



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.nj.gov/njhighlands



CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

JIM RILEE
Chairman

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

MARGARET NORDSTROM
Executive Director

HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM MUNICIPAL CENTRAL STAKEHOLDER MEETING

DATE: December 15, 2014

TIME: 3:00PM – 5:00PM

LOCATION: County College of Morris
214 Center Grove Road
Randolph, NJ

ATTENDEES:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Jessie	Caldwell	J. Caldwell & Associates, Mt. Arlington Borough/Vernon Township
Darren	Carney	Township of Randolph
Megan	Hunscher	Montville Township
Jason	Kasler	NJ Planning Officials
Jim	Loveys	Township of Randolph
Robert	Michaels	Robert Michaels & Associates/Township of Randolph
Steve	Mountain	Township of Randolph
David	Novak	Burgis Associates/Rockaway Township
Ken	Short	Washington Township/Morris County
Russell	Stern	Roxbury Township
Richard	Vohden	NJ Highlands Council - Member
Margaret	Nordstrom	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Andy	Davis	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Chris	Danis	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Keri	Benscoter	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Maryjude	Haddock-Weiler	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
James	Humphries	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Corey	Piasecki	NJ Highlands Council - Staff
Chris	Ross	NJ Highlands Council - Staff

HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



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 municipalities.
 - b) Thoughts on opportunities for improvement to the RMP.
 - c) How can outreach and education from the Highlands Council be improved?
 - d) What RMP topics/information are most appropriate for ongoing monitoring?
 - 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 Rob Freudenberg, Director of Energy and Environmental Programs at Regional Plan Association (RPA), the project consultant. Attendees introduced themselves. Mr. Freudenberg gave a short PowerPoint presentation with background on the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) Monitoring Program and process. Key points included:

- 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 be held in mid-December and January.
- Two series of technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings will take place, one in winter 2015 and the second after initial research and analysis has been completed.
- The process will result in the Monitoring Program Recommendations Report (MPRR) and a science and research agenda.

HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



- A Fiscal Impact Assessment (FIA) will be conducted concurrently to measure the economic state of the Highlands region as well as provide comparisons to other regions.

Mr. Corey Piasecki, Regional Planner at the Highlands Council, added that there are multiple opportunities within the process to provide feedback, including public workshops and a web comment portal. In response to a question about the FIA, Mr. Piasecki explained that it will be completed in a timely manner to inform the MPRR. Further, as a sub-consultant on the FIA, RPA can bridge both efforts. Participants then engaged in discussion, facilitated by Mr. Freudenberg, about local experiences with the Highlands Council and RMP, and opportunities for improvement.

Participants discussed the impact of the Act and RMP on local Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) obligations. One participant asked Council staff on the best course of action if a municipality is primarily in the preservation area, and its planning area is built out. The RMP recognizes the need to meet affordable housing obligations. The Highlands Council has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) whereby COAH must recognize local development limitations; however, Council staff are uncertain how affordable housing policies will take effect in the Highlands region once new rules are finally adopted. The Highlands Council and COAH will continue to engage in dialogue on this issue.

Participants commented on the complexity of the plan conformance process. While planners, engineers, and others with a technical background may understand the nuances of the Act and RMP, it is difficult to convey information to local elected officials, municipal employees, and the general public. Similarly, municipalities are hesitant to adopt the Highlands template land use ordinance, because of the confusing and longwinded nature of the ordinance. One participant suggested that the Council create a user-friendly “roadmap” of the conformance process.

In regard to interaction with the Council, participants generally conveyed satisfaction and expressed that Council staff are very amenable to assisting local officials. Mr. Freudenberg asked participants how municipalities address day-to-day issues that relate to Highlands policies and programs. In response, participants stated that when a Highlands-related issue arises, municipalities generally consult Council staff directly.

In terms of opportunities for improvement in outreach and education, participants emphasized the need to better educate governing bodies. For example, Council staff could attend municipal council or planning board meetings on an annual basis to educate local officials on the Act and RMP. Participants agreed that topic-oriented

HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



webinars (such as an introduction to the Highlands, exemptions, redevelopment, or the transfer of development rights program) would be very effective in reaching local officials.

Mr. Freudenberg then asked participants to comment on potential indicators and data sources. The following feedback was conveyed:

- The Act has succeeded in resource preservation, but at the expense of economic development. With the demise of brick-and-retail mortar, there is a need to redevelop and reuse the region's substandard retail buildings.
- Housing-related indicators should be measured.
- Storefront/nonresidential vacancies should be measured. Data is generally collected on the municipal level, though many municipalities may not track this.
- Contaminated sites and water bodies should be measured. Many contaminated sites are deceptively bucolic.
- Property values and school enrollment information should be available on the municipal level.

One participant asked how the FIA will differentiate the impacts on the regional economy of the Act/RMP from the impacts of the recession and larger trends. In response, Council staff explained that the FIA analysis will be conducted on multiple geographic levels, including the Highlands region, the seven counties containing land in the Highlands, North Jersey, and the NJ-NY-PA metropolitan region. Data will be collected going as far back as possible.

In reference to the indicators, one participant asked how parameters will be defined. For example, steep slopes are classified differently by municipalities. Council staff responded that many of the indicator parameters will be as defined by the RMP.

Participants provided additional feedback on indicators:

- Freight rail should be measured.
- Commuting patterns should be measured.
- The monitoring program should consider whether millennials staying in cities once they have families, or moving back to the suburbs.
- Redevelopment should be tracked by type of project and location.
- It would be beneficial to have a better sense of development approvals and Highlands Center approvals.
- Land purchased for preservation should be measured.

HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN MONITORING PROGRAM



- The MPRR should include a TDR update – where have development credits been purchased and for how much?
- Need for improved clarity about grant opportunities.

As the meeting concluded, Mr. Freudenberg remarked that participants are encouraged to send further feedback on indicators and data via email and through the online comment portal. Participants are also encouraged to identify potential TAC members. The TACs will have approximately 15-20 participants and will meet in two series, the first set of meetings in January 2015 and the second pending release of NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) land use land cover data and associated project team analysis. Interested stakeholders should send resumes.

Highlands Council staff requested that municipal officials publicize the online comment portal and upcoming public workshops, and in addition, are encouraged to link to the Highlands Council website from municipal webpages.

Over the next few weeks, Highlands Council staff and the project team will be meeting with northern and southern municipalities and hosting additional public workshops.

Next Steps/Action Items

- Participants should submit via email: additional feedback on indicators, additional feedback on data sources, and TAC member suggestions.
- The project team and Highlands Council staff will follow up with individual participants regarding indicators and data sources.