



## State of New Jersey

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Highlands Council Releases Draft Monitoring Report for Public Comment

*Report contains recommendations for potential amendments to  
Regional Master Plan*

CHESTER, N.J. — The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council has released a draft *Monitoring Program Recommendation Report (MPRR)* for public comment. The culmination of more than two years of work, the *MPRR* provides an examination of progress made toward achieving the goals of the 2004 Highlands Act through implementation of the 2008 Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), and includes recommendations for possible revisions and amendments. Comments on the report will be accepted through Sunday, September 10, via email or hard copy submissions. The draft *MPRR* and instructions for submitting comments are available on the Highlands Council website at [www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/monitoring/mpr.html](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/monitoring/mpr.html). A hard copy of the draft *MPRR* is also available for review in the Highlands Council office during regular business hours.

“The passing of the Highlands Act and adoption of the RMP has had an undeniable impact on this region,” said Highlands Council Chairman James Rilee. “Since becoming chairman of the Council it has been a priority of mine to find ways to address concerns raised regarding that impact. It is not within the purview of the Council to change the Act, but the Act directed the Council to periodically review the RMP and make revisions where appropriate. This report provides the foundation for such revisions.”

The *MPRR* is organized around the topic areas of the RMP with recommendations drawn from a combination of implementation experience and analysis of identified indicators. Background

information is provided to illustrate how the goals and programs of the RMP are drawn directly from the goals of the Highlands Act. Data points resulting from a Fiscal Impact Assessment (FIA) that was conducted as part of the RMP Monitoring Program are also incorporated into the Report.

“With more than 10 years’ experience working with the RMP in the real world, collaborating with our municipal and county partners, we have tremendous insight into what’s working well and where there’s room for improvement,” explained Highlands Council Executive Director Margaret Nordstrom. “We have the benefit of several staff members who have been here since the drafting of the RMP. That expertise combined with the data collected and analyzed for the MPRR and the FIA has resulted in a very solid multi-year work plan for the Council.”

The draft MPRR will be subject to public comment for a period of 60 days; this is the opportunity for members of the public to comment on the draft, including making suggestions for additional recommendations to include in the final MPRR. Throughout the comment period, Highlands Council staff will be available during regular business hours to meet with individuals or small groups to discuss the contents of the MPRR. Interested parties should contact the Highlands Council to schedule an appointment.

Council Member Kurt Alstede, who chairs the RMP Amendment Committee, explained that the public is encouraged to submit potential recommendations. “The MPRR includes a number of recommendations for possible amendments and changes to the RMP and we’d like to know people’s thoughts on those proposals,” said Alstede. “But we’d also like to hear from the public if they feel something is missing and should be included. We do ask members of the public to keep in mind the scope of this exercise and submit comments that fit within the framework of the RMP.”

Following the public comment period, Council staff will prepare a summary of comments received for the Council’s RMP Amendment Committee and a final MPRR will be prepared and released by the Council. The RMP Amendment Committee will then begin the work of vetting possible amendments for full Council consideration. Council anticipates a final MPRR release in early fall with the first amendment(s) proposed for Council Consideration before the end of 2017.

*The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency, established in 2004 with the passage of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, and is charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at [www.nj.gov/njhighlands](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands).*

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