



NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COALITION

Monthly Update

Volunteer Spotlight

Nick Homyak



Nick Homyak of Lake Hiawatha has been a long time environmental steward and Highlands Advocate. As one of our top Highlands Advocates, Nick regularly attends town meetings to urge the importance of Highlands Municipal Conformance while reporting back to us as our eyes on the ground. Nick became a Highlands Advocate during the Parsippany "Waterview" rezoning turmoil. Parsippany at the time was in a suspended state of regional conformance, idling, not advancing, into a better land

use Municipal Master Plan. ***“When I saw what I believed to be the subversion of grassroots democracy, I decided to learn more and speak up in an attempt to promote and make known the benefits of Master Plan Conformance.”*** Nick became engaged in learning about Highlands Conformance while watching the favoring of development in Parsippany not in the best interest of the community or future generations and not protecting water resources or preserving natural and scenic landscapes. ***“Clean water and good land use cannot be separated,”*** says Nick.

Some of Nick’s environmental achievements include:

- Working with the NJ Clean Air Council
- Work on the Indoor Air Quality Act
- Being a Union Steward
- Advocating for local land issues
- Serving as a National Park Service Volunteer since the 70’s
- Taking part in the establishment of Pyramid Mountain, Morris County Park
- Adopting a Green Acres “River Sensitive Area” where he abates litter



“The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act is a great achievement; it’s advances should be built upon, not ignored or diminished. Plan to the Land, not Land to the Plan. Water is life, nature keeps it clean. Nature also gives, we must become keepers of the garden.” –Nick Homyak

“The Main thing about being an advocate is caring, learning and

participating in some actual physical interchange among people and places; even if it's something basic, like litter abatement, attending public meetings or writing letters. Too much change is not good. The balance has already been tipped. Even our trashed landscapes somehow seem normal now and that is disturbing. -Nick Homyak

We would like to thank Nick for all of his hard work and his continued support of the NJ Highlands Coalition and the work we do. We look forward to working alongside Nick on many projects in the future to help preserve and protect NJ's pristine forests, precious natural resources and abundant clean water.

Policy Update

Good news from Trenton! On December 15, the Assembly voted in favor (48 yes, 25 no, 3 not voting, 4 abstain) of ACR-192, the Assembly Concurrent Resolution, finding that DEP violated the intent of the Highlands Act in proposing to amend the septic density standards of the Highlands Preservation Area Rules at NJAC 7:38. The amendments to these rules propose to reduce the minimum lot size for a new septic system on a forested lot in the Highlands Preservation Area from 88 acres to 22 acres. If the New Jersey Senate follows suit and passes the same resolution, then DEP will have 30 days to amend its rule proposal to be consistent with the Highlands Act. If DEP fails to do so, then by a second Concurrent Resolution (in both houses), the rule proposal is invalidated. On January 9 the Assembly Concurrent Resolution was received in the Senate and referred to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee for action. We understand the Senate Environment and Energy Chair, Senator Smith, is waiting for DEP to adopt the rule proposal before the Senate needs to act. DEP proposed the rule change on May 5, 2016, and must adopt the rule within one year or the rule proposal expires. This constitutionally enumerated authority of the Legislature to invalidate a state agency rule cannot be vetoed the Governor.



Highlands Council



Next Scheduled Meeting: February 16th, 2017 | 4 pm

100 North Road, Chester, NJ

The Highlands Council met Thursday, January 19th where they approved the *Authorization To Utilize The Draft Procedure For Considering Proposals To Amend The Highlands Regional Master Plan* resolution. This resolution outlines the process needed for any future amendments made to the RMP. Some highlights of the process include only a 30-day comment period and holding five public hearings within the Highlands Region and at least one in Trenton for amendments to the RMP. Despite much push back from commenters on the need for additional hearings in Highlands water-receiving parts of the State, this will be the process used for future amendments.

The February 2nd Highlands Council HDC Bank Board meeting was cancelled.

Highlands Council Info

Highlands Advocates Program

Upcoming Exclusive Advocates Seminar Feb. 15th!



On February 15th 7 PM at Willow Hall in Morristown we will be holding an exclusive seminar for our Highlands Advocates on Municipal Land Use Law. At the seminar, speakers Sandy Batty and Dave Peifer will discuss the following:

- Using the NJ Municipal Land Use Law to protect the environment in your community
- Understanding the municipal master plan and how it will shape your town's future
- Realizing the importance of public participation in local meetings, how to get involved, and how to get others to join you
- Linking the local process to Highlands protection goals

If you are interested in attending this seminar please contact us today to potentially become an advocate and take advantage of these exclusive opportunities.

