking – is a big source of income, but aquatic invasives are an issue. Some locations are more vigilant in stopping pollution and dumping. The Highlands Council relayed that it has funding to for lake management plans and protocols. All agreed that there should be greater education and outreach on invasive species.

Historic properties in Highlands Region could be better tracked, particularly in Sussex County. It would be beneficial to know how many properties there are and their value. It would also be helpful to know what historic groups are working in the region. Statewide, there is a push toward heritage tourism to encourage people to extend their visits. Business owners and local stakeholders must work with each other to foster greater tourism

Ms. Mercer then asked participants about the coordination between NJDEP and the Highlands Council regarding redevelopment and brownfields in the Highlands Region. Participants remarked that they are unsure whether there is currently much collaboration. The NJDEP GIS maps contain contaminated sites, and these are publicly available. NFA (no further action) information can be found in the metadata. Highlands Council staff inquired about whether Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSRP) are knowledgeable about Highlands Region policies. Participants commented that when LSRP are conducting remediation, they are required to know about local rules. Licensing requires that

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professionals demonstrate environmental technical expertise, complete continuing education, and that the Licensing Board has continued oversight over LSRP. Highlands Council staff remarked that the Highlands Act puts the onus on NJDEP to ensure consistency with the RMP.

Ms. Mercer asked about coordination between the Highlands Council and NJDEP Water Resources. Participants remarked that there is not routine interaction, but there is overlap in terms of routine monitoring. While there are not specific reports targeted to the Highlands Region, the data could be pulled and organized for monitoring purposes. In the Highlands and statewide, AmeriCorps ambassadors are stationed to organize cleanups and aquatic invasive removal. In terms of indicators, the NJDEP can track water quality responses, amongst others.

There is a lot of interaction with the Highlands Council staff regarding wastewater, but the topic merits further, offline discussion.

There is a lot of interaction between the Highlands Council and Land Use Regulations, particularly with permitting. There is the potential to monitor the water supply, vis a vis the number of people served and the cost to treat. Water companies have a lot of data, and there is an opportunity to relate this data to larger economic impacts. In terms of development in the Highlands, there should be a ranking to prioritize purchase of certain properties for conservation. Mitigation and restoration should occur in areas that have the highest environmental benefit. It would be beneficial to have a map that can be readily available when engaging with developers. Takings waiver are a potential limitation that could result in development in unanticipated areas.

The Green Acres (GA) program has been working with the Highlands Council for several years. In previous open space and recreation plans, the Highlands Region has been noted as a key area. The GA program is essentially a real estate agent. Finding a willing seller and ensuring management of the property after acquisition are limiting factors for the GA program. Flooding and water quality are heavily weighted in state land acquisition. Lately, the program has been focused on Blue Acres buyouts.

Ms. Mercer asked participants whether there is a uniform dataset and source for preserved land. Participants remarked that the GA program keeps a database of properties that have been preserved through the program, but an all-encompassing database does not yet exist. The NJ Conservation Fund is attempting to build such a database. Ms. Mercer remarked that this could also be included in the science and research agenda. Ms. Mercer asked participants about the dual appraisal process for Green Acres. Participants answered that the data could be provided.

The enforcement is reactionary in nature. Data can be made available about level of enforcement and penalties. There is an aggressive anti-dumping campaign to focus on

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parkland, fish and wildlife. Data for the Highlands Region could be provided. Participants remarked that enforcement will largely require a public education component. Use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) was identified as a prohibited, but common, activity in the environmentally-sensitive Highlands Region, and particularly in Passaic County. Members of the public have previously identified this as a major issue. Participants conveyed that there could be greater public education regarding ATVs, and that the public can play a larger role in identifying ATV usage and reporting it anonymously. To mitigate the problem, one solution is to establish ATV parks; however, challenges include public opposition and site location (without environmental constraints).

Regarding State Parks Service, many parks and campsites in the Highlands Region contain gaining infrastructure that needs to be replaced. There is concern that larger capital projects cannot be completed within the confines of the Highlands regulations.

The Solid and Hazardous Waste division has implemented temporary debris management areas (TDMAs) during major weather events. Some TDMAs in the Highlands Region accept brush. Pre-approval for TDMAs is important to activate sites immediately after a disaster. In the Highlands, regional TDMAs could be implemented. There is a need to work with the Highlands municipalities to develop a protocol.

Highlands Council staff remarked that there is a grant program that offers planning funding that could be programmed in coordination with NJDEP programs. Few municipalities have applied for funding.

Ms. Mercer then steered the group to further discuss potential indicators and data sources, asking about what information will be most important to monitor. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDECA) can provide information about construction permitting and certificates of occupancy. The NJDEP 2012 land use/land cover data will be a critical component of analysis. It is possible to track land use permits in the Highlands and other regions, but parameters regarding the geographic extent and time period will be necessary as inputs. NJDEP is interested in seeing feedback from water companies on supply and quality. As part of this process, the Highlands Council and project team will be meeting with these stakeholders. Participants thought that the monitoring program could examine how well priority preservation areas are being targeted. Other areas of study include the impact of open space on home value, and the impact of climate change. NJDEP can provide data on fish species that are indicators of water quality and temperature. In response to an inquiry about a preserved land indicator being under the landowner equity topic area, Ms. Mercer replied that it will relate to easement purchases as a form of compensation.

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

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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 stakeholders.

### Next Steps/Action Items

- Participants should submit additional feedback on indicators, additional feedback on 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.