

New Jersey Highlands Council **Letter 52**

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Web Response

I believe the Highlands Act of 2004 is putting a severe financial hardship on my family of four. We bought our property in 2001 and slowly began restoring the present house and cleaning up the land after it was foreclosed upon. Not having a lot of money, we built our house slowly with the intention of selling at least one property lot off to pay for an addition if needed when we had our children. Before we hardly were settled in, the Highlands Act went through and we lost the right to subdivide anything. Apparently only huge landowners have retained the right to sell off any property under the Highlands Act. I have looked into selling our entire property and leaving NJ only to be told that our land value is all but worthless as far as real estate is concerned. Although I have applied and have been allocated for HDC credits, the program seems to be going nowhere. This act has stolen our property value and it has NEVER been addressed. I do not know how long we can stay in this house which is too small for our family. SO shameful to think I will need to leave an area which my family has been for the last three generations. I agree with protecting NJ's absolute beautiful natural assets. I agree with preserving woodlands and farmlands. Without some protection, they would slowly succumb to urban sprawl which is far more financially profitable than saving natural resources in short term. The Highlands properties are full of wildlife, reptiles and trees that are hundreds of years old. The streams that run through these lands are full of life that need our protection. However, I cannot be the one left alone to financially support another area of the state that is benefiting from our clean resources since already soiling their own. This is the garden state with soil that can support agriculture for generations to come. But, in many areas, that is too late. I actually hope the Highlands Act keeps seriously protecting resources but HAS to be subsidized somehow. The politicians in this area apparently caught wind of this act being passed before us general public people since a couple of them immediately subdivided property before 2004 and got a lot of it on the market. I find this whole thing a bit hard to swallow after living this nightmare for 10 years. I am bitter because my family is crammed into this house and scraping by since loans are hard to come by in this recession and our plan to just sell one lot to keep us financially stable fell apart so fast. I am just one opinion but I am hoping that someone can see that although the intentions are honorable, the way value was stolen without concern is questionable. Thank you. Melissa Zikas

Respondent

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