

RESOLUTION 2006-30
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE THE DRAFT REGIONAL MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act) has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

WHEREAS, Sections 8 and 10 of the Highlands Act mandate that the Highlands Council prepare and adopt a Regional Master Plan with the goal of protecting and enhancing the significant values of the resources in the Highlands Region; and

WHEREAS, Sections 11 and 12 of the Highlands Act require that the Regional Master Plan be comprised of (a) a Resource Assessment that seeks to determine the amount and type of human development and activity that can be sustained by the Highlands Region ecosystem while maintaining the Region's overall ecological value; (b) a Financial Component that details the costs of implementing the Regional Master Plan, and details the sources of revenue for covering those costs; (c) a Local Participation Component that provides for the maximum feasible local government and public input; (d) a Coordination and Consistency Component that details the ways in which local, State, and federal programs and policies may be best coordinated to promote the goals, purposes, policies, and provisions of the Regional Master Plan; (e) a Transportation Component that provides a plan for transportation system preservation; (f) a Smart Growth Component that assesses opportunities for appropriate development, redevelopment, economic growth and a transfer of development rights program, and includes a Land Use Capability Map; and (g) a Land Use Capability Map for the Preservation Area and statement of policies, including a preservation zone element that identifies zones within the preservation area where development shall not occur in order to protect water resources and environmentally sensitive lands and which shall be permanently preserved through use of a variety of tools, including but not limited to land acquisition and the transfer of development rights and minimum standards governing municipal and county master planning and development regulations; and

WHEREAS, in the course of developing the components of the Regional Master Plan, the Highlands Council has held forty Council meetings and work sessions to gain insight from Highlands Council staff, State agencies, and other interested stakeholders, including the public, regarding various Plan elements; and

WHEREAS, as required by Section 9 of the Highlands, in developing the Regional Master Plan, the Highlands Council has consulted and coordinated with many State agencies and authorities, including the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Agriculture, the Departments of Transportation, Law and Public Safety, Banking and Insurance, and Treasury as well as the Council on Affordable Housing, the State Agriculture Development Committee, the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust, the Garden State Preservation Trust, the State Transfer of Development Rights Bank, the Pinelands Development Credit Bank, the New Jersey Commerce Commission, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, and the North Jersey Water Supply Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Council also established and met with eighteen Technical Advisory Committees comprised of professionals and other interested stakeholders whose input has been sought on various aspects of the Regional Master Plan, including Brownfield Redevelopment,

Community Investment, Cultural and Historic Resources, Ecosystem Management, Eco-Tourism, Education, Geographic Information Systems, Green Construction, Housing, Land Preservation, Land Use Planning, Regional Development and Design, Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Forestry, Transfer of Development Rights, Transportation, Utility Capacity, and Water Resource Management; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Council also held numerous meetings with both elected and appointed county and municipal officials to discuss various aspects of Regional Master Plan development and to gain input from the county and municipal officials on plan implementation; and

WHEREAS, with input from the Highlands Council staff, State agencies, the Technical Advisory Committees, professional services firms, county and municipal officials, and the public, the Highlands Council has prepared a draft Regional Master Plan that incorporates the statutorily required components with the goal of protecting and enhancing the significant values of the resources in the Highlands Region; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Council has prepared a draft Regional Master Plan that includes a Land Use Capability Map and statements of Plan's goals, policies, standards and requirements.

WHEREAS, the Council has also prepared an Atlas that shows the Land Use Capability Map at a higher resolution, which is ready for public release; and

WHEREAS, the Council is completing technical reports and guidelines which provide further explanation of and details about the draft Plan, which documents shall be released to the public as they are completed;

WHEREAS, the Council's draft Regional Master Plan includes fairness and just compensation policies such as the recommendation to extend the deadline in the Highlands Act for pre-Highlands Act values, and also includes commitments to advocate for the establishment of one or more dedicated, stable sources of funding for the purpose of acquisition, enhancement, and long-term stewardship, including but not limited to the reauthorization of the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund with funds dedicated for the Highlands Region, a source water protection fee to be assessed on all water purveyors providing water that originates in the Highlands Region, a Highlands water consumption fee assessed to all consumers of Highlands Region water, and additional appropriations under the Federal Highlands Conservation Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Highlands Council that the Executive Director, or his designee, is directed to take the following actions:

1. Publicly release the draft Regional Master Plan for public review and comment;
2. Transmit the draft Regional Master Plan to New Jersey's Executive and Legislative branches of government;
3. Transmit the draft Regional Master Plan to the governing body of every municipality and county located in the Highlands Region;
4. Call upon the Executive and Legislative branches to take the necessary steps to effectuate the fairness and just compensation provisions of the Highlands Act to provide a strong and significant commitment by the State to fund the acquisition of exceptional natural resource value lands consistent with the goals and provisions of the Regional Master Plan;

5. Take the necessary and immediate steps to further refine the fairness and just compensation policies contained in the Regional Master Plan;
6. Publicly release the Atlas to assist the public in viewing the Land Use Capability Map at a higher resolution.
7. Publicly release the supporting technical reports and guidelines as these documents are completed; and
8. Issue a public notice and schedule for public hearings in January 2007 on the draft Regional Master Plan.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 30th day of November, 2006.



John Weingart, Chairman