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Highlands Council helps ensure permanent protection of 190+ acres in West Milford

*Property conveyed to Land Conservancy of New Jersey for
preservation and stewardship*

CHESTER, N.J. — A 192-acre tract of land in West Milford, NJ has been permanently protected under the stewardship of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC-NJ) as the result of a recent collaboration between TLC-NJ, the Highlands Council, and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The Passaic County property was identified by the Highlands Council as exceptionally well-suited to meet the mitigation requirements of a Comprehensive Mitigation Plan (CMP), which was created in connection with a utility upgrade project in the region.

“This was a wonderful partnership to protect one of the most important privately owned properties remaining in the Highlands,” said David Epstein, President of TLC-NJ. “We look forward to caring for and enhancing this quintessential Highlands property to ensure that it continues to provide clean drinking water for New Jersey residents.”

The property, previously owned by Gibbs Special Limited Partnership, LLC., contains eight parcels and includes prime forest and critical wildlife habitat, as well as Prime Ground Water Recharge Areas, and Special Environmental Zones as identified in the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP).

The CMP that provided the framework for the transaction was developed by Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (TGP) in conjunction with, and at the request of, the Highlands Council, in support of the company’s request to NJDEP for an exemption to the Highlands Act. The CMP

requires, among other things, the acquisition and preservation of 147 acres of prime forest and critical wildlife habitat lands as mitigation for the temporary impacts of the project. Owners of the Gibbs property had previously contacted the Highlands Council expressing interest in conservation options. The Highlands Council coordinated with NJDEP, TLC-NJ and TGP to arrange the transaction.

“The Highlands Council was particularly pleased to find property that so well met the criteria of the CMP,” said Margaret Nordstrom, Highlands Council Acting Executive Director. “The property lies within the same HUC14 watershed the project runs through, it’s less than 10 miles from the affected area, and it’s almost entirely surrounded by preserved lands creating a larger contiguous block of protected land.”

Highlands Council Chairman Jim Rilee says the Council is also pleased with the role TLC-NJ will play. “This has been an excellent example of a public/private partnership in which our GIS and natural resource management teams were able to identify the property, and TLC-NJ has the experience to expertly manage it going forward,” said Rilee. TLC-NJ has more than 30 years of experience in land preservation and stewardship and is responsible for the preservation of more than 20,000 acres in the state, 15,000 of which are located in the Highlands Region.

The Highlands Council is a regional planning entity, established in 2004 with the passing of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at www.nj.gov/njhighlands.

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Additional Information

See attached map (jpg file available upon request)

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company Comprehensive Mitigation Plan:

http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/projectreview/5_NEUP_CMP_Applicant_Submittal.pdf

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