

New Jersey Highlands Coalition issues 2015 Capstone Award

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The New Jersey Highlands Coalition in Boonton issued its 2015 Capstone Award to Eileen Swan, former executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council on Wednesday, Oct. 14, at its annual meeting. Swan was cited in the award for her innovative leadership and her bold stand against political interference in the Highlands.

Also receiving the coalition's Leadership and Vision Awards were State Senator Nia Gill for her long-term commitment to the protection of the Highlands Region, her stance against political interference and her defense of Democratic principles; Edward Lloyd, Esq., director of the Columbia Law School Environmental Law Clinic, for his commitment to New Jersey's environment and his tireless advocacy for the Highlands; and to former Mayor John Graefe, of Bethlehem Township, for his effective leadership as mayor and committeeman promoting municipal conformance with the Highlands Master Plan and his ongoing commitment to the long term protection of the Highlands.

The Highlands Coalition also presented its annual Wilma Frey Volunteer Award to Rilda and Basil Hone, of Tewksbury Township, for their decades of volunteering which has been surpassingly effective in protecting the environment and the character of their Highlands community.

Also receiving the Wilma Frey Volunteer Award was John Gattuso of New Jersey Environment News for providing an informative and extremely valuable compilation of environmental news and information which has proved to be essential to the whole state.

Presenting these awards was Julia Somers, executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition; John Thonet, of Pittstown, president of the Board of Trustees; Candace McKee Ashmun, of Bernards Township, trustee and policy committee chair; Cinny MacGonagle, of

Bethlehem Township and George Cassa, of Tewksbury Township, trustees; and Elliott Ruga, of Boonton Town, policy director.

According to Somers, "Each of these award recipients has had an extraordinary impact on Highlands protection. Their recognition is a reminder that it takes many voices to protect our environment, our culture and our landscapes. Their perseverance, often against great odds, ensures that their voices are heard and everyone benefits. We owe them a great debt of gratitude."