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Exciting New Features and Upgrades For The New Jersey Highlands Trail

CHESTER, N.J. — The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (Trail Conference) recently completed a Highlands Council-funded project to enhance signage and mapping along the New Jersey portion of the Highlands Trail. As part of the project, 500 blazes (trail markers) and 88 signs were created and are currently being installed along 130 miles of the New Jersey portion of the Highlands Trail, which runs from the Riegelsville Bridge in Pohatcong, NJ to the New York border in West Milford, NJ. In addition, a complete end-to-end free trail map is now available via the Avenza Maps mobile application.

“The New Jersey portion of the Highlands Trail travels right through the heart of the region, showcasing the diversity and beauty of our landscapes and communities,” explains Lisa Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. “The Trail represents an untapped opportunity to connect trail users with local businesses, such as restaurants and stores, and expand tourism in the region. This signage and mapping project is the first critical step in that process.”

The complete long-distance Highlands Trail runs 180 miles from the Delaware River in New Jersey to the Hudson River in New York, with additional miles maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club in Pennsylvania and plans to extend north into Connecticut. The selected route traverses the

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Highlands via established trails through existing parks and preserved open spaces with some road walking to provide connections. The trail route is designed to highlight the abundant natural and built resources in the Highlands and emphasize its critical importance to the region.

To navigate the trail, users historically had to reference several different maps and written descriptions. In 2019, the Highlands Council awarded a \$29,000 grant to the Trail Conference to create one consistent Highlands trail map from end-to-end and enhance signage along the route to make it easier for visitors to find and use the trail.

New signage created includes:

- **Trail and spur blazes** augment existing painted turquoise blazes and help clarify the route.
- **Trailhead signs** in parking areas help direct users to trailheads along the route.
- **Long-distance signs** show distances to prominent features along the trail.
- **Directional signs** are placed in areas where roadside pull-offs are used to access the trail.

A free printed overview map will also be available at kiosks at 10 State Park offices and several other distribution points along the route. Overview maps are also available at the Highlands Council office in Chester, NJ. The free Avenza Maps version of the end-to-end map is available now, and the installation of signage is expected to be completed before the end of the Summer.

Additional information is available at TheHighlandsTrail.org, including details about accessing the Avenza Maps app. Those who already have the free app can download the map now by searching “Highlands Trail” in the Store. Be sure to select the free “Highlands Trail in New Jersey” from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

Anyone familiar with the Trail Conference’s popular trail maps will recognize the quality and detail of the map available in Avenza, with the additional benefit of being able to pinpoint your location on a map, without cell or Wi-Fi connectivity, using built-in GPS features. Users can also orient themselves with a built-in compass; add placemarks to mark a specific location for future reference using custom symbols, names, and/or geo-tagged photos; and track or navigate live using GPS.

“One of the best ways to experience all the Highlands has to offer is to get out on a trail,” says Carl Richko, Chairman of the Highlands Council. “The Highlands Act, first and foremost, directs us to protect the region because of the critical water resources here. But it also clearly acknowledges the importance of protecting the region for our enjoyment and ensuring its long-term viability. The Highlands Trail presents a perfect opportunity to promote tourism that will contribute to economic sustainability in the Highlands.”

[Photos Below]

1. Trailhead sign with Highlands Trail spur trail blazes behind Salt Gastropub in Stanhope, NJ
(credit: NY-NJ Trail Conference)
2. Highlands Long-Distance sign in Musconetcong Gorge Preserve (credit: NY-NJ Trail Conference)

3. Highlands Council Director of Planning, Science, and GIS James Humphries (right) reviews new Highlands Trail signage with Zachary Cole, Long-Distance Trails Program Coordinator, New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. (credit: NJ Highlands Council)
4. Walkers along the Highlands Trail, Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County. (credit: NJ Highlands Council)
5. Highlands Trail Brochures/Overview Map. (credit: NJ Highlands Council)
6. Avenza Maps screen capture. (credit: NJ Highlands Council)

Photos:





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