



## State of New Jersey

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## Highlands Council Approves Funding for Projects in Sussex and Morris Counties *Stormwater Management, Town Center Planning, and more on the horizon*

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council approved more than \$145,500 in grants to Highlands municipalities for planning activities that help advance the goals of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP).

In Sussex County, Vernon Township was approved for over \$80,000 for three separate projects to address Farmland Preservation, Stormwater Management, and Municipal Center and Trail Planning. Harding Township in Morris County will develop a Water Use and Conservation Management Plan. Per the Highlands Act, municipalities in the region are eligible to apply for grant funding to support planning work that helps advance the goals of the RMP.

“In the past few years, we’ve seen increasing engagement from municipalities in the Highlands interested in advancing local goals and projects,” said Lisa J. Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. “As we emerge from the pandemic, municipalities are more sharply focused than ever on maximizing resources and opportunities to create strong, resilient communities. The Highlands Council can play a significant role in supporting these efforts.”

Following is a summary of municipal requests approved for funding at this meeting.

- **Vernon Township – Farmland Preservation Plan**  
*Not to exceed \$15,000*

Vernon Township will take a comprehensive look at the past, present and future of the agricultural industry in the area. The plan will analyze historic and projected trends in the local agricultural industry, ensure consistency with state and local plans, review ways to promote economic development and retain agricultural resources, and envision a future

version of its Farmland Preservation Program.

- **Vernon Township – Stormwater Management Plan**

*Not to exceed \$27,500*

In an effort to bring its Stormwater Management Plan into conformance with Highlands-specific requirements and meet NJDEP Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements, Vernon has requested grant funding to complete stormwater facilities digital mapping and updates to their mitigation plan and stormwater control ordinance.

- **Vernon Township – Municipal Center and Trail Feasibility Plan**

*Not to exceed \$38,000*

Vernon is in the process of developing a Town Center walking and biking trail that will run parallel to State Highway Route 94 through its Town Center area. The proposed trail would link the Town Center to nearby resorts and amenities, and potentially connect to other trail systems. Funding will support siting, design, preliminary engineering, and analyses of cultural and environmental impacts.

- **Harding Township – Water use and Conservation Management Plan**

*Not to exceed \$65,000*

Harding Township will be developing a municipal-wide Water Use and Conservation Management Plan (WUCMP) to help address Net Water Availability (NWA) deficits in the municipality.

“The diversity of projects approved for funding at tonight’s meeting reflect not only the pressing needs of these specific municipalities, but the common goals shared throughout the Highlands region,” said Carl Richko, Chairman of the Highlands Council. “The Highlands Act was put in place to protect water resources because they are essential to vibrant towns, active agriculture, and the beautiful open spaces we all enjoy. We are grateful to our municipal partners for helping us all move closer to achieving that vision.”

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/index.html](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/index.html) (click on July 15 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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