

# The Citizen of Morris County

## N.J. Highlands Coalition awards environmental grants

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**BOONTON** – Local grassroots organizations protecting water and other environmental resources and cultural and historic treasures in the [New Jersey Highlands](#), including one in Rockaway Borough, have been awarded grants up to \$5000 through the [New Jersey Highlands Coalition's](#) 2016 Small Grants Program.

The announcement was made and checks were presented on Oct. 5 at the N.J. Highlands Coalition's Annual Meeting at Villa Milagro Vineyards in the Finesville section of Pohatcong Township in Warren County, the southwestern tip of the New Jersey Highlands.

“This is the tenth year of our Small Grants Program for environmental organizations and the second year we have awarded grants to protect historic resources,” said Julia Somers, executive director of the N.J. Highlands Coalition.

“These grants are really seed money to help local residents get their activities off the ground, but it's the efforts of people who know and love their communities that have made this program a success for a decade.”

Listed below are the grassroots groups selected to receive 2016 grants that will help protect the Highlands resources that are the source of drinking water for 850,000 people in the Highlands and more than 6.2 million users outside the region who depend on Highlands water.

- Friends of the Musconetcong in Hampton Borough to retain an environmental professional to provide evidence that there is a regulated tributary to the Musconetcong River on a 77-acre site proposed for a development with more than 300 units. The development would include a sewer system that would discharge to groundwater in land that is part of the municipal well recharge area. The study would be used during the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection's permitting process.
- Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO) to hire a licensed site remediation professional (LSRP) to survey contamination on Stag Hill Mountain, where illegal commercial, industrial and residential trash dumping is rampant. Since 2011, MEVO has tried to remove this dumping, taking out 28 tons of tires and car metals, 17 tons of litter, and 5 tons of recycling.

Now the group wants to create a long-term strategic plan for addressing the illegal dumping, closing off-roading trails, and remediating the environment.

- Ringwood C.A.R.E.S. (Community Action to Restore Environmental Sustainability) to fund a Groundwater Education Day to teach the community about the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site, where a Ford factory dumped toxic waste, including lead paint and other dangerous materials. Adults and older children will get information from an expert while a childhood educator offers a hands-on activity to teach children about the dangers of groundwater pollution and its irreversible nature.
- Rockaway Borough Conservation Alliance to help the municipality acquire the Ogden Parcel, a two-acre lot that is a prime groundwater recharge area for the region and lies on top of all three municipal wells that supply drinking water to residents. This wooded lot, which soaks up stormwater for flood-prone adjacent areas, is under threat from potential developers. While the township would provide the purchase price, the citizens group would use the grant to help cover “soft” costs, such as surveys and legal fees for closing.
- Stop the Quarry Expansion to fight the rezoning of Federal Hill by Bloomingdale Borough to allow Tilcon Quarry to expand their mining operations into the adjacent Meer tract, 180 pristine, forested acres that contain endangered species, exceptional resource value wetlands and trout production streams. The expanded mining operations could also threaten the historically-significant site of the Pompton Mutiny, where General Washington’s troops mutinied in the winter of 1781.

Grassroots organizations are defined as non-governmental organizations with a total annual operating budget of less than \$200,000. Grants from the Highlands Coalition cannot be used for political purposes.

Grant applications had to meet at least one of five criteria, with the items at the top getting more weight than those below:

1. Focus on implementation of the Highlands Regional Master Plan, such as projects that identify, map or verify Highlands natural or cultural resources;
2. Establish a precedent advancing strong environmental or cultural protection in the Highlands ;
3. Assist an organization to fight against development in the Highlands that seriously threatens or damages natural or cultural resources;
4. Support capacity building of Highlands Region grassroots organizations;
5. Educate the public about Highlands cultural resources or water and other natural resources.

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition represents a diverse network of organizations working to protect the Highlands, ranging from small citizens groups working in one community to large state-wide organizations. The Coalition works to protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey

Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of the region's drinking water. More information is available at [www.njhighlandscoalition.org](http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org)