Benefits of becoming an advocate:

- Access to webinars/seminars on environmental law and policy, science and current threats to the Highlands
- Be part of a network of other prominent environmental community members and fellow advocates
- Gain support of the NJ Highlands Coalition for your advocacy efforts in your Highlands' municipality

How to become an advocate:

Contact Our Outreach & Education Director, Sean Gilson at 973-588-7190 or email sean@njhighlandscoalition.org

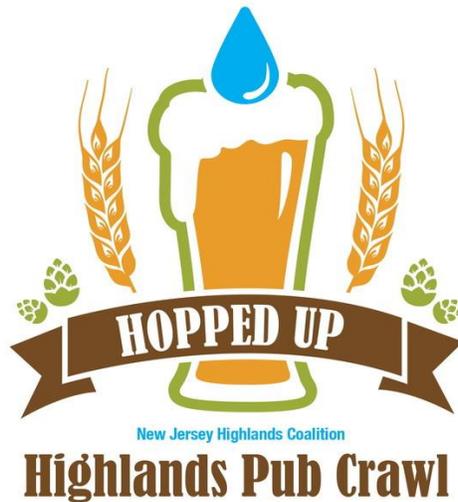
**3rd Annual
Lopatcong Creek Initiative**



As a partner in the Delaware River Watershed Initiative (DRWI), our Lopatcong Creek Initiative (LCI) continues to promote a watershed ethic in the communities that share land within the Lopatcong Creek watershed, in southwestern Warren County. New opportunities provided by Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program have enabled LCI to partner with Lopatcong and Phillipsburg Townships to explore sites and concepts for the implementation of green infrastructure demonstration projects. The LCI program is currently working with partners from North Jersey RC&D, Trout Unlimited, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation to agree on a series goals and objectives for Phase II of the DRWI. More information about LCI is on its [website](#) and on its [Facebook page](#).

Save the Date

Hopped Up Scavenger Pub Crawl in Hackettstown



On Earth Day at noon, our Hopped Up Scavenger Pub Crawl in Hackettstown starts at Manskirt Brewery. At this April 22 event, enjoy the specials being offered at each of the multiple participating locations by purchasing a ticket in advance for \$20 (plus Eventbrite fees) at [Eventbrite](#), or at Manskirt Brewery on the day for \$25. To sweeten the deal, we have fun and interactive trivia-challenges-clues at each bar, a Hopped Up Pub Crawl Scavenger Hunt, discounts on food and drink and a commemorative t-shirt.

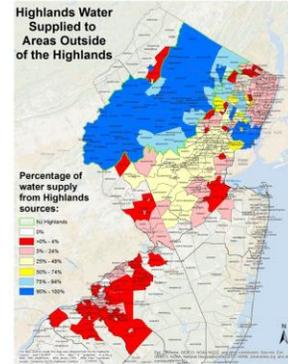
NJ Highlands Coalition 2nd Annual Golf Outing



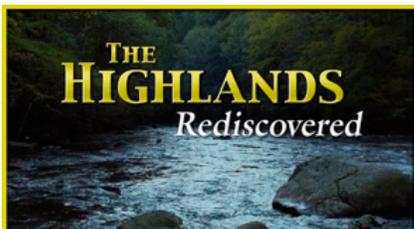
Mark your calendars for our 2nd Annual Golf Outing at Hawk Pointe Golf Club on Thursday, May 11th, 2017. Join us on the course with your foursome or as a gold, silver or platinum level sponsor! Learn more about our event and how to become a part of it with our [online brochure](#).

Uphold the Highlands Update

Our Uphold the Highlands program, which has garnered well over 100 municipalities', counties' and regional and local Environmental Commissions' support for the Highlands Act and Regional Master Plan, is moving into a new phase. We hugely appreciate those communities being open minded and taking the time to understanding and appreciate our efforts, even if sometimes they needed a little persuasion! We have not given up on the remaining communities which are still being pursued actively, albeit more slowly than earlier converts.



Our outreach has now expanded to other efforts seeking local and governmental support. We, of course, will still approach targeted towns outside the Highlands that receive water from the Highlands to approve our Resolution of Support for the Highlands Act. But now, we are working with the Keep It Green Campaign and SaveH2ONJ on resolutions advocating continued funding support for Open Space acquisition, and for the release of the long delayed New Jersey Water Supply Plan which was finished in 2011 but has not been released to the public for local and regional planning use. Communities as diverse as Bernardsville, Newark and my home town of Wharton have recently signed on to both of these resolutions. Political events both in Washington and here in New Jersey have made the local and regional governmental/political picture somewhat more than cloudy(!), but having met with officials inside and outside the Highlands in places like Stanhope and Paterson, we continue to promote the important economic and environmental values of the Highlands.



The Highlands Rediscovered Complimentary Screenings

We have been busy showing the NJN film "The

Highlands Rediscovered" and we would like to continue sharing this beautiful and informative film. We're happy to work with your organization (or an organization you know) if interested in hosting the New Jersey Highlands Coalition for a free screening of this film, followed by a short Q&A session. Just let us know where and when!

[Schedule a Screening](#)

FOLLOW US!

for the latest news and exclusive behind the scenes access to the NJ Highlands Coalition!



The New Jersey Highlands Coalition

represents a diverse network of organizations - small and large, local, regional, statewide and national - and individuals with the common goal to protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of drinking water both for the 850,000 people in the Highlands as well as the more than 5.4 million people in surrounding areas who depend on Highlands water. For more information visit our website.

Thank you for all of your support!

[\\$ Donate](#)

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