



River Road, Holland Township, Hunterdon County

Highlands Council Meeting

March 19, 2026



Chairman's Report



Updated Council Member Committee Assignments

Audit	Audit Evaluation	Budget and Finance	Personnel	Bylaws
<p>Tim Dougherty, Chair Mary J Amoroso Joe Basralian Dan Bush Kelley Smith</p>	<p>Dan Van Abs, Chair Kurt Alstede Tammy Koop Melonie Marano Matt Oswald</p>	<p>Jim Visioli, Chair Dan Bush Bill Kibler Tammy Koop Helen Le Frois Carl Richko</p>	<p>Kurt Alstede, Chair Joe Basralian Melonie Marano Carl Richko Jim Visioli</p>	<p>Tim Dougherty, Chair Mary J Amoroso Tammy Koop Helen Le Frois Melonie Marano</p>
Plan Conformance	RMP Amendment	Landowner Equity & Land Preservation	Affordable Housing	Agriculture Advisory
<p>Bill Kibler – Chair Joe Basralian Dan Bush Carl Richko Dan Van Abs Jim Visioli</p>	<p>Kurt Alstede – Chair Bill Kibler Matt Oswald Carl Richko Kelley Smith Dan Van Abs</p>	<p>Bill Kibler - Chair Mary J Amoroso Joe Basralian Helen Le Frois Matt Oswald Kelley Smith</p>	<p>Dan Van Abs – Chair Mary J Amoroso Tim Dougherty Tammy Koop Matt Oswald Jim Visioli</p>	<p>Kurt Alstede Kelley Smith</p>



