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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Comment Period Begins on Highlands Regional Master Plan

Three public hearings have been scheduled for February 2008

CHESTER, N.J. – The 90-day public comment period for the Highlands Regional Master Plan (Final Draft 2007) begins with the publication of the Regional Master Plan and technical addenda on the Highlands Council’s web site and the scheduling of three public hearings in the Highlands Region.

“The Final Draft of the Regional Master Plan is an exciting example of regional planning in New Jersey,” said John Weingart, Chairman of the Highlands Council. “The Council members and staff have worked hard to prepare a plan will protect, enhance and restore the valuable resources of the Highlands as required by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. While this draft plan already reflects changes suggested by the public during the Council’s many hearings and lengthy comment period earlier this year, we wanted to provide another opportunity for input. We invite the public including interested stakeholders to review the new final draft and suggest potential improvements for the Council to consider before adopting the Regional Master Plan.”

The Final Draft Regional Master Plan (RMP) is both much more complete and better organized than the Council’s 2006 Draft RMP. By developing a new Land Use Capability Map Series with five maps, identifying zones, water availability, water supply and wastewater utility capacity and septic system yields, the Highlands Region has been depicted in a more detailed manner. Approximately 75 percent of the Highlands Region (more than 643,000 acres of the nearly 860,000 acres) is now in areas of environmental sensitivity. Importantly, significant portions of the Planning Area are designated as having environmentally sensitive lands – more than 270,000 acres of the 445,000 acres of the Planning Area. In addition, the Council believes readers will find the Final Draft much easier to follow to determine the policies and implications for particular municipalities, counties and areas.

Three public hearings for the RMP have been scheduled for the following times and dates:

- **February 6, 2008** from 4 p.m. to end of public comment at the Morris County Haggerty Education Center, 53 East Hanover Avenue, Morristown, NJ.
- **February 11, 2008** from 6 p.m. to end of public comment at the Passaic County Community College, One College Blvd., Paterson, NJ.
- **February 13, 2008** from 6:30 p.m. to end of public comment at the Voorhees High School, 256 County Rt. 513, Glen Gardner, NJ.

There is no pre-registration at these sessions and the public comment period will officially close on February 28, 2008. Comments may be submitted directly to the Highlands Council's Web site at <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/> or by e-mail: RMPCComments@highlands.state.nj.us.

Written comments should be sent via regular mail by February 28, 2008 to:

Attn: Final Draft RMP Comments
Highlands Council
100 North Road – Route 513
Chester, NJ 07930

“One of the most important lessons we learned after releasing the first draft of the Regional Master Plan was the wide variety of perspectives and viewpoints held by the public about the Highlands and the value of reading or listening to every comment,” said Eileen Swan, Executive Director of the Highlands Council. “In the course of developing this plan, we held numerous Council meetings, work sessions and public hearings to gain insight from staff, state agencies and other stakeholders regarding various elements of the Plan. Because the response we received the first time was so great, we know that public’s input on the Plan will only improve the final Plan.”

To view the Highlands Regional Master Plan - Final Draft November 2007 and the accompanying technical report addenda and Land Use Capability Series maps, visit:
<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/master/index.html>.

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