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Governor Murphy Names Carl Richko Highlands Council Chair

West Milford Resident has Served on Council since 2010

CHESTER, N.J. — On Thursday, May 10, Governor Phil Murphy designated Carl Richko as Chairperson of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council. Richko has been a member of the Highlands Council since January 2010, and takes over the leadership role from Acting Chair Kurt Alstede who has held the position since March following the resignation of Jim Rilee.

“I’m extremely honored to have been asked to serve as Chair,” said Richko. “It’s been a pleasure to be a member of the Council these past eight years, and I’m looking forward to renewing the Council’s focus on water resource protection. I believe we’ve made great progress in many areas, but there’s still quite a bit of work to do.”

Richko is a resident of West Milford Township in Passaic County, which holds the distinction of being the largest municipality in the New Jersey Highlands and one of only five municipalities located entirely in the Preservation Area, where natural resource protection is considered to be most vital. The municipality is home to five reservoirs and Greenwood Lake, and has two reservoirs on its border.

“Having lived and worked in the Highlands for more than 55 years, I understand well the importance of the Highlands Act for this region and the role of the Council in its implementation,” said Richko. “I agree with members of the public and my fellow council members who say that people who receive clean drinking water from the Highlands should be part of the team that helps protect it. I will continue to advocate on that front.”

Richko is a graduate of Texas A&M University and a retired elementary educator from the Sparta school system, where he worked for 34 years. He served for nine years on the West Milford School Board and four years on the West Milford Council, including two years as mayor. Richko’s experience also includes work with the Pequannock River Coalition, where he served on the Board of Directors and as the organization’s Vice President. He is also a former member of the Passaic County Open Space Committee and an avid outdoor enthusiast who enjoys fishing, hiking and running in the Highlands.

“Carl’s tenure on the Council along with his experience as a municipal official and in the community will certainly help ensure a smooth transition and continued progress for the Council,” said Highlands Council Executive Director Margaret Nordstrom. “The staff and I are very happy to be working with him.”

The Highlands Council is a 15-member body, appointed by the Governor. There are currently three vacancies on the Council to be filled. The Highlands Act prescribes the make-up of the Council to ensure representation from across the Region, which includes 88 municipalities and parts of seven counties. The Act also specifies that the Governor designate one member of the Council to serve as chairperson. Carl Richko will be the fifth Chairman of the Highlands Council since its formation in 2004.

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.

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