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Planning For a Sustainable Future

Council releases first wave of Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports

CHESTER, N.J. – The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council is providing a glimpse into the future as the first wave of Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports were released to the public today.

The Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports are a capacity-based, parcel-level analysis of a municipality's potential for development if that municipality conforms to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. It represents a municipality's total capacity for development, not just based on vacant land and available lots, but also addresses utility capacity (for both water and wastewater), net water availability, and natural resource protection. The Highlands Act required that the Regional Master Plan be based on a resource assessment that would determine the amount and type of human development and activity which the ecosystem of the Highlands Region can sustain while still maintaining the overall ecological values thereof. The Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports provide municipalities with the science- and capacity-based planning from the Regional Master Plan at a local and watershed-based scale.

Municipalities that are required to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan can utilize the findings in the Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports to update existing municipal master plans and environmental resource inventories. Municipalities that are considering conformance to the Highlands Regional Master Plan can apply the findings of the Highlands Municipal Build-Out Report when examining the implications of the Plan. The Highlands Municipal Build-Out Report can also be used for numerous planning functions including: municipal master planning; affordable housing planning; and waste water and water supply planning.

Each Highlands Municipal Build-Out Report is the result of a partnership between the Highlands Council staff and the individual municipalities in the Highlands Region. Highlands Council planners say it's the first time in the state – and possibly the nation – that so many municipalities have been afforded the chance to partner with a state agency to create such a detailed analysis. Municipalities

were reimbursed for their expenses related to the process through the 2009 Plan Conformance Grant Program, which set aside \$7.5 million in state funds.

“By partnering with each municipality’s planning professionals, we were able to use their local knowledge to create the best possible planning tool,” Highlands Council Chairman John Weingart said.

Today, 17 reports were released to the public and are posted on the Highlands Council website:

Hunterdon County: Bloomsbury Borough; Califon Borough; Clinton Town; Glen Gardner Borough; Milford Borough; Tewksbury Township

Morris County: Chester Borough; Mountain Lakes Borough; Mount Olive; Riverdale Borough

Passaic County: Ringwood Borough; Wanaque Borough

Somerset County: Bedminster Township; Bernardsville Borough; Far Hills Borough

Warren County: Allamuchy Township, Pohatcong Township

The Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports can be accessed from the Highlands Council website at http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/index_municipal.html. Reports from additional municipalities will be posted as they are completed.

“The Highlands Council and its staff have created a cutting edge planning tool, one that should be a national model for regional planning,” Highlands Council Executive Director Eileen Swan said. “We take great pride in this accomplishment but know there is still much work to be done as we near our statutory deadline of December 8, 2009, for the submission of Plan Conformance petitions.”