

Public comments on this document will accepted until January 7, 2027. Comments can be sent directly to the State Planning Commission via e-mail to ospmail@sos.nj.gov or mailed to State Planning Commission, c/o Walter C. Lane, Department of State, P.O. Box 820, Trenton, NJ 08625-0820.

Special Resource Application

Preamble

This is an application for regions which are seeking potential Special Resource Area (SRA) recognition in 2026. Note that significant changes were made to the final 2025 State Development and Redevelopment Plan (“State Plan”) which clarified the intent, purpose, and scope of SRAs.

Per the 2025 State Plan, “A Special Resource Area is an area or region with unique characteristics or resources of statewide importance, which are essential to the sustained wellbeing and function of its own region and other regions or systems—environmental, economic, and social—and to the quality of life for future generations.”

SRA recognition indicates the need for a regional vision and is intended to help an area stimulate and support collaborative regional planning efforts to work towards said vision. SRA recognition is intended to result in the SRA becoming legislatively mandated by statute, with its own regulatory authority to oversee regional planning and implementation strategies, but it would not preclude the implementation of existing laws and regulations including the State Planning Act and the Fair Housing Act. Please read through the “Regional Planning and Special Resource Areas” chapter of the State Plan (pp. 75-80) prior to completing this application to confirm your continued interest in SRA recognition.

Anyone may use this application to apply for SRA recognition. However, government entities that lead an application for SRA recognition must also include a resolution to transmit the completed application to OPA. Completing the application does not guarantee that the State Planning Commission (SPC) will move forward with SRA recognition. Refer to the SRA Guidelines (forthcoming) for more information about the SRA application review and recognition process. The SPC will make the final determination on whether an area is recognized as an SRA. Entities that are interested in regional planning efforts but do not meet the standard for formal SRA designation are invited to reach out to the Office of Planning Advocacy for help with facilitating regional coordination of planning efforts.

By submitting this application, all participating entities affirm that they plan to pursue a new, legislatively established authority for the proposed Special Resource Area.

Special Resource Area Application

SECTION A: Point of Contact

1. Who is completing this application?
Please include name, entity, job/function title, email address, and phone number.
2. What entities (both public and private) are participating in this application?
Please list each entity that is a party to this application.
3. Who is the primary point of contact for discussions concerning the potential SRA?
Please include name, entity, job/function title, email address, and phone number.

SECTION B: Identification

1. Describe the SRA being proposed. What is its location and what are its general features?
2. Please upload/include a map of the area seeking SRA recognition. The map must include both the boundaries of the proposed SRA and spatial information about the primary environmental, economic, and social features that would justify its recognition.
The boundaries of the proposed SRA should be limited to certain natural features (such as bodies of water or steep slopes) or manmade features (such as parcels, roads, trails, park boundaries, municipal boundaries, or county boundaries). Please include an ESRI geodatabase or similar spatial data for the proposed SRA.
3. What is the approximate size of the proposed SRA (in acres or square miles)?
4. Please list all the counties and municipalities that either intersect or are adjacent to the area for which SRA designation is sought.
5. Does the proposed SRA overlap with areas over which the State Planning Commission has no mapping jurisdiction, such as the Pinelands Area, Highlands Preservation Area, or Meadowlands?

SECTION C: Significance of Area

1. What features exist in the proposed SRA which are **unique** on a State-wide, national, or global scale? How are the features in this area (such as but not limited to economic activities, cultural and historic districts/programs, and regionally beneficial ecosystems) distinct from other similar features? How do these features contribute to the sustained wellbeing and function of other regions in the state?
2. What features exist in the proposed SRA which are **significant** on a State-wide, national, or global scale? What is the nature and known extent of this significance? How do these features (such as but not limited to major water supplies or regionally beneficial ecosystems) contribute to the sustained wellbeing and function of other regions in the state?
3. Please attach all relevant studies and reports pertaining to the economic, ecological, or social significance of this area. Reports must provide relevant factual data to justify (a) the type of Special Resource Area that is being requested, (b) the uniqueness and significance of the region, and (c) the reason or need for an additional planning authority in the proposed SRA. Refer to the USDA Forest Service's report titled "New York-New Jersey Highlands Regional Study: 2002 Update" for an example of the requisite thoroughness and scientific rigor.
4. Attach all letters/resolutions of support or non-support for SRA recognition, should any exist. Letters may come from entities including but not limited to: counties, municipalities, regional planning entities, non-profit organizations, and civic groups. Applicants are particularly encouraged to seek letters of support from municipalities and counties which are inside or adjacent to the proposed SRA.

SECTION D: Current Constraints and Resources

1. Please describe the current constraints, challenges, and/or threats the area faces, particularly those which would be ameliorated or improved by SRA recognition.
2. What entities currently have planning jurisdiction in this area?
3. Is any part of the proposed SRA in a Plan Endorsed jurisdiction? If so, why is additional recognition needed?
4. What are the prevailing Planning Areas in the proposed SRA? Why are these Planning Areas not sufficient to protect the identified features in the proposed SRA?
5. Please characterize relevant past planning efforts pertaining to the proposed SRA.
6. Does this area have a formal, existing regional vision? If so, please describe it.
7. Characterize the municipal zoning in the proposed SRA.
8. What are the existing policies, planning tools, and/or regulations that support the environmental, economic, or social features in the area?
9. What grants or programs currently support the protection and enhancement of these features?
10. Is there any past or ongoing litigation that impacts the proposed SRA? If so, please describe it.

SECTION E: Benefits of SRA Recognition

1. How would SRA recognition in this area benefit the sustained wellbeing and function of this area and other areas in the State?
2. Why is a new legislatively established planning authority needed for the area to meet its regional vision and planning goals?
3. Is the applicant looking for additional state incentives or support for regional planning within the desired SRA? If so, what support is desired? What benefits would these provide to residents within the region and across the state?

SECTION F: Additional Information

1. Is there any other information which the applicant would like to share with OPA or the SPC regarding the proposed SRA? Attach supporting documentation as needed.

SECTION G: Certification

By submitting this application, I affirm that the information included herein is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

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