

Date: July 20, 2011

To: New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

c/o chris.danis@highlands.state.nj.us

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

Borough of Alpha Petition for Plan Conformance

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition supports the Borough of Alpha's petition for plan conformance. We encourage the Council to consider all of the hard work done by the Borough to conform to the Highlands Act and the Regional Master Plan and to approve their petition.

We especially support the effort to coordinate plan conformance and center designation regarding the available capacity of the Phillipsburg Sewerage Treatment Plant with Alpha's neighbors: Pohatcong, Phillipsburg, Greenwich, and Lopatcong. Local planning across municipalities in an area with limited resources is smart and insightful and we fully support these plans as long as the plans are designed within the existing available capacity of the Phillipsburg STP. We do not support the development of projects that will add further stress to water/wastewater systems.

We are pleased to see that Alpha's proposed center abuts Pohatcong's and that both areas are comparably developed, so that one town's fields are not adjacent to another town's heavily developed sites.

We recognize that the southwestern portion of the proposed designated center was the most viable location even though it is a forested area (according to the Interactive Map) that contains a body of water. The area around the lake is denoted as important farmland soil, even though there is a seemingly heavy presence of trees. The Coalition requests that the forested area around the lake remain within the required 300' buffer zone in regards to future development.

We recognize that the other potential areas for the designated center had more environmental restrictions and would have been more inappropriate for development than the proposed site.

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