

**TOWNSHIP OF VERNON  
SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

**ORDINANCE #13-10**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 330 LAND DEVELOPMENT  
ORDINANCE, TO ADD ARTICLE XIX HIGHLANDS PRESERVATION AREA  
REQUIREMENTS TO UPDATE SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR  
APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS  
PRESERVATION AREA OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERNON**

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (“Highlands Act,” N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq.) was enacted by the State Legislature on August 10, 2004 for the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring the natural resources of the New Jersey Highlands Region, in particular the water resources, which provide drinking water to over 5 million New Jersey residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Act created the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (the “Highlands Council”) and charged it with crafting a comprehensive master plan for the New Jersey Highlands Region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Regional Master Plan was adopted by the Highlands Council through the adoption of Resolution 2008-27 on July 17, 2008, and became effective on September 8, 2008 as the product of a long-term, participatory, and region-wide planning effort; and

**WHEREAS**, Resolution 2008-27 included the adoption of Highlands Regional Master Plan as well as the adoption of various technical reports and guidelines that accompanied the Plan including the 2008 Plan Conformance Guidelines; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Conformance Guidelines provide an overview of the Highlands Act’s bifurcated system for municipal conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan – mandatory Plan Conformance for any portion (or if applicable, the whole) of a municipality located within the Preservation Area and voluntary Plan Conformance for any portion (or if applicable, the whole) of a municipality lying within the Planning Area; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 14 of the Highlands Act expressly requires that municipalities must revise and conform their local master plan and development regulations for that portion of their lands within the Preservation Area, as related to development and use of said lands, with the goals, requirements and provisions of the Regional Master Plan within 15 months of the effective date of adoption thereof, or December 8, 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 15 of the Highlands Act provides for voluntary Plan Conformance where any municipality located wholly or partially in the Planning Area may at any time voluntarily revise and conform its local master plan and development

regulations, as related to the development and use of land in the Planning Area, with the goals, requirements and provisions of the Regional Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Conformance Guidelines detail the requirements for Plan Conformance including amendments to the Environmental Resource Inventory, Master Plan, and Land Use Ordinance, which together are intended to achieve conformance with the Regional Master Plan and provide immediate protections to vital Highlands Resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Conformance Guidelines require conforming municipalities to adopt Initial Revisions as a first step of Plan Conformance; the initial revisions are revisions of the existing master plan and development regulations which are deemed necessary by the Highlands Council for prompt enactment by a petitioning local government in order to ensure the protection and enhancement of the resources of the Highlands Region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Conformance Guidelines include the adoption of a Development Application Checklist Ordinance as an Initial Revision in order to ensure that any Application for Development not be deemed complete until such time as certain documents have been submitted by the Applicant and to ensure that Applications for Development are consistent or revised to be consistent with the Regional Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Vernon is located in the Highlands Region with lands lying within the Preservation Area only, as defined by section 7 of the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon has, on behalf of the municipality, petitioned the Highlands Council for Plan Conformance with respect to Township lands located within the Preservation Area portion of the Highlands Region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Petition filed with the Highlands Council contains proposed amendments to the municipal planning program, including amendments to the Environmental Resource Inventory, Master Plan, and Land Use Ordinance, which together are intended to achieve conformance with the Regional Master Plan and provide immediate protections to vital Highlands Resources located within the Township; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Body finds that the proposed changes to the municipal planning program are of broad and significant effect, are vital to the protection of the Highlands resources of the municipal Highlands Area, and are compelling to the interests and general welfare of the community; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Body recognizes that the formal municipal adoption of each component of the revised planning program must take place, in sequential order in accordance with all statutory requirements, involving public hearings and deliberation by the Environmental Commission, in some cases, the Land Use Board, and Governing Body; a process that will require an additional undetermined period of time; and

**WHEREAS**, an immediate level of protection to the resources located within the Highlands Region by adoption of revised submission requirements pertinent to Applications for Development therein is required by the Plan Conformance Guidelines; and

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of revised submission requirements pertinent to Applications for Development therein is essential to ensuring that Applicants achieve compliance with the standards and protections required under the Highland Regional Master Plan despite the interim status of the municipal Plan Conformance ordinances and regulations, this interim period not constituting an appropriate instance in which municipal approvals based upon existing municipal regulatory requirements, can appropriately be issued conditioned upon subsequent approval by the Highlands Council or the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), as may occur under usual circumstances; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Body finds that the adoption of such submission requirements are important not only to provide such immediate resource protections, but to ensure the proper management of Applications for Development involving lands within the Highlands Area of the municipality; and

