

6. Recreation and Tourism

Existing Conditions

Tourism is a major component of New Jersey's economy. It is the second largest industry in the State and accounted for \$36.3 billion in revenue and provided 472,326 tourism-related jobs in 2005. Strategically located between New York City and Philadelphia, New Jersey is well positioned to take advantage of a significant tourism market. The Highlands Region, located within this market, is within a day's drive of over 20 million people and a range of economic assets.

The 1997 New Jersey Tourism Master Plan outlines five major values for achieving a successful tourism approach. Among these is the "appreciation of what is uniquely New Jersey." The vast resources within the Highlands Region, both physical features and cultural and historic locations, represent a significant contribution to the uniqueness factor in the tourism equation.

Recreation opportunities can be found throughout the Highlands, from spots for hiking, fishing, hunting and boating to farmland where agri-tourism activities include pick your own fields, corn mazes, hayrides, vineyards, and petting farms. Cultural heritage is yet another richly evident resource throughout the Highlands, from the crossroads of the American Revolution to the remnants of the iron mining industry. These assets and many more are the foundation for an extensive recreation and tourism economy in the Highlands.

Historic, cultural, and scenic resources are an integral part of many of the federal, state, county, and municipal recreational lands within the Highlands Region. These resources, including canals, foundries, and battlefields, are found throughout the parks and open space lands of the Highlands. They represent a valuable asset to the recreation and tourism in the Region and attract a diverse population. With a rich history that spans from colonial times to the industrial era and beyond, the Highlands offers visitors a recreational landscape that supports history, culture, scenic beauty, and outdoor recreation all within one tourist destination.

The Highlands is home to ten State parks – Wawayanda, Hopatcong, Farny, Stephens, Allamuchy Mountain, Hacklebarney, Voorhees, Delaware and Raritan Canal, Ringwood, and Long Pond

Ironworks; four State forests – Abram S. Hewitt, Jenny Jump, Ramapo Mountain, and Norvin Green; and two State recreation areas – Spruce Run and Round Valley. The Division of Parks and Forestry within NJDEP manages these facilities.

In addition, NJDEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife maintains 29 Wildlife Management Areas throughout the Highlands Region comprising 36,677 acres of land. These lands are managed by the Division's Bureau of Land Management for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife habitat. While hunting and fishing are the most obvious activities taking place at these facilities, the Wildlife Management Areas are also prime spots for bird and wildlife watching, photography, cross country skiing, hiking, and mountain biking.

Additionally, six of the seven Highlands counties have an open space network comprised of both passive and active recreational facilities. There are 70 county open space facilities in the Highlands Region covering nearly 30,000 acres. These facilities range from ice skating arenas and golf courses to wilderness lands and campgrounds. Historic sites, districts, and cultural destinations are among the extensive and diverse recreational and tourist resources operated by the counties. The 88 Highlands municipalities and various non-profit organizations maintain many more recreational resources.

The New Jersey Trails Plan has organized a number of these resources and others into an extensive trail system totaling 1,500 miles of marked or mapped trails on federal, state, interstate, and county lands and waterways. A portion of this trail system travels through the Highlands on the Ramapo Mountain Trail System, Patriots' Path in Morris County, the Morris Area Trail System, and parts of the Sussex Branch Trail and the Appalachian Trail, as well as along the Musconetcong River.

Goals and Requirements of the Highlands Act

The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act recognizes the Highlands Region “as a landscape of significance” with “many sites of historic significance,” “abundant recreational opportunities” and “innumerable social, cultural, and economic benefits and opportunities.” (Section 2). Additionally, the goals of the Act specifically call for the preservation of “environmentally sensitive lands and other lands needed for recreation and conservation purposes”, the “continuation and expansion” of

recreational opportunities, and the preservation of “outdoor recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, on publicly owned land.” (Sections 10.b and 10.c). Utilizing this guidance, the Highlands Council staff performed an assessment and evaluation of the resources of the region and developed the following policies and strategies in order to maintain and enhance the touristic and recreational resources of the Highlands Region. (Section 11.a.(1)(b)).

