



## **NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COALITION**

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For Immediate Release

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### **Grants Available to Local Citizens Groups Fighting to Protect Environmental and Cultural Treasures in NJ Highlands**

BOONTON, N.J. – The New Jersey Highlands Coalition has announced the availability of grants up to \$5,000 for local citizens’ groups fighting to protect the natural or cultural resources of the Highlands. Past funding has supported groups opposing unwise development proposals such as million square-foot warehouses on prime farmland, or trying to prevent the logging of large trees in our maturing forests that are storing atmospheric carbon and serving as our best defense against climate change.

Applications for the 2023 Small Grants Program must be received by June 1, 2023. Grants will be presented on October 11 at the N.J. Highlands Coalition’s 2023 Annual Meeting.

“Our Small Grants Program is one of the unique strengths of the Highlands Coalition,” said Julia Somers, Executive Director. “We work at the state and regional levels, but most members of our coalition are from local grassroots groups who are in touch with breaking issues in their communities. They’re our early warning system.”

The grants can also go to historic projects that include “brick-and-mortar” projects for specific historic sites or districts. This is the seventeenth year of the Coalition’s Small Grants Program for environmental projects and the ninth year for projects that protect cultural, historic, and archaeological resources in the Highlands, an important part of the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

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. To be eligible to apply for a grant, an organization must become a member of the Coalition, but dues are as low as \$20 a year. 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.

Projects covered by the grant should meet at least one of the following five criteria, with the items at the top getting more weight than those below:

1. Projects that focus on developing a stronger Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), and/or implementation of the RMP. For example, projects that identify, map, or verify mapped Highlands natural or cultural resources or monitor the implementation of RMP standards at the local level; projects that advocate for and result in municipal conformance with the RMP;
2. Projects that would establish a precedent, advancing strong environmental or cultural protection in the Highlands. For example, hiring a consultant to help achieve the most environmentally protective decision by NJDEP, the Highlands Council, or other regulatory bodies on a Highlands matter, or for meeting local affordable housing needs;
3. Projects that may not help set a precedent, but would assist an organization to fight against a development in the Highlands Region – such as residential, commercial, agribusiness projects, etc. – that seriously threatens or damages natural or cultural resources in the Region;
4. Projects that support capacity building of Highlands Region grassroots organizations, for example, a membership mailing, a strategic planning exercise, a workshop, conference or public educational event, etc.;
5. Projects that educate about Highlands water and resources, and/or increase public awareness of the use and conservation of Highlands water.

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/small-grants](http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org/small-grants) for more information. To join the Coalition, place click “Donate,” check “Make this gift on behalf of an organization” and join with your \$20 (non-voting) or \$30 (voting) membership contribution.

Applicants seeking more information are encouraged to contact Julia Somers at 973-588-7190 or [julia@njhighlandscoalition.org](mailto:julia@njhighlandscoalition.org). She welcomes your call.

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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)