Executive Directors Report



Overview of Highlands Act and RMP



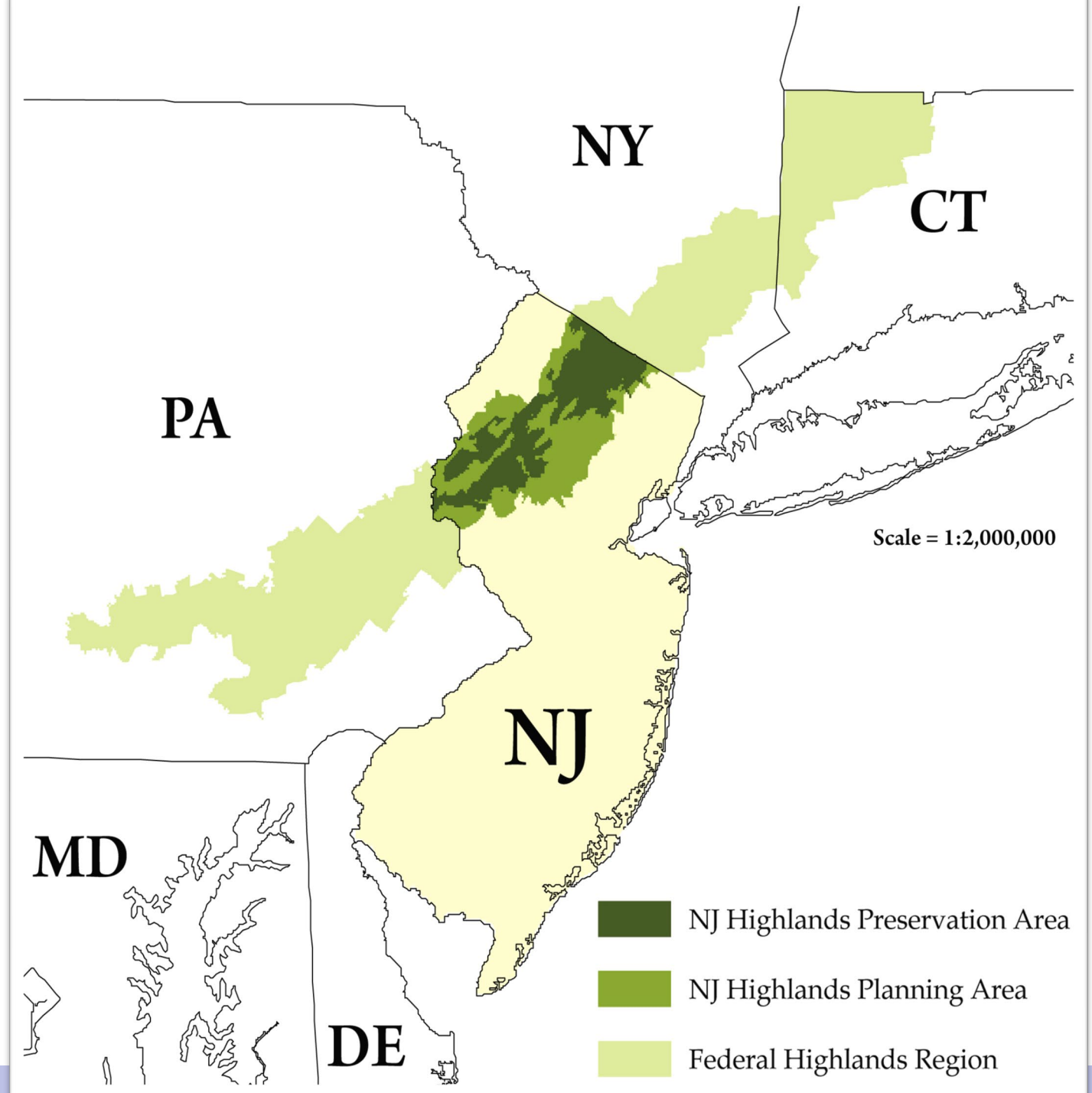
Federal Highlands Region

Highlands Conservation Act (HCA)

Passed 2004 (amended 2022)

Provides grant funding for land preservation projects.

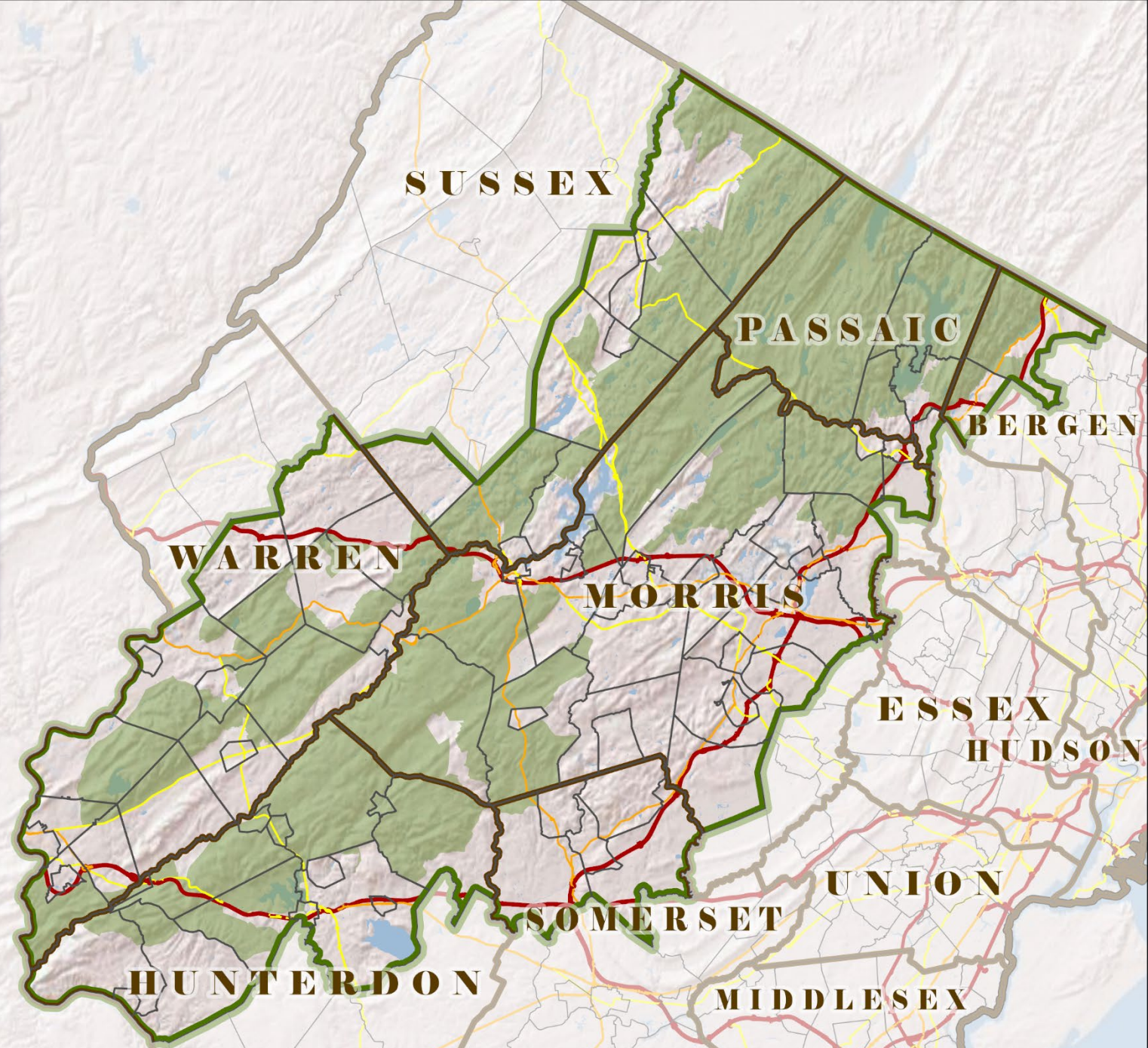
“...to recognize the importance of the water, forest, agricultural, wildlife, recreational, and cultural resources of the Highlands region, and the national significance of the Highlands region to the United States.”