**WHEREAS**, the Highland Council deems the immediate protections ascribed by this Ordinance to lands in the Preservation Area of the municipality, eligible for application of the provisions of the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-22 and N.J.S.A. 13:20-24 regarding legal representation to municipalities filing for Plan Conformance and regarding the strong presumption of validity and extraordinary deference afforded to such ordinances;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Governing Body of the Township of Vernon that the Land Use Ordinance of the Township of Vernon be and is hereby amended to incorporate the following provisions:

**SECTION 1.**

**ARTICLE XIX HIGHLANDS PRESERVATION AREA APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

**§ 330-229 APPLICABILITY**

This Ordinance shall apply to any Application for Development involving lands located within (or partially within) the Township Highlands Area (as illustrated in Exhibit 1, “Township of Vernon Highlands Preservation Area”) that seeks approval of a site plan, subdivision, or change in use, where approval of such Application would: a) result in the ultimate disturbance of one (1) acre or more of land; b) produce a cumulative impervious surface area of one-quarter (1/4) acre, or more; c) in the case of residential development, create three or more dwelling units; or d) introduce or expand on any of the following land uses/facilities:

- A. Landfills;
- B. Permanent storage or disposal of hazardous wastes, industrial or municipal sludge or radioactive materials, including solid waste landfills;
- C. Collection and transfer facilities for hazardous wastes, solid wastes that contain hazardous materials, and radioactive materials;
- D. Industrial treatment facility lagoons; or
- E. Any Major or Minor Potential Contaminant Source (as identified in Appendix A and Appendix B of this Ordinance, respectively) on lands located within 200 feet of the wellhead of any public community well or public non-community well, as these are defined at Section 4 below.

For purposes of this Ordinance, the phrases “Application for Development,” “Highlands Area,” “residential development,” “ultimate disturbance,” and “cumulative impervious surface area” shall be defined as provided at Section 4 below.

**SECTION 2.**

**§ 330-230 ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLETENESS**

A. CONSISTENCY DETERMINATIONS REQUIRED. No Application for Development included in Section 330-29 above, shall be deemed complete or considered for review by the applicable Land Use Board until and unless the Applicant has obtained and provided a copy of:

1. A Consistency Determination from the Highlands Council indicating that the application is consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan; or
2. A Consistency Determination from the Highlands Council indicating that the application is not consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan, accompanied by a certification, as detailed in Section 1.B below, by the Applicant’s professional(s) that the application has been revised since review by the Highlands Council to achieve consistency with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

B. FINDINGS OF INCONSISTENCY. Where a Highlands Council Consistency Determination indicates that an Application for Development is inconsistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan, no such application shall be deemed complete or considered for review by the applicable Township land use Board, until or unless the Applicant has obtained from the professional(s) responsible for preparation of the Applicant’s plans, a certification indicating that to the best of the knowledge and abilities of such professional(s), the application has been revised to achieve consistency with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and specifically describing the revisions made to achieve such consistency.

C. CHECKLIST WAIVER. The Township may issue a waiver from the provisions of this Section where it can be established by the Applicant and can be verified by the designated representative(s) of the Township that:

1. The activity, improvement or development proposed by the subject Application for Development has not yet been formally determined to be exempt from the Highlands Act (see Section 330-231.B, below), but eligibility for an exemption has been sufficiently established by the Applicant; or
2. The activity, improvement or development proposed in the Application for Development will neither encroach upon a Highlands Resource or Highlands Resource Area, nor be of detrimental impact to any Highlands resource or Highlands Resource Area as these are identified and delineated in the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Applicant's professional(s) responsible for preparation of the Applicant's plan shall establish compliance of the above through a formal certification specifically addressing the Highlands Resources and Resource Areas and related policies and objectives as identified in Chapter 4 of the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

D. HIGHLANDS COUNCIL CALL-UP. All municipal waivers or findings of application completeness issued pursuant to this Section shall be issued in writing, inclusive of a statement indicating the rationale for the determination. All such determinations shall be subject to Highlands Council call-up review and shall specifically include conditions requiring same consistent with this paragraph. The municipality shall within five (5) calendar days of issuance of all such determinations, provide a copy of the decision to the Applicant and to the Highlands Council. The Highlands Council call-up review period shall expire 15 calendar days following its receipt of such notice. Absent any notice to the municipality from the Highlands Council within that timeframe, the application shall be considered complete, with the date of the waiver or application completeness to be as of the date of first issuance by the municipality. Upon determining to exercise this authority for call-up review, the Highlands Council shall transmit notice to the Applicant and the municipality.

