

RESOLUTION 2024-07
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
APPROVAL OF CONTRACT TO DEVELOP AN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION
PLAN FOR THE NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS REGION

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act), N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq., has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Council is tasked with implementing the Highlands Act; and

WHEREAS, section 6.g of the Highlands Act authorizes the Highlands Council to enter into any and all agreements or contracts to effectuate the purposes of the Highlands Act; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-2 declares that the New Jersey Highlands is an essential source of drinking water, providing clean and plentiful drinking water for one-half of the State's population and contains exceptional natural resources such as clean air, contiguous forest lands, wetlands, pristine watersheds, and habitat for fauna and flora for the citizens of the State; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-2 further declares that “the new regional planning approach and the more stringent environmental regulatory standards should be accompanied, as a matter of wise public policy and fairness to property owners, by a strong and significant commitment by the State to fund the acquisition of exceptional natural resource value lands . . .”; and

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2008, the Highlands Council adopted the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), which became effective on September 8, 2008, to guide implementation of the Highlands Act; and

WHEREAS, RMP Goal 1H calls for the protection of critical resources through land preservation and stewardship of open space throughout the Highlands Regions; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, the Highlands Council applied for and was awarded a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Capacity Building Grant under the Highlands Conservation Act (HCA) program, to enable the Highlands Council through their Open Space program to be more proactive in locating and prioritizing properties for preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Council prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking firms with varied expertise in all facets of open space and recreation planning to develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Highlands Region which, after public and key stakeholder input, will identify specific properties, establish priorities for preservation, and align potential funding sources for land preservation needed to accomplish the conservation and recreation goals of the region, and to effectively utilize and leverage resource-based recreation in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Open Space and Recreation Plan will be developed with the benefit of significant outreach before, during, and after the Plan adoption to address equity amongst all stakeholders within the State and shall incorporate environmental justice principles to ensure that proposed open space and recreation projects have equitable benefits for all populations, and climate resiliency principles to address the impacts of climate change on the region; and

WHEREAS, the RFP was released to the public on July 13, 2023, and seven (7) Teams submitted proposals on or before the deadline of October 6, 2023; and

RESOLUTION 2024-07
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
APPROVAL OF CONTRACT TO DEVELOP AN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION
PLAN FOR THE NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS REGION

WHEREAS, after reviewing the proposals, staff selected five (5) Teams to participate in in-depth interviews to determine the extent of their expertise in all facets of developing an open space and recreation plan and their overall suitability to provide the services contemplated in the RFP; and

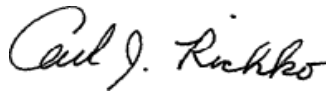
WHEREAS, Highlands Council staff recommends that the following team is best suited to meet the needs articulated by the Highlands Council’s RFP: the Trust for Public Land along with subconsultants TwentyTwenty Public Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Highlands Council staff further recommends that the Highlands Council authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with the aforementioned Team to develop an open space and recreation plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Highlands Council that the Executive Director, or their designee, is hereby authorized to enter a contract with the Trust for Public Land, for an amount not to exceed \$298,500.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 15th day of February, 2024.



 Carl J. Richko, Chairman

Vote on the Approval of This Resolution	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede			√			
Councilmember Bush			√			
Councilmember Dougherty			√			
Councilmember Dressler			√			
Councilmember Francis			√			
Councilmember James		√	√			
Councilmember Sebetich			√			
Councilmember Van Abs						<i>Recused</i>
Councilmember Visioli	√		√			
Councilmember Vohden			√			
Chairman Richko			√			