New Jersey Highlands Region

88 municipalities; parts of 7 counties.

The New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act: "...the protection of the New Jersey Highlands, because of its vital link to the future of the State's drinking water supplies and other key natural resources, is an issue of State level importance that cannot be left to the uncoordinated land use decisions of 88 municipalities, seven counties, and a myriad of private landowners..."



Protecting the Highlands is not just about the Highlands.

The Highlands exports approximately **840 million gallons** of clean drinking water to the rest of the state **each day**. This includes nearly all the state's major population centers.

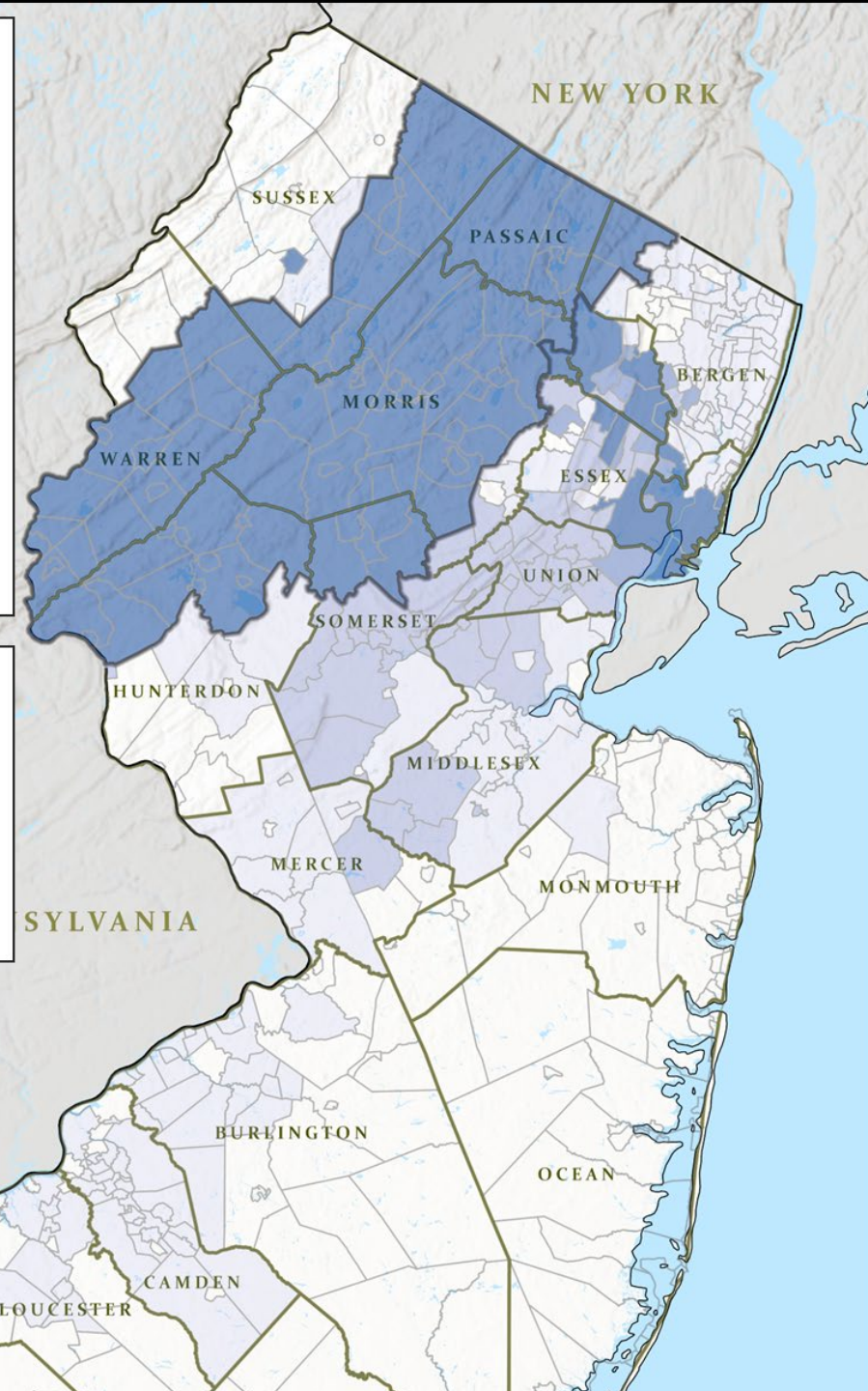
70% of New Jersey residents get some or all of their drinking water from the New Jersey Highlands, including 8 of every 10 residents living in overburdened communities.