### **SECTION 3.**

#### **§ 330-231 EXCLUSIONS AND EXEMPTIONS**

A. EXCLUSIONS. The following specific improvements and related applications shall be excluded from the provisions of this Ordinance:

1. The reconstruction, within the same footprint, of any building or other structure lawfully existing as of the effective date of this Ordinance, in the event of its destruction or partial destruction by fire, storm, natural disaster, or any other unintended circumstance.
2. Any improvement or alteration to a building or other structure lawfully existing as of the effective date of this Ordinance, where such improvement or alteration is

necessary for compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or to otherwise provide accessibility to the disabled.

3. Any Agricultural or Horticultural Use or Development that would not result in either:
  - a. An increase, since the date of enactment of the Highlands Act (August 10, 2004), either individually or cumulatively, of new agricultural impervious cover of greater than three percent (3%) to the total land area of a Farm Management Unit. Solar panels shall not be included in any calculation of agricultural impervious cover (all terms as defined in Section 4, below); or
  - b. Construction of three (3) or more residential dwelling units (including accessory dwelling units) served by individual on-site septic system(s).

B. EXEMPTIONS. Any activity, improvement or development project listed and demonstrated to constitute a Highlands Act exemption shall be exempt from the provisions of this Ordinance. Formal demonstration of a Highlands Act exemption for an Application for Development involving lands located (or partially located) in the Preservation Area shall consist of one of the following:

1. *State Agency Determination.* State Agency Determinations shall consist of a Highlands Applicability Determination (HAD) issued by the NJDEP indicating that the proposal qualifies as a Highlands Act Exemption.
2. *Municipal Determination.* Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding dated July 19, 2012 between the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, municipalities that are certified by the Highlands Council may adopt an ordinance to approve Highlands Exemptions within the municipality. If the Township chooses to adopt the model ordinance, entitled "Township of Vernon Highlands Area Exemption Ordinance," any application under this Ordinance involving Highlands Act Exemptions #4, #6, #7, or #8, the applicant may request and shall be deemed to have satisfied the evidentiary requirement by obtaining a Municipal Exemption Determination issued by the Municipal Exemption Designee, provided such Determination indicates that the proposal qualifies as a Highlands Act Exemption. The applicant may rely upon the findings of a Municipal Exemption Determination to the same extent and with the same protections as would apply in the case of a HAD issued by the NJDEP.

## **SECTION 4.**

### **§ 330-232 DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this Ordinance, the following terms, phrases, words, and their derivations shall have the meanings stated herein unless their use in the text of this Ordinance clearly demonstrates a different meaning. When not inconsistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future, words used in the plural number include the singular number, and words used in the singular number include the plural number. The word “shall” is always mandatory and not merely directory.

**Agricultural or Horticultural Development** – means construction for the purposes of supporting common farm site activities, including but not limited to, the production, harvesting, storage, grading, packaging, processing, and the wholesale and retail marketing of crops, plants, animals, and other related commodities and the use and application of techniques and methods of soil preparation and management, fertilization, weed, disease, and pest control, disposal of farm waste, irrigation, drainage and water management, and grazing.

**Agricultural or Horticultural Use** – means the use of land for common farm site activities, including but not limited to, the production, harvesting, storage, grading, packaging, processing, and the wholesale and retail marketing of crops, plants, animals, and other related commodities and the use and application of techniques and methods of soil preparation and management, fertilization, weed, disease, and pest control, disposal of farm waste, irrigation, drainage and water management, and grazing.

**Agricultural Impervious Cover** – means agricultural or horticultural buildings, structures or facilities with or without flooring, residential buildings and paved areas, but not meaning temporary coverings.

