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Public Comments Now Being Accepted on Highlands Regional Master Plan

CHESTER, N.J. — The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) announced today that it would begin accepting public comments on the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), the document that guides the implementation of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. Members of the public are encouraged to submit comments via an online web portal, which is accessible by clicking the “Submit Comments” link on the homepage of the Highlands Council website (www.nj.gov/njhighlands). Comments are also being accepted via traditional hard copy methods and can be mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered to the Highlands Council office.

“Comments received during this phase of the monitoring program will help inform the development of indicators and milestones that will be used to measure how effective the programs and policies in the RMP are and have been in implementing the Highlands Act,” explains Kurt Alstede, Highlands Council Vice-Chair and Chair of the Highlands Council committee leading the RMP Monitoring Program effort.

The Highlands Act required creation of the RMP and specified periodic reviews, which will be addressed through the RMP Monitoring Program. The Program is intended to develop the factual foundation on which potential amendments to the RMP may be made.

In addition to collecting public comments, the Monitoring Program will involve public hearings, meetings with stakeholder groups, and consultation with technical advisory committees. A fiscal impact analysis is also being developed to evaluate the economic effects of the Act and RMP on

municipalities and counties in the region. This work will result in a Monitoring Program Recommendation Report that will be presented to the Council and the public for additional comment.

“Public input on the RMP is not only a requirement of the Act, but a critical component of a thoughtful and thorough review process,” says Highlands Council Chairman, Jim Rilee. “Over the years we have heard from many constituent groups that have been a part of the Highlands Act implementation. Now is the time to formally submit those comments as part of the Monitoring Program.”

Users accessing the web comment portal will be directed to categorize their comments based on primary focus areas of the RMP. It is requested that hard copy comments identify a specific content area or aspect of the RMP and include the commenter’s name and affiliation. Comments will be accepted through February 27, 2015.

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

Highlands Council Regional Master Plan and Technical Reports:

<http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/>

Highlands Council Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program:

<http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/monitoring/>

Highlands Council Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program, Comment Submission intro page:

<http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/monitoring/comments.html>