This map shows that Highlands water makes it as far south as Gloucester County.

This is why protecting the New Jersey Highlands region is a matter of **statewide importance**.

How much Highlands water do they get?

- Greater than 80%
- 50% - 80%
- 25% - 50%
- 1% - 25%
- Highlands Region Boundary



New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act)

- Passed August 10, 2004
- Establishes Planning and Preservation Area boundaries
- Establishes Highlands Council
- Defines 17 exemptions and 3 waivers
- Directs development of a regional master plan
- Directs development of plan conformance program and grants
- Directs DEP development of Highlands Rules

Much more. These are just key points.



Highlands Act Quick Reference

- Section 1- 6: Background, Definitions, Council set-up & authority
- Section 7: Boundaries of Preservation and Planning Areas
- Section 8- 12: Regional Master Plan
- Section 13: TDR Program
- Section 14-15: Plan Conformance
- Section 16-17: Project Review Authority
- Section 18-19: Grant Programs
- Section 28: Exemptions
- Section 32: NJDEP Highlands Rules

Key Sections Only

These are most relevant to the regular work of the Council.



The Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP)

- Adopted July 2008
- Based on extensive research and stakeholder outreach
- Underpinned by 15 technical reports
- Requires periodic review per Act (Monitoring Program)
- ***Foundation of everything the Council does***



Regional Master Plan (RMP) Quick Reference

Organized around

- Natural Resources
- Water Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Historic, Cultural, Archaeological, and Scenic Resources
- Transportation
- Future Land Use
- Landowner Equity
- Sustainable Economic Development
- Air Quality

For each of these areas the RMP:

- provides a **regional analysis**,
- identifies **Goals, Policies, and Objectives (GPOs)**
- defines **programs** to implement the GPOs.



Land Use Capability Zones (LUCZ)

- LUCZ is guiding policy map for region;
- Created in 2008 with RMP, amended in 2024
- 3 Primary Zones and 4 subzones
 - Protection Zone: Forest – Highest resource protections
 - Conservation Zone: Agricultural – Protect agricultural lands
 - Existing Community Zone: Developed areas – Areas for growth
- Guides growth in the region



Land Use Capability Zones

Zone

- Protection
- Conservation
- Existing Community

Sub-Zone

- Conservation - Environmentally Constrained
- Existing Community Environmentally Constrained
- Lake Community
- Wildlife Management Area
- Lakes Greater Than 10 Acres

