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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 17, 2014

Highlands Council Approves Jefferson Petition and Moves Monitoring Program Forward

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) approved its 46th Petition for Plan Conformance. Jefferson Township in Morris County has 3,303 acres in the Planning Area and 24,080 acres in the Preservation Area of the Highlands Region. The municipal petition included only Jefferson's Preservation Area lands.

Petition approval means that Jefferson can now move on to completion and formal adoption of documents that integrate the land use and natural resource protections of the Highlands Act into local planning and regulatory materials. Funded implementation components include a Sustainable Economic Development plan, Habitat Conservation and Management plan, Stream Corridor Protection and Restoration plan, and Stormwater Management plan among others. Funded planning will benefit the entire municipality, not only Preservation Area lands.

“Jefferson Township engaged in a very thorough public process as they worked toward Plan Conformance,” explains Acting Highlands Council Executive Director Margaret Nordstrom. “They are now in a strong position to move forward with implementation and we look forward to supporting them in those efforts.”

Also at its April meeting, the Highlands Council approved contract awards in support of its operations, including one related to the upcoming Regional Master Plan (RMP) Monitoring Program. The RMP Monitoring Recommendation Report will synthesize the results of all efforts related to the Monitoring Program including public input, the fiscal impact assessment, and work

with stakeholder groups. Earlier in the year, the Council awarded a contract for a web-based comment tool, which will also support the Monitoring Program.

“We are pleased to be moving forward with the RMP Monitoring Program,” noted Highlands Council Chairman Jim Rilee. “The monitoring report is an essential component of the RMP update process and staff will be working closely with the selected consulting team in the coming months to ensure a comprehensive review of the RMP as required by the Act.”

In other Council business, a modification was made to an existing contract with the firm that provides the Highlands interactive mapping tools. The firm will be developing a mobile application that will allow municipal professionals to collect required field data as part of stormwater management planning that is funded through Plan Conformance. Complete details regarding awarded contracts, including award amounts and selected firms are available in the resolutions posted at the Highlands Council website via the link below.

The Council also passed resolutions reinstating Kurt Alstede as Vice Chairman of the Highlands Council and Bob Holtaway as Treasurer, and renewing the authority of the Executive Director to review and approve certain matters on behalf of the Council.

Actions taken by the Council at this meeting will take effect following the Governor’s review and consideration of the meeting minutes, up to 10 business days from receipt of the minutes. Materials related to this meeting including resolutions, presentations, audio and minutes will be posted at: <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/about/calend/> (click on April 17 meeting).

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