**Applicant** – means a developer submitting an Application for Development.

**Application for Development** – means the application form and all accompanying documents required by ordinance for approval of a subdivision plat, site plan, planned development, conditional use, zoning variance, or direction of the issuance of a permit pursuant to section 25 or section 27 of P.L.1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-34 or C.40:55D-36).

**Disturbance** – means the placement of impervious surface, the exposure or movement of soil or bedrock, or the clearing, cutting, or removing of vegetation.

**Disturbance, Ultimate** – means the total existing or proposed area of disturbance of a lot, parcel, or other legally designated (or otherwise legally recognized) tract or subdivision of land, for the purpose of, and in connection with, any human activity, property improvement, or development, including the surface area of all buildings and structures, all impervious surfaces, and all associated land disturbances such as excavated, filled, and graded areas, and all lawn and landscape areas. Ultimate disturbance shall not include areas of prior land disturbance which at the time of evaluation: a) contain no known man-made structures (whether above or below the surface of the ground) other than such features as old stone rows or farm field fencing; and b) consist of exposed rock outcroppings, or areas which, through exposure to natural processes (such as weathering, erosion, siltation, deposition, fire, flood, growth of trees or other vegetation) are no longer impervious or visually obvious, or ecologically restored areas which will henceforth be preserved as natural areas under conservation restrictions.

**Farm Management Unit** – means a parcel or parcels of land, whether contiguous or noncontiguous, together with agricultural or horticultural buildings, structures and facilities, producing agricultural or horticultural products, and operated as a single enterprise.

**Highlands Council** – means the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council.

**Highlands Act** – means the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, P.L. 2004, c.120, as amended, codified in part at N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 *et seq.*

**Highlands Applicability Determination (HAD)** – means the determination made by the NJDEP of whether a project proposed for the Preservation Area is a major Highlands development, whether any such major Highlands development is exempt from the Highlands Act, and whether the project is consistent with the applicable Areawide Water Quality Management Plan.

**Highlands Area** – means that portion of the municipality for which the land use planning and regulation are in conformance with, or are intended or proposed to be in conformance with, the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

**Highlands Region** – means all that area within the boundaries of the municipalities listed in subsection a. of section 7 of the Highlands Act.

**Impervious Surface** – means any structure, surface, or improvement that reduces or prevents absorption of stormwater into land, including, but not limited to, porous paving, paver blocks, gravel, crushed stone, decks, patios, elevated structures, and other similar structures, surfaces, or improvements.

**Impervious Surfaces, Cumulative** – means the total area of all existing or proposed impervious surfaces situated or proposed to be situated within the boundary lines of a lot, parcel, or other legally recognized subdivision of land, expressed either as a measure of land area such as acreage, or square feet, or as a percentage of the total lot or parcel area.

**Major Potential Contaminant Sources (PCS)** – means land uses and activities determined by the Highlands Council to pose a major risk of ground water contamination (see Appendix A).

**Minor Potential Contaminant Sources (PCS)** – means land uses and activities determined by the Highlands Council to pose a minor risk of ground water contamination (see Appendix B).

**Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL)** – means the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 *et seq.*

**NJDEP** – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

**NJDEP Preservation Area Rules** – means the regulations established by the NJDEP to implement requirements of the Highlands Act, titled “Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Rules,” and codified at N.J.A.C. 7:38-1 *et seq.*

**Planning Area** – means lands within the Highlands Region not within the Preservation Area (N.J.S.A. 13:20-7).



**Plan Conformance** – means the process by which a municipality revises the master plan, development regulations and other regulations related to the development and use of land to conform them with the goals, requirements, and provisions of the Regional Master Plan in accordance with the Highlands Plan Conformance Guidelines.

**Preservation Area** – means that portion of the Highlands Region so designated by subsection b. of section 7 of the Highlands Act.

**Public Community Well** – A well that provides water to a public water system serving at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serving at least 25 year-round residents.

**Public Non-Community Well** – A well that is not a public community well and that provides water to a public water system regularly serving at least 25 individuals for at least 60 days in any given calendar year.

**Regional Master Plan (RMP)** – means the Highlands Regional Master Plan or any revision thereof adopted by the Highlands Council pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:20-8.

**Solar Panel** – means an elevated panel or plate, or a canopy or array thereof, that captures and converts solar radiation to produce power, and includes flat plate, focusing solar collectors, or photovoltaic solar cells and excludes the base or foundation of the panel, plate, canopy, or array. (As defined by the Highlands Act, N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 *et seq.*, as amended.)

