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## **Four More Towns, First County Approved For Conformance with Highlands Plan**

CHESTER, N.J. – Today, at its sixth anniversary meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council continued its implementation of the Highlands Regional Master Plan by unanimously approving Petitions for Plan Conformance from four more municipalities. In addition, the Council approved a Conformance petition from Passaic County, the first Highlands County to be approved. The municipalities approved today are Mahwah Township in Bergen County, and Bethlehem Township, Califon Borough and Glen Gardner Borough in Hunterdon County.

In addition to these four, the Highlands Council previously approved Byram Township in Sussex County, Chester Township in Morris County, and Hampton Borough and Lebanon Borough in Hunterdon County.

“The Highlands Council and our partner municipalities are moving forward with more speed and efficiency,” Highlands Council Acting Chairman Jack Schrier said. “With each meeting we streamline the process, and are ready to move even more swiftly in 2011. In fact, we anticipate approving several additional towns at our January meeting.”

Fifty-nine of the 88 Highlands municipalities have submitted conformance petitions to the Highlands Council. These petitions include a great amount of detailed analysis of critical planning data and model ordinances and Master Plan elements to implement future planning. As of today, eight of these petitioning municipalities have been approved as “conforming” by the Highlands Council, with several more municipalities expected to be voted on at next month’s meeting.

Mahwah Township has 9,478 acres in the Preservation Area, where conformance to the Regional Master Plan is mandatory, and 7,067 acres in the Planning Area, where conformance is voluntary. The municipality petitioned to conform to the Regional Master Plan for both areas. Bethlehem

Township also opted to conform for its 1,141-acre Planning Area in addition to its 12,147 acres in the Preservation Area. Califon Borough, with 629 acres, and Glen Gardner Borough, 991 acres, are entirely in the Preservation Area. The eight conforming municipalities total 66,180 acres, with 54,118 acres in the Preservation Area and 12,063 acres in the Planning Area.

“It is critical to note that the Highlands Council has developed a model partnership with municipalities so that the data gathered for capacity-based planning has been verified by the municipality’s professionals,” Highlands Council Executive Director Eileen Swan said. “The success of the implementation to date is a reflection of the relationships forged between the municipalities and the regional planning agency.”

More information about the municipal petitions approved today can be found on the Highlands Council website:

Bethlehem Township:

[http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/bethlehem\\_twp.html](http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/bethlehem_twp.html)

Califon Borough:

[http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/califon\\_boro.html](http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/califon_boro.html)

Glen Gardner Borough:

<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/glengardner.html>

Mahwah Township:

<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/mahwah.html>

Passaic County’s Petition for Plan Conformance was the first County Petition to be considered by the Highlands Council. All seven Highlands counties are required by law to conform to the Regional Master Plan for their Preservation Area lands. The Passaic Petition was for its Preservation Area portion (Passaic County, which has 126,940 acres in total, has 83,852 acres in the Highlands Region; 78,789 acres, or 94 percent, are in the Preservation Area). Under the Highlands Act, counties are required to conform to the Regional Master Plan primarily concerning the development of county-owned lands and facilities. Passaic County has been a leader in county Plan Conformance and the Highlands Council today praised them for their work in preservation and comprehensive planning, which led to a streamlined process to conformance.

More information about Passaic County’s Petition for Plan Conformance can be found on the Highlands Council website at:

[http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/passaic\\_county.html](http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/passaic_county.html)

Today’s actions by the Highlands Council do not take effect until 10 business days after a copy of the minutes of the meeting have been delivered to the Governor to allow time for his review and consideration.