

## Benefits and Incentives for Highlands Plan Conformance

- **The Legal Shield and Legal Representation** – The Highlands Act provides a “strong presumption of validity” for local ordinances and provides opportunities for direct legal representation where needed.
- **Highlands Council Planning Grants, Smart Growth Grants and Technical Aid** – Grants are available for reasonable expenses associated with preparing conforming master plan and land use ordinances.
- **Council on Affordable Housing Obligations** – COAH is mandated under the Highlands Act to consider the Regional Master Plan (RMP) under all third round substantive certifications. In conforming municipalities, COAH obligations can be adjusted according to the RMP.
- **Tax Stabilization Funding** – The Act creates a Tax Stabilization Board, which will determine the compensation amount due to qualified municipalities for the decline in the aggregate true value of vacant land caused by the Highlands Act.
- **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Impact Fees and Enhanced Planning Grants** – Financial assistance is available for communities considering creating TDR receiving zones.
- **Priority for Green Acres and Farmland Funding** – The Highlands Act provides preservation funding opportunities for conforming municipalities.
- **Enforcement of the Regional Master Plan (RMP)** – The Act authorizes the Highlands Council to enforce the provisions of the RMP in conforming municipalities.
- **Stricter Land Use Provisions** – Any conforming municipality has the option to adopt stronger environmental standards and land use restrictions if these are more appropriate in that specific community. These stricter standards will be developed in coordination with the Highlands Council during the conformance period.
- **State Plan Endorsement** – All conforming municipalities will have the equivalent of State Plan endorsement.
- **Model Land Use Ordinances and Technical Guidance** – The Council will provide technical assistance in environmental science, planning and GIS services to assist with municipal and county conformance.

## How much water do you use in a day?

Would you believe more than 1,200 gallons?

The typical household uses 260 gallons of water a day, but it takes nearly 1,200 gallons per person per day to meet the needs of farmers, factories, electrical utilities, and many other organizations that make it possible for us to have food on our table, a computer on our desk and power for our home.



## New Jersey Highlands Coalition

**Our Mission** is to advocate for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the water, forests, wildlife, farmland and other natural, historic and cultural resources of the New Jersey Highlands, and to enhance the sustainability of natural and human communities and the quality of life for current and future generations.

Specifically, our focus is on:

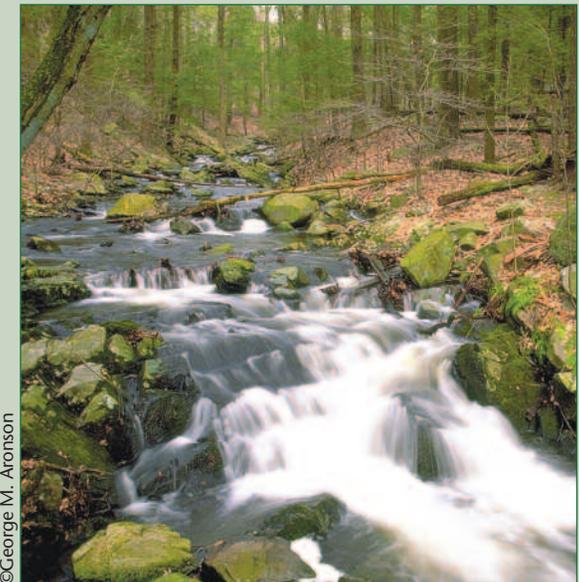
- Safeguarding the water resources, ecological integrity, and biodiversity of the New Jersey Highlands.
- Promoting the development and implementation of a strongly protective Highlands Regional Master Plan.
- Ensuring strict application of the NJ DEP's Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and other regulations.
- Increasing local, state, federal and private sources of funding for land conservation and stewardship in the region, and promoting better planning, growth management and land acquisition strategies.
- Educating the public and decision-makers on, and serving as an information source for, New Jersey Highlands preservation and protection issues.
- Mobilizing individuals and organizations into a strong alliance to protect, preserve and enhance the New Jersey Highlands.

Contact the New Jersey Highlands Coalition:  
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Phone: 973-588-7190 Fax: 973-588-7193  
info@njhighlandscoalition.org  
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## Considering Highlands Plan Conformance in Your Community

*A primer on balancing resource protection with livable, enjoyable, prosperous and healthy communities in the Highlands Region.*



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## Working Together

**Municipal, County and regional partnerships** allow environmental and water resources to be better protected by looking at issues from a much larger point of view. Coordination between municipalities, counties and across the region allows all interested parties to participate in resource protection and bring different interests to bear.

The **Highlands Regional Master Plan** provides the opportunity to work with neighboring municipalities and counties.

The Highlands Regional Master Plan also provides the data and science to support sound land use decisions in your community. Conforming to the Regional Master Plan protects your community from “builder’s remedy” lawsuits and other legal challenge by providing local ordinances with a strong presumption of validity in the State of New Jersey. Where needed, the **Highlands Council** will provide direct legal representation.



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## Addressing the Challenges of Tomorrow

**Serving Communities** – From private, individual wells to municipal and county water supply systems, we all rely on clean and plentiful drinking water for our homes, businesses and municipal services, such as police, fire and EMS.

**Helping Farmers** – Eighty percent of the water consumed in the United States is used to irrigate crops, feed livestock and support other agricultural uses. Clean and plentiful drinking water in the Highlands supports local farm markets and helps keep the “Garden” in the Garden State.

**Economic Growth** – Clean and plentiful drinking water serves our State’s three largest industries and ensures that our economy remains strong. Even when these businesses are located outside of your community, they support the local economy by providing jobs, goods and services. Economic growth and expansion cannot occur without ready supplies of drinking water.

**Value to the Environment** – Good land use practices not only ensure clean air, water and soil for the local community. They help support the larger eco-systems of New Jersey, including our valued wetlands, Threatened and Endangered Species and the water quality in our rivers and streams, and help prevent downstream flooding and pollution.

**Quality of Life** – Preserving lands that help protect our water supply not only retains many of the natural resources necessary to our survival but also helps preserve the scenic character and historic heritage of the Highlands for all to enjoy.



Morris Land Conservancy

## Taking the First Step

### Available Grant Programs

The Highlands Council has an active grants program to provide funds for projects that promote the goals of the Highlands Act or further the Regional Master Plan (RMP).

### Open Grant Programs

The Highlands Council is currently accepting applications for four categories of grants:

- Initial Assessment Grants
- COAH Planning Grants
- Agriculture Grants
- TDR Feasibility Grants

### Initial Assessment Grants

The Initial Assessment Grant Program (IAG) will fund preliminary municipal and county Plan Conformance activities for lands within the Preservation Area, where Plan Conformance is mandatory, as well as in the Planning Area, where Plan Conformance is voluntary. These grants allow local jurisdictions to engage their professionals to assess the requirements and benefits of Plan Conformance. For 2008, the Highlands Council has allocated \$1.5 million for the IAG Program.

Receipt of an IAG does not obligate municipalities or counties to conform to the RMP with respect to lands in the Planning Area. Furthermore, receipt of an IAG will not prevent an applicant from applying for additional grants after the adoption of the RMP by the Highlands Council, or for other future grant programs that may be offered by the Highlands Council.

**How to Apply:** Municipalities and counties interested in the Highlands Council’s existing grant programs should contact the New Jersey Highlands Council office at 908-879-6737 or [highlands@highlands.state.nj.us](mailto:highlands@highlands.state.nj.us).



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