



JON S. CORZINE
Governor

State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
100 North Road (Route 513)
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322
(908) 879-6737
(908) 879-4205 (fax)
www.highlands.state.nj.us



JOHN R. WEINGART
Chairman

EILEEN SWAN
Executive Director

Contact: Nancy Benecki, Manager of Communications
(908) 879-6737 ext. 105 or nancy.benecki@highlands.state.nj.us

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Highlands Council Releases Draft Of New Map Series For The Highlands Region

Chester, NJ - The Highlands Council today released to the public a draft of its new Land Use Capability Map Series for the Highlands Region. The series of maps includes an updated regional zone map, as well as four other maps that outline water and wastewater capabilities for the Highlands Region. The Land Use Capability Map Series includes the following maps:

- Land Use Capability Zone Map
- Land Use Capability Water Availability Map
- Land Use Capability Public Community Water Systems Map
- Land Use Capability Domestic Sewerage Facilities Map, and
- Land Use Septic System Yield Map

The Zone Map will guide land use and conservation efforts in the Region by identifying the location of the primary overlay zones – the Protection Zone, the Conservation Zone and the Existing Community Zone. The Zone Map also includes three new sub-zones within the Existing Community Zone and Conservation Zone. The Lake Community Zone along with the Environmental Constrained Sub-Zones within the Conservation Zone and the Existing Community Zone identifies additional constrained lands in the Highlands Region.

The Land Use Capability Map Series was developed by using the Highlands Council's Land Use Analysis Decision Support (LANDS) model, which has the ability to represent indicators, capacities and constraints at a scale of one-twentieth of an acre (or 2,500 square feet, in 50 ft. by 50 ft. cells). The LANDS model includes more than 50 data layers that have been refined as a direct response to suggestions raised during the public comment period for the first draft of the Highlands Council's Regional Master Plan. Additional information on water usage and availability, sewerage facilities, and

septic system yields was developed by the Highlands Council with the assistance of federal and State agencies and county and local governments.

“The amount of information available through this map series is amazing because it was developed for regional planning, but it is also extremely detailed,” said John Weingart, Chairman of the Highlands Council. “These maps are a tool for more effective local and regional planning because they allow us to address land capability and capacity throughout the Highlands and see how one decision can affect the entire area.”

The maps also allow for a better portrait of areas for potential development and redevelopment. The map series identifies areas within the Highlands Region that may be able to support additional development but may have water supply or sewerage constraints that could be addressed through local planning. These efforts will continue to guide future development away from environmentally sensitive and agricultural areas while utilizing existing infrastructure and making it more efficient.

“In areas where sewerage or water supplies already are at capacity, that does not necessarily mean there can be no future development,” said Eileen Swan, Executive Director of the Highlands Council. “On the contrary, municipalities that come into conformance with the Regional Master Plan will be prioritized to receive state and federal funding to make infrastructure upgrades and improvements to water treatment facilities so water delivery and treatment is as efficient as possible.”

As municipalities and counties enter into the Highland Council’s Plan Conformance process, more detailed information about local land use, water use and supply will be incorporated from local governments and utilities. In areas where water deficits are identified, local governments will be provided grant funds from the Highlands Council to develop a strategic approach in a Water Management Plan to address these shortages.

Starting today, the draft Land Use Capability Map Series will be available for download and viewing at the New Jersey Highlands Council’s Web site, www.highlands.state.nj.us.

About the Highlands Council

In August 2004, the New Jersey Legislature enacted the Highland Water Protection and Planning Act in order to protect nearly 860,000 acres which supply drinking water for more than sixty-five percent of New Jersey’s residents. The Highlands Act created the Highlands Council as a regional planning entity charged with protecting the water resources and natural beauty of the New Jersey Highlands while allowing for planned, sustainable development and redevelopment of the region. The Council members include a broad and representative range of elected officials from Highlands municipalities and counties, as well as individuals with diverse backgrounds and area perspectives.

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