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To: New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

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From: Erica Van Auken, Campaign and Grassroots Coordinator, NJ Highlands Coalition

### **Petition for Plan Conformance: Town of Phillipsburg**

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition supports Phillipsburg's petition for plan conformance. Phillipsburg's petition includes many elements that will complement the goal of becoming a Highlands Center. The proposal to designate the entire municipality as a Highlands Center is sensible as Phillipsburg is nearly built out. This proposal coupled with the Sustainable Economic Development Plan, the Conservation Plan Element and the Development Transfer Plan Element demonstrates that Phillipsburg is going to consider all aspects of growth when planning the future of their town.

We are pleased to see that the Highlands Council will be initiating coordination between Phillipsburg's neighboring towns of Pohatcong, Lopatcong, Greenwich, and Alpha to ensure the availability of water and wastewater treatment in the region. Although it would be above and beyond conformance to the RMP, we think it would be greatly beneficial for Phillipsburg to also coordinate its plans with Easton across the Delaware River in Pennsylvania. We hope that the town and the Council will address traffic issues and transit opportunities as Phillipsburg and its neighboring towns move forward with development and redevelopment.

We would be remiss if we overlooked the concerns of Karst particularly in the southwestern region of the Highlands. Phillipsburg's proposal to become a town-wide Highlands Center could be problematic if the issue of extensive Karst is not addressed through careful inspection and Karst-specific mitigation techniques.

We thank the Highlands Council for this opportunity to submit comments.