

New Jersey Highlands Council **Letter 64**

OT	S	RT	DT	EA	F	RI	CE

Attributes

Response Type:	1 - Letter
Delivery Type:	W - Web-based submission
IP Address:	[REDACTED]
Form Letter:	

Web Response

I tried to read the RMP, I really did. I'm not stupid, and I read government regulations all the time in my business, so I know how to read these kinds of things. The Highlands Regional Master Plan, as a plan, is virtually useless. Anyone trying to understand what needs to be done and how the Highlands Council will do those things has the massively daunting task of wading through a rambling collection of texts about various and sundry agendas that are often only tangentially related to the core purposes of the plan. The typical reader, to whom the RMP must be understandable, cannot find an actual plan in the document without unnecessary difficulty. Parkinson's Law says that bureaucracies primarily exist to perpetuate themselves. If they accomplish any of the real goals and objectives set for them in the first place, it is usually entirely by accident. The RMP is an example of how the Highlands Council staff perpetuates itself by obfuscating their mission and workings by operating with a hopelessly complicated document that calls itself a plan. By obfuscating the actual plan, the only ones who can work with the plan are the insider bureaucrats who are then in a position to bully those subject to their regulations into things that may or may not actually relate to the stated purposes and mandates of the Highlands Act. A plan should show a clear path of action to the reader, not provide a soapbox for narrow agendas and special interests. It should not provide a bureaucratic structure that can perpetuate itself and operate beyond its actual legal responsibilities. As an example, the Highlands Development TDR program, still not fully functional since its inception in 2008, is an overly complicated program that is technically supposed to give a means of compensating those whose property values were significantly impacted by the restrictions placed on development by the Highlands Act. Clearly, those property owners should have been compensated. The Act says so. The compensation should have been implemented by a straightforward, direct program to have the State of New Jersey pay the property owners for their losses. That is what the Act says should happen. Instead, obfuscation and byzantine bureaucracy. The document should be entirely rewritten, focusing on the actual responsibilities that the Highlands Act mandates. Clear attention should be paid to the responsibilities already handled by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the various water quality management bodies in the counties in the Highlands Region. That the Highlands Council did not implement the needs of the Highlands Act through the existing NJ DEP, county, and municipal bodies to a much greater extent is most unfortunate for the people of New Jersey.

Respondent

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Created On	3/10/2015 10:08:00 AM