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Highlands Council Approves Five More Towns

CHESTER, N.J. – The New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council unanimously approved petitions for plan conformance from five municipalities today, bringing the total number of approvals to 13 municipalities and one county.

“With five approvals today, we continue to implement conformance to the Regional Master Plan in an accelerated fashion. It is important to remember that each approval is the result of months of careful, collaborative work between the municipality and the Highlands Council,” Highlands Council Acting Chairman Jack Schrier said. “And we expect to consider several more petitions at next month’s meeting.”

The municipalities approved today were the Town of Clinton and High Bridge Borough in Hunterdon County; Mount Olive Township and Denville Township in Morris County; and Green Township in Sussex County. High Bridge Borough, with 1,558 acres entirely in the Planning Area, was the first Highlands municipality to formally adopt an ordinance to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan; High Bridge’s also is the second petition approved by the Highlands Council from a Planning Area-only municipality. The Town of Clinton is a split municipality, with 141 acres in the Preservation Area, where conformance is mandatory, and 781 acres in the Planning Area, where conformance is voluntary; its petition covered both areas. The other three municipalities only petitioned for lands in the Preservation Area, but can petition to include their Planning Area lands at any time.

The Highlands Council previously approved petitions for Plan Conformance from eight municipalities: Mahwah Township (Bergen County); Bethlehem Township, Califon Borough, Glen Gardner Borough, Hampton Borough and Lebanon Borough (Hunterdon County); Chester Township (Morris County); and Byram Township (Sussex County). The Highlands Council also approved a petition from Passaic County.

Today's approvals bring another 18,633 acres into conformance – 16,294 acres in the Preservation Area, and 2,339 acres in the Planning Area. A total of 84,813 acres will now receive the benefits and protections of the Highlands Regional Master Plan, including 70,412 acres in the Preservation Area and 14,402 acres in the Planning Area.

“The goals of the Highlands Act will be achieved through collaboration with our municipal partners,” Highlands Council Executive Director Eileen Swan said. “By working together, we can show that it is possible through capacity-based planning to protect natural resources while allowing for sustainable development.”

More information about the municipal petitions approved today can be found on the Highlands Council website:

Town of Clinton:

<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/clintontown.html>

Denville Township:

<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/denville.html>

Green Township:

http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/green_twp.html

High Bridge Borough:

http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/highbridge_boro.html

Mount Olive Township:

http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/mt_olive.html

To date, 59 municipalities representing 97 percent of the Preservation Area (401,910 acres) and 34 percent of the Planning Area (148,995 acres) have submitted plan conformance documents to the Highlands Council. The total acreage is 550,905 acres, representing 64 percent of the entire Highlands Region. Five counties have submitted plan conformance documents as well. The remaining two counties and one municipality with lands in the Preservation Area, as well as 16 other municipalities that have filed a Notice of Intent to Conform to the Regional Master Plan but have yet to file plan conformance documents, continue to work with the Highlands Council staff.

Today's actions by the Highlands Council do not take effect until 10 business days after a copy of the minutes of the meeting have been delivered to the Governor to allow time for his review and consideration.