



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

DANTE DI PIRRO  
Executive Director

## Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Patty Sly (908) 879-6737 ext 104

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### Highlands Council Revises Schedule

Chester, NJ- The Highlands Council has issued a revised schedule for the release of the draft regional master plan. Stating that the plan is “so important we need to get it right,” Council Chairman John Weingart has restructured the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting to allow time for additional public comment and to address several policy issues. The Council will then meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup> to address remaining issues and review parts of the proposed draft plan. The vote to release the draft plan is expected at the November 30<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Council has been functioning under an aggressive timetable, meeting weekly since the beginning of September, to discuss the 18 key policies that will define the plan. The new timetable will allow the Council to tackle several key issues in the broader context and take public comment before moving to the draft plan’s release. Council Chairman Weingart went on to say that, “During the work sessions it was necessary for the Council to have uninterrupted blocks of time to consider the many factors that must be addressed by the regional master plan. This revised schedule will allow us to hear from the public and refine the Plan before formally proposing it for widespread public review.”

“Protecting our water supply is our primary concern and we cannot let haste compromise the plan’s quality,” said Executive Director Dante Di Pirro, who said we’re in the final sprint at the end of a marathon. He explained that the plan is multifaceted with the 18 critical elements factoring in to the final product, making plan development a complex and important undertaking. “We are sensitive to the impact the timing has on our stakeholders and believe in the end that the short additional time will be reflected in a better plan.”

Anyone who wishes to speak to the Council at its October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting will be provided time to do so. The meeting will start at 10:00 am. Following the release of the draft plan, the Council will hold 6 public hearings around the region and in Trenton.

*In August 2004, the New Jersey Legislature enacted the Highland Water Protection and Planning Act in order to protect over 850,000 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 fifteen 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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