In addition, the Highlands Act renews the call for the preparation of a natural resources inventory by NJDEP, in cooperation and consultation with the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission’s Division of Travel and Tourism and the Highlands Council, for the purpose of “encouraging ecologically based tourism and recreation.” (Section 48).

The Highlands Plan Approach

The extensive and varied recreational, cultural, historical, and scenic resources contained within the Highlands Region represent a substantial foundation for a regional tourism economy. It also serves the local population with many active and passive recreation facilities close to home. With a substantial recreational resource base and connectivity between many facilities, the Highlands are an ideal location to support a tourism program both for residents and for visitors.

Recreation and tourism currently provide economic benefits to communities in the Highlands Region. The first day of trout fishing draws thousands of fishing enthusiasts throughout the Region. The Appalachian Trail attracts long-distant hikers as well as day-trippers who dream of walking from Georgia to Maine. Visitors to the Highlands contribute to the regional economy through hotels, diners, and ancillary businesses, such as bait shops and bike rentals that cater to recreation demand. People fill their gas tanks and purchase merchandise on these trips. These dollars can be an economic contributor for a variety of businesses. Recreation in the Highlands can fuel both the physical and mental well-being of residents and visitors and the economic livelihood of commercial operations.

Outdoor recreation and the tourism associated with it involve the interaction of people with an outdoor environment during their travel and leisure time. Outdoor recreation consists of active pursuits such as sports and games, as well as less active, more restorative activities such as walking in

the woods or bird watching. The outdoors is a playground that offers a venue for organized activities or casual hobbies. Outdoor recreation can be educational (wildlife watching), physically healthful (jogging), mentally restorative (walking in the woods), physically challenging (rock climbing) or stress relieving (tubing). Outdoor resources accommodate two types of recreation activity: resource-based recreation and facility-based recreation. A community should have a mix of resource-based and facility-based recreation opportunities for its residents.

Enjoyment of resource-based recreation activities is directly linked to the health of the outdoor environment. Hikers, canoeists, cross-country skiers and campers enjoy their experiences more if the environment is clean and healthful. Fishing enthusiasts rely on clean water to support the trout they catch. Certain recreation activities rely primarily on the presence of a particular resource. Fishing takes place in streams and ponds and the quality of the waterbody has a direct affect on the level of enjoyment. If a stream's water is degraded such that fish cannot survive, fishing is in jeopardy. Resource-based recreation is dependent on a healthy environment.

Facility-based recreation is accommodated through a built facility. Typical facility-based recreation activities include indoor ice-skating, pool swimming, and sports requiring a field or court. Generally, the location of these facilities are less dependent on the natural surroundings than other forms of recreation. A tennis court can be built in the middle of a neighborhood, downtown, or in a barn in the countryside. The quality of the outdoor environment is generally a minor factor in determining where to locate these facilities.

Recreational tourist activities can be as varied as people's interests, habits, and budgets. Recreation tourism takes people to various destinations at high rates of speed (mountain biking) or at a slower pace (hiking). Outdoor recreation offers a full array of activities ranging from physically demanding, high-energy pursuits to more sedate, tranquil activities. Outdoor recreation may involve specialized equipment (tennis, boating), clothing (skiing) or skill (kayaking). The outdoors can be enjoyed during a short casual stroll through a park or through a significant commitment of time during a weeklong camping trip. The adventures may be experienced in an afternoon, but the memories can last a lifetime.

In furtherance of the requirements and goals of the Highlands Act, the Plan focuses on two areas of action to address recreation and tourism opportunities within the Highlands Region:

- Maintain the existing outdoor recreation on public lands throughout the Highlands Region, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, biking, and boating
- Advance a process and opportunities for supporting tourism through the promotion of historic, cultural, scenic, and recreation resources within the Region, as well as ancillary and supporting uses

The technical basis and additional background information on recreation and tourism analysis can be found in the Highlands Council's technical report entitled *Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Recreation, and Tourism Technical Report*.

