

RESOLUTION 2008-13
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
SUPPORT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO DEDICATE REVENUE
FOR OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION

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, the Legislature has adopted the Highlands Act in recognition that the 860,000 acre Highlands Region serves as an “essential source of drinking water, providing clean and plentiful drinking water for one-half of the State's population” and that the area includes exceptional natural resources such as clean air, contiguous forest lands, wetlands, pristine watersheds, habitat for fauna and flora, many sites of historic significance and provides abundant recreational opportunities, all of which are an invaluable and irreplaceable asset of the current citizens of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act empowers the Highlands Council to identify and designate areas in the Highlands Region within which “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 the Legislature included in the Highlands Act included a specific commitment for additional funding through “a strong and significant commitment by the State to fund the acquisition of exceptional natural resource value lands”; and

WHEREAS, the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund that funds the Green Acres Program, the Farmland Preservation Program, and other programs presently provides a significant source of funding for acquisition projects in the Highlands Region; and

WHEREAS, the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund will no longer be able to issue any new bond, note or other obligation after June 30, 2009 unless the Trust Fund is reauthorized; and

WHEREAS, almost all individuals and groups who have repeatedly testified before the Highlands Council at its regular meetings and public hearings – regardless of their varying views on other aspects of the Highlands Act –have agreed that there needs to be a dedicated, directed, and stable funding source sufficient to preserve the lands envisioned to be protected by the Highlands Act, and

WHEREAS, in Resolution 2005-18, Resolution 2006-22 and the pending Regional Master Plan, the Highlands Council has repeatedly expressed its support for a dedicated, directed and stable source of land acquisition and stewardship funding; and

WHEREAS, on March 6, 2008, Senate Concurrent Resolution 88 was introduced to the New Jersey Legislature proposing to amend Article VIII, Section II of the Constitution of the State of New Jersey to provide that revenue from water consumption and water user fees be dedicated only for the purpose of providing funding for the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes and for the preservation of farmland for agricultural and horticultural use and production.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

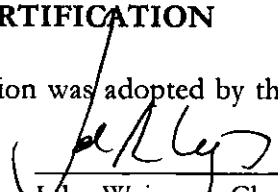
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The Highlands Council hereby supports the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 88 SCR 88 which proposes to amend Article VIII, Section II of the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and encourages support for this constitutional amendment from all parties interested in the protection and preservation of the Highlands Region and the resulting sustainability of clean and plentiful drinking water for over half the population of the State of New Jersey.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 15th day of May, 2008.



John Weingart, Chairman

**Vote on the Approval of
this Resolution**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Councilmember Alstede	✓			
Councilmember Calabrese				✓
Councilmember Carluccio	✓			
Councilmember Cogger	✓			
Councilmember Dillingham	✓			
Councilmember Kovach	✓			
Councilmember Letts	✓			
Councilmember Pasquarelli	✓			
Councilmember Peterson				✓
Councilmember Schrier	✓			
Councilmember Vetrano	✓			
Councilmember Way				✓
Councilmember Whitenack	✓			
Councilmember Weingart	✓			