**Structure** – means a combination of materials to form a construction for occupancy, use or ornamentation whether installed on, above, or below the surface of a parcel of land.

## **SECTION 5**

If any portion, paragraph, clause, sentence or phrase of this Ordinance is determined to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

## **SECTION 6**

All ordinances or parts thereof inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency only.

## **SECTION 7**

This Ordinance shall take effect after final passage and publication in the manner prescribed by law.

## **APPENDIX A. MAJOR POTENTIAL CONTAMINANT SOURCES**

---

Land uses and activities determined by the Highlands Council (based on New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Act regulations at N.J.A.C. 7:10 and NJDEP regulations) to be Major Potential Contaminant Sources include those listed below.

1. Underground fuel and chemical storage and oil tanks regulated by NJDEP under provisions of the Underground Storage of Hazardous Substances Act (N.J.S.A. 58:10A-21 *et seq.*).
2. Above-ground storage facility for a hazardous substance or waste with a cumulative capacity greater than 2,000 gallons.
3. Automotive service center (repair & maintenance).
4. Dry cleaning processing facility.
5. Road salt storage facility.
6. Cemetery.
7. Highway maintenance yard.
8. Truck, bus, locomotive maintenance yard.
9. Site for storage and maintenance of heavy construction equipment and materials.
10. Site for storage and maintenance of equipment and materials for landscaping, excluding household storage and maintenance of such equipment.
11. Livestock operation containing 300 or more Animal Units (AU) [1 AU= 1000 pounds of live animal weight] as defined by the NJ Department of Agriculture in its Criteria and Standards for Animal Waste Management, at NJAC 2:91.
12. Quarrying and/or mining facility.
13. Asphalt and/or concrete manufacturing facility.
14. Junkyard/auto recycling and scrap metal facility.
15. Residential or agricultural motor fuel in NJDEP exempted underground storage tanks (i.e., under 1,000 gallons).

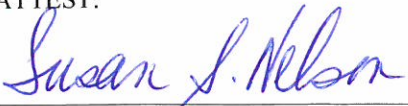
**APPENDIX B. MINOR POTENTIAL CONTAMINANT SOURCES**

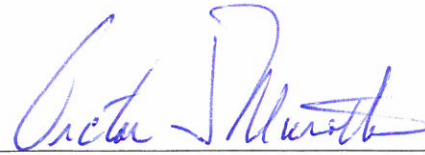
---

Land uses and activities determined by the Highlands Council (based on New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Act regulations at N.J.A.C. 7:10 and NJDEP regulations) to be Minor Potential Contaminant Sources include the following:

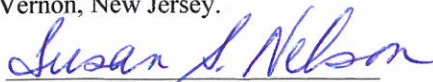
1. Underground storage of hazardous substance or waste of less than 50 gallons.
2. Underground heating oil storage tank with a capacity of less than 2,000 gallons.
3. Sewage treatment facility regulated by a NJPDES permit granted under NJAC 7:14A.
4. Industrial waste line.
5. Septic system disposal field.
6. Facility requiring a ground water discharge permit issued by the NJDEP pursuant to N.J.A.C 7:14A *et seq.*
7. Stormwater retention-recharge basin on an industrial property receiving runoff from surfaces other than roof areas.
8. Dry well on an industrial property receiving runoff from surfaces other than roof areas.
9. Waste oil collection, storage and recycling facility.
10. Agricultural chemical bulk storage and mixing or loading facility including crop dusting facilities.
11. Above-ground storage of hazardous substance or waste in quantities of less than 2,000 gallons.
12. Livestock operation containing 8 or more Animal Units (AU) [1 AU= 1000 pounds of live animal weight] or those receiving 142 or more tons of animal waste per year as defined by the NJ Department of Agriculture pursuant to its Criteria and Standards for Animal Waste Management, at NJAC 2:91.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan S. Nelson, Municipal Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Victor J. Marotta, Mayor

TAKE NOTICE that the above entitled Ordinance was introduced at a regular meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon on May 13, 2013, and will be considered for final passage after public hearing at a regular meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon to be held on June 24, 2013, at 7:30pm at the Municipal Building, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan S. Nelson, RMC  
Municipal Clerk