



## **Cultural Resources Policy New Jersey Highlands Coalition**

### **Formal basis of this policy**

**The Highlands Act and the Regional Master Plan specifically authorize the Highlands Council to protect historic resources, including scenic landscapes. (See Act, sections 6 (t), 10 (b)(4) and 9(c)4). The Regional Master Plan, (RMP) addresses “Historic , Cultural, Archaeological and Scenic Resources” in Chapter 3,Part 4 and in Chapter 5, “Programs”. However, the Council has been somewhat less than enthusiastic in its implementation efforts.**

### **Use of this policy**

This policy was created by the Cultural Resources Subcommittee of the Policy Committee of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition (NJHC). It is for use as an internal guide for the organization, in cases where cultural resources are involved. The purpose is to improve the protection of cultural resources in both the Preservation and Planning Areas of the Highlands. Such cases include, but are not limited to, instances where NJHC

- uses or appears at cultural resource sites, whether or not the sites are formally recognized or listed
- provides assistance or mentorship to other organizations
- chooses recipients of small grants
- works with or comments to the Highlands Council about cultural resource matters
- provides comments or assistance on the Highlands Council RMP

### **Principles supporting this policy**

New Jersey, the most densely-populated state in the United States, has a long history of human settlement, dating from prehistoric times. Human alterations of the plant and animal communities, soil systems, mineral resources, and landscapes have taken place in the Highlands (and statewide), and will continue in the future. New Jersey has a rich heritage of human cultural resources, both archaeological (above and below ground) and structural. The natural and built environments exist in concert. Each supports the other; neither stands alone. When people recognize these interrelationships, they can discover new and enriching ways of understanding our lives and the world we live in.

It is an important part of land use management to protect, narrate, and preserve the indicators of these relationships. The indicators, what we call “cultural resources,” include buildings, sites,

districts, structures, or objects that are significant in history, architecture, archaeology, culture, or science. Studies in this area can extend to cover a community's ethnic heritage and way of life.

These guidelines should help to provide understanding of cultural resources as they occur in NJHC work. They are designed to shape our attitudes, to broaden our awareness, to create caution and improve reflection as we pursue our hopes for implementation of the Highlands Act and its potential for protection.

### **Implementation of this policy: a checklist for users**

***1. Assume a cultural resource aspect of every case, until you have ruled it out.***

**2. Identify the resource**

What kind of resource is it? It could be not only a structure, but, for instance, a scenic landscape, a district in its setting, an item or assemblage of infrastructure, a commercial or industrial feature, or an above- or below-ground archaeological site.

**3. Why is the resource important?**

Formal determination of significance is a job for a technician, but reasonable estimates can be made by amateurs who consult local human and written sources and other public material. Investigating significance is crucial to the assessment of the resource. Many 'ordinary' or common features may be of great significance to a local community, although from a national or worldwide view they have less importance. The feature should be evaluated at all levels.

**4. What is the larger context of the resource?**

The importance of every cultural resource is a matter not only of its individual character but of its interrelations with the entire story of the culture. Review other fields for connections: eg. archaeology, architecture, biology, botany, climatology, ecology, education, ethnicity, geography, industrial history, land use policy and practice, landscape design, local, state, and national history, natural history, politics, pre-history, social history, transportation.

**5. How should the resource be treated?**

Review the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, Guidelines and Guidance at <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm> and adapt the principles of those recommendations to the case at hand.

Aim for the most respectful level of treatment that the resource deserves, to ensure the best protection.

In particular, bear in mind that cultural resources embody the story of our lives, and that the story must be told with intellectual accuracy, not distorted from its educational purpose by a temptation to be merely decorative, entertaining, or attractive by current standards, or to impose one's own taste on original material. Consult with NJHC members who are experienced in the field of historic preservation and in other relevant fields. Become familiar with mistakes that have been made in other, similar cases.