- Interstate Highways
- Highlands Region
- County Boundaries



0 2.5 5 10 15 Miles

Date Exported: 10/11/2023

PENNSYLVANIA

NEW YORK

SUSSEX

PASSAIC

BERGEN

WARREN

MORRIS

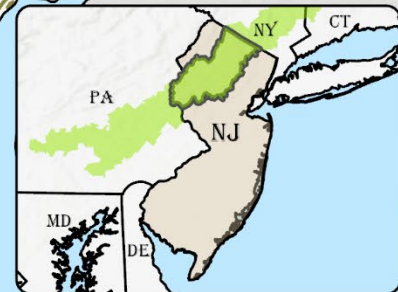
ESSEX

HUDSON

UNION

SOMERSET

HUNTERDON



RMP Standards

- 300 ft Buffers from Highlands Open Waters
- Sewer and Water limitations based on LUCZ
- Septic densities based on LUCZ
- Water availability limitations
- Steep slope area protections
- Critical Habitat and vernal pool protections
- Agricultural resource protections
- Groundwater recharge area protections



RMP Amendments

- 2018-1 – Procedures for Considering Proposals to Amend the Highlands RMP
- 2019-1 – Procedures for Highlands Redevelopment Area Designation
- 2019-2 – Plan Conformance Procedures
- 2024-1 – Policy Standards for Warehousing in the NJ Highlands Region
- 2024-2 – Land Use Capability Zone Map & Technical Report Update
- 2024-3 – Highlands Affordable Housing Amendment



How is RMP used by the Council?

- **Project Conformance Reviews**

- Municipalities and Counties incorporate land use and resource protection standards of RMP into local ordinances and regulations
- Project Reviews: Proposed developments are reviewed against land use and resource protection standards of RMP, including certain DEP permitting.

- **RMP Implementation Projects**

- Agricultural grants, tourism grants, economic development, lake and watershed management planning

- **Municipal and County Grant Awards**

- Implementation of RMP through municipal land use amendments and county planning
- Resource Management Plans including lake management, critical habitat, stormwater management, affordable housing plans.



RMP Monitoring

- Review of RMP implementation required by Highlands Act
- RMP outlined a Monitoring Program
- First review completed 2018
- Second review in progress
 - Anticipated 2026 timeline
 - June 2026: Release MPRR for Public Comment
 - September 2026: Council Release of MPRR



Highlands Regional Master Plan

Monitoring Program Recommendation Report

Baseline Report: 2018

New Jersey Highlands Water
Protection and Planning Council



Highlands Redevelopment Areas



The Highlands Act and Highlands Redevelopment

- **Highlands Act Sections 9b and 11h** Requires the Council to identify areas appropriate for redevelopment. An area identified for possible redevelopment shall be either a brownfield site designated by the Department of Environmental Protection or a site at which at least 70% of the area is covered with impervious surface.
- **Highlands Act Section 35b** Provides for a waiver of any provision of a Highlands permitting review on a case-by-base basis for redevelopment in certain previously developed areas in the preservation area identified by the Council.
- **RMP Policy 7G2** For both the Preservation Area and the Planning Area, a waiver may be issued by the Highlands Council on a case-by-case... for redevelopment in certain previously developed areas as identified by the Highlands Council.



Highlands Redevelopment Area Designations

What is it? A designation by the Highlands Council of an area found to be appropriate for redevelopment. Allows for waivers from the RMP and the NJDEP Highlands Rules.

Trigger: An application from either a municipality or a land owner.

Key factors: 70% impervious or brownfield site.

Reviewing for: Consistency with Act and RMP and the 2019 RMP Amendment, Highlands Redevelopment Area Procedures.

Review Process: Set forth in 2019 RMP Amendment. Requires 30 Day public comment period. Council takes action at public hearing.



Audit Review Committee



Budget & Finance Committee



Highlands Council Protection Fund Grant

Recommended Awards

- **Water Use & Conservation Management Plan (\$45,000)**
High Bridge Borough, Hunterdon County
- **Center Study (\$30,000)**
Washington Township, Warren County
- **Drainage Study (\$27,010)**
Green Township, Sussex County
- **Agricultural Sustainability Grant (\$25,000)**
Randolph Township, Morris County
- **Open Space & Recreation Plan (\$16,000)**
Pohatcong Township, Warren County
- **Initial Assessment Grant (\$15,000)**
Hope Township, Warren County



RMP Implementation Account Contracts

- Highlands Tourism Website Maintenance and Hosting
 - \$29,622 total for 3-year period
 - Website: enjoynjhighlands.com





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