Policies

Tourism and recreation are two activities that have long been popular in the Highlands, although they have been pursued without the benefits of a central organizing entity. The Highlands offers abundant outdoor recreation assets and with its location near major population centers is well poised to attract visitors and tourism dollars. Additionally, there is a natural link between historic, cultural, and scenic resources and the recreation and tourism encouraged by the Highlands Act. A strong partnership between historic, cultural, and scenic resource advocates and the recreation and tourism industry would provide mutually beneficial results to each.

The Highlands is endowed with abundant natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources. It follows that recreation and heritage tourism may be important elements of the economy of the Highlands into the future. Local governments will be better able to maximize the economic benefits if they understand the interrelationship between the resources and tourism patterns. They will also be better equipped to capitalize on the regional recreation and tourism efforts anticipated by the comprehensive Highlands tourism program.

Connecting all of the Highlands resources physically and programmatically will be an important element of a tourism plan for the Highlands Region. A coordinated recreation and tourism effort will seek to take advantage of all that the Highlands offers in recreation resources, as well as its

transportation and community infrastructure. The tourism plan will look comprehensively at the Highlands Region. Each of the components of the regional master plan, from water resources and healthy ecosystems to transportation and redevelopment opportunities, may be considered as potential contributors to a successful tourism approach in the Highlands. For example, a tourism plan will endeavor to provide transit alternatives for visitors both into and around the Highlands. Existing highway rest areas may serve as visitor centers as well as the entrance to hiking and biking trails. Tourism planning may look to redevelopment of Specially Planned Areas as a place to introduce needed tourism services such as restaurants, bed and breakfast establishments, and visitor services.

Site-Specific Standards

POLICY: The Highlands Council shall implement the following standards to provide for recreational opportunities on a site-specific basis during site plan review:

- Development applicants shall prepare a map indicating existing and proposed open space and recreational facilities located on, adjacent to, within the municipality and within the bordering municipalities as a means to evaluate the connection and expansion of recreational opportunities
- Development applicants shall provide for connectivity between existing and proposed open space and recreational resources

Pre-Conformance Policies

POLICY: Prior to the initiation of the conformance period, and in furtherance of the Highlands Act, the Highlands Council shall take actions that include the following:

- Develop, in coordination with Federal, State, county, and municipal recreation and open space agencies and the Division of Travel and Tourism, an inventory of Recreation and Tourism Resources. The inventory shall include active and passive recreation facilities, including historic, cultural, and scenic resources, and will be utilized to promote the wise management of the abundant recreational resources within the Highlands

Draft for Review by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
at the November 9, 2006 Meeting
Version: November 7, 2006

- Refine the database of existing regional, county, and municipal inventories of recreation and tourism facilities from Highlands municipalities, counties, and other appropriate entities
- Refine the database of information about existing tourism programs and approaches, including agri-tourism, eco-tourism, and heritage tourism, from Highlands municipalities, counties, and tourism entities

Conformance Policies

POLICY: During the conformance period, and in furtherance of the Highlands Act, the Highlands Council shall take actions that include the following:

- Require that conforming municipalities and counties revise master plans and development regulations to address recreation and tourism resources and initiatives consistent with this section
- Conforming municipalities shall prepare both a Recreation Plan element and an Economic Plan element of the municipal master plan and fully investigate the links between the two elements. The Recreation Plan Element shall include a comprehensive listing of recreation and open space within the municipality. The Economic Plan Element shall consider all aspects of economic development and vitality within the municipality, with a special focus on tourism
- Conforming counties shall include, as an integral component of their county master plans, a recreation and tourism component. The component shall provide for identification of recreation and tourism facilities and strategies for advancing recreation and tourism within their jurisdiction
- Municipalities and counties, as part of their master planning, shall anticipate needed infrastructure, such as access management, parking at trailheads and restroom facilities. Strategies and plans to implement these improvements shall be developed as needed

Long Term Policies

POLICY: To establish long term goals to ensure continued refinement and development of the Regional Master Plan, the Highlands Council shall take actions that include the following:

- Coordinate with the NJDEP to ensure a stable source of funding for stewardship of open space recreation resources within the Highlands Region

