



**NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COALITION**

508 Main Street, Boonton, New Jersey 07005

973-588-7190 (office)/973-588-7193 (fax)

[www.njhighlandscoalition.org](http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org)

For Immediate Release:

April 6th, 2020

Contact:

Julia Somers

973-588-7190 (office)

## **Citizens Groups Can Get Grants to Fund Protection of Environmental and Cultural Treasures in the NJ Highlands**

BOONTON, N.J. - Local grassroots citizen groups protecting water and other environmental resources or preserving cultural and historic treasures in northern New Jersey's Highlands Region are encouraged to apply for grants up to \$5000 through the New Jersey Highlands Coalition's 2020 Small Grants Program.

Applications must be received by June 22, 2020. Grants will be presented on October 14 at the N.J. Highlands Coalition's Annual Meeting.

"Local citizens groups are the heart and soul of the Highlands Coalition," said Julia Somers, the Coalition's Executive Director. "They are our eyes and ears in the 88 Highlands municipalities and provide an early warning about inappropriate development or the loss of historic treasures. Our grants prime the pump for funding their battles to protect the water supply depended on by 70 percent of New Jersey's residents."

Historic projects include "brick-and-mortar" projects for specific historic sites or districts. This is the fourteenth year of the Coalition's Small Grants Program for environmental projects and the sixth year for projects that protect cultural, historic, and archaeological resources in the Highlands, an important part of the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

Grassroots groups who received grants in the past say that getting expertise and information from established groups was as valuable as the funding. “Joining the NJ Highlands Coalition was one of the best decisions our group made very early on,” said Silvia Solaun of NJ Forest Watch/Friends of Sparta Mountain, a grant recipient in 2019. “There is so much to know and learn, and attending the monthly Policy Committee meetings provided an incredible opportunity to share ideas and to assist in the collaboration of creating environmental policies.”

“Our group was formed when we discovered an application for a Recycling plant close to Spruce Run Reservoir,” said Tom Koven of Citizens for Sustainable Planning in Bethlehem (Hunterdon). “We needed to intervene fast. We had little knowledge of how to organize a non-profit group and had to find funds to hire an attorney. The Highlands Coalition took us under their umbrella and the Small Grants Committee gave us a grant.”

Grassroots organizations are defined as non-governmental organizations with a total annual operating budget of less than \$200,000. It is not necessary that the organization be incorporated, but to be eligible to apply for a grant, an organization must be a current member of the Coalition. Instructions to join are available on our website. Grants from the Highlands Coalition cannot be used for political purposes.

A grassroots group may apply for one or more grants, either environmental, cultural or components of both. But the total amount requested by any one organization cannot exceed \$5000.

Grant applications should meet at least one of the following five criteria, with the items at the top getting more weight than those below:

1. Focus on implementation of the Highlands Regional Master Plan, such as projects that identify, map or verify Highlands natural or cultural resources;
2. Establish a precedent advancing strong environmental or cultural protection in the Highlands ;
3. Assist an organization to fight against development in the Highlands that seriously threatens or damages natural or cultural resources;
4. Support capacity building of Highlands Region grassroots organizations;
5. Educate the public about Highlands cultural resources or water and other natural resources.

Applicants are advised to view the full guidelines for the program on the Coalition’s website, particularly for cultural and historic grant components which have very detailed requirements. Go to [www.njhighlandscoalition.org](http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org). On the menu bar at the top, place your cursor on “Programs,” then click “Small Grants” in the dropdown menu. To join the Coalition, place cursor on “Join Us,” then click on “Organization Membership.”

Applicants seeking more information can contact Julia Somers at 973-588-7190 or [julia@njhighlandscoalition.org](mailto:julia@njhighlandscoalition.org)

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition represents a diverse network of organizations working to protect the Highlands, ranging from small citizens groups working in one community to large state-wide organizations. The Coalition works to protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of the region’s drinking water upon which 6.2 million people depend. More information is available at [www.njhighlandscoalition.org](http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org)

# # # #