



## State of New Jersey

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 20, 2021

## Hunterdon County Joins Growing List of Towns and Counties Working with the Highlands Council

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council approved a Petition for Plan Conformance from Hunterdon County. This action will help support key priorities in Hunterdon, including tourism, historic preservation, and managed growth. Hunterdon joins Passaic and Somerset Counties as the third county in the Highlands Region to earn this distinction. Approval of this Petition qualifies Hunterdon County for significant grant funding and is a natural next step in the County's work with the Highlands Council.

"The Highlands Council has enjoyed an increasingly collaborative and productive relationship with Hunterdon County over the last few years," explained Lisa J. Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. "In addition to funding three phases of the County's comprehensive Tourism Study, representatives from the county have played an active role in the development of a Highlands Regional Economic Sustainability Plan. We're pleased that the County views working with the Highlands Council as an important step in planning for a sustainable environmental and economic future."

Just like conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) at the municipal level, the county conformance process is driven by local goals. County conformance is, however, even more focused on planning rather than regulation, reflecting the actual role of the county in local governance.

Hunterdon County's approved petition includes an Implementation Plan and Schedule (IPS) that allocates up to \$250,000 in grant funding to address three near-term County priorities: 1) an update to the Hunterdon County Master Plan, also referred to as the Growth Management Plan; 2) an update to the County's Historic Preservation Plan; and 3) an economic development project identified as Hunterdon County Tourism Marketing. Longer-term priorities identified for future funding in the IPS include planning initiatives related to Stormwater Management, Water Use and Conservation Management, Forest Stewardship, Agricultural Retention and Farmland Preservation, and Redevelopment, among others.

“As development pressures continue to mount in the Highlands, counties and towns are recognizing that good regional planning is essential to protecting our natural resources and supporting positive growth that enhances our quality of life,” noted Carl Richko, Highlands Council Chairman. “Through Plan Conformance, the Highlands Council can assist Hunterdon County in achieving its goals, while simultaneously advancing the goals of the RMP.”

Of the 26 municipalities in Hunterdon County, 15 are located in the Highlands Region (~202 square-miles or 46% of the county). Conformance with the Highlands RMP at the county level offers Hunterdon County the option of seeking funding from the Highlands Council for planning work that would benefit the entire County, not just the Highlands portion.

*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: [www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/) (click on May 20 meeting).*

*The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency, established in 2004 with the passage of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at [www.nj.gov/njhighlands](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands).*

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