Local Participation Policies

POLICY: To promote the understanding and support for these resource protection goals at the local level, the Highlands Council shall take actions that include the following:

- Assist municipalities in the tourism inventories to identify both public and private tourist attractions, such as historic, cultural, scenic, and recreation sites as well as facilities to support tourism, such as bed and breakfast inns, restaurants, bicycle rentals, and provisioners
- Assist municipalities to work cooperatively with counties and neighboring towns to approach tourism from a regional perspective

Coordination and Consistency Policies

POLICY: To promote the active participation in the implementation of the Regional Master Plan among state and federal agencies, the Highlands Council shall take steps that include the following:

- In coordination with the Division of Travel and Tourism and tourism professionals, establish a region-wide initiative to develop a comprehensive Highlands tourism program. The program would be geared towards advancement and support of tourism and recreation throughout the Highlands, including cultural, historic, and scenic resources
- Develop a comprehensive Regional tourism program to provide a meaningful resource to visitors, municipalities and counties, as well as a resource and a reference for Federal agencies, State agencies, and local landowners, as future land use decisions are considered
- Coordinate with the Division of Travel and Tourism to leverage the unique assets of the Highlands into a significant economic force within the Region

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- Develop a coordinated interpretive system for recreation and tourism in the Highlands Region that may include elements such as signage, brochures, self-tour guides, and other informational tools
- Coordinate with the Department of Transportation and local government units to establish and implement a road signage program to identify significant natural, historic, cultural, scenic, and recreation resources within the Highlands Region
- Coordinate with NJDEP and the Division of Travel and Tourism to update the natural resources inventory for the purpose of encouraging ecologically based tourism and recreation in the Highlands Region. This inventory shall contain information on the Highlands Region's natural, historic, and recreational resources, and shall include, to the greatest extent possible, but need not be limited to, Federal, State, county and local parks, wildlife management areas, hatcheries, natural areas, historic sites, State forests, recreational areas, ecological and biological study sites, reservoirs, marinas, boat launches, campgrounds, waterfront access points, winter sports recreation areas, and national wildlife refuges
- Coordinate with the NJDEP regarding conveyances by the State involving an exchange of lands within the Highlands Region, that are used for recreation or conservation purposes, to the federal government or any agency or entity thereof, another State agency or entity, or a local unit. The Highlands Council shall coordinate with local units of government, in accordance with Section 49, to ensure that these lands will continue to be used for recreation or conservation purposes and that the proposed recreation and conservation purposes for the lands do not significantly alter the ecological and environmental value of the lands being exchanged. The Council's determination that the proposed recreation or conservation purpose does not significantly alter the ecological and environmental value of the lands being exchanged, if:
 - (1) the Highlands Council determines that any proposed recreation or conservation use of the lands being exchanged is consistent with the Regional Master Plan and the requirements of the law, rules or regulations have been met to the satisfaction of the Council; and

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(2) a portion of the lands would be maintained in an undeveloped or pre-conveyance state and no wetlands would be negatively affected in violation of State or Federal law, or any rules or regulations adopted pursuant thereto

GLOSSARY

[These terms will be in the glossary at the back of the Regional Master Plan but are included here for convenience of Members during the review of this draft section].

Recreation and conservation purposes - means the same as that term is defined in section 3 of P.L.1999, c. 152 (C.13:8C-3).

Resource-based recreation – Resource-based recreation generally occurs in the outdoors and is dependent on a healthy environment. Enjoyment of these activities is directly correlated to the health of the outdoor environment. Some recreation activities rely primarily on the presence of a particular resource, such as fishing. The quality of the resource affects the degree of enjoyment. Resource-based recreation is dependent on nature. Special facilities, such as trails, boat ramps and others allow easier access for that activity, but the recreation can occur without these accommodations.

Facility-based recreation – Facility-based recreation is accommodated through a built facility, such as a ball field, court, rink or ring. Generally these activities can be located in any setting without regard to the natural surroundings. The quality of the outdoor environment is not a determining factor in deciding where to locate these facilities. The activities take place in a built environment. Typical facility-based recreation activities include indoor ice skating, pool swimming, and sports requiring a field or court.