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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Highlands Council Approves New Grants

\$275,000 in Planning Assistance Awarded To Municipalities

CHESTER, N.J. – The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council approved five Initial Assessment Grants of \$15,000 each at yesterday's meeting, bringing the total number of grants approved to 18 municipalities in the Highlands Region.

The grants can be used by municipalities with lands in the Preservation Area, where conformance is mandatory, to initiate the planning required by the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Municipalities with lands in the Planning Area, where conformance is voluntary, can use the grants to assess the requirements and benefits of Plan Conformance as they determine if they will opt into conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The grants also are available to the seven counties with lands in the Highlands Region.

At yesterday's meeting, the Council adopted a resolution awarding grants of no more than \$15,000 each to Byram Township, Greenwich Township, Mendham Borough, Union Township and the Borough of Wanaque.

To date, the Council has approved Initial Assessment Grants to eighteen municipalities in the Highlands Region. In addition to the five municipalities awarded grants yesterday, the Council has awarded grants to Alexandria Township, Bethlehem Township, Bloomsbury Borough, Hampton Borough, and Lebanon Township in Hunterdon County; Chester Township and Mt. Olive Township in Morris County; Ringwood Borough and West Milford Township in Passaic County; Bedminster Township in Somerset County; Franklin Township and Hopatcong Borough in Sussex County; and Lopatcong Township in Warren County.

The Highlands Council allocated \$1.5 million in 2008 for its Initial Assessment Grant program, and so far has awarded more than \$275,000 to over 20 percent of the 88 Highlands municipalities. Sixteen of the eighteen grants approved for these municipal lands comprise more than 40 percent of the lands in the Preservation Area.

More information about the Highlands Council's grant programs can be found at <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/stake/municipalities.html>.