

HIGHLANDS COUNCIL CHARRETTE
Cultural/Historic/Scenic Resource Preservation
Tourism and Recreation

ATTENDEES:

Brian Morrell, Canal Society of New Jersey
Marion Harris, Morristown Historic Preservation
Julia Somers, Great Swamp Watershed Association
Kathy Murphy, Mt. Olive Township
Bill Drew, West Milford Township
Paul Bailey, West Milford Township Tourism Commission
Bill O’Hearn, Highlands Coalition
Bill Foelsch, New Jersey Recreation & Park Society
Edward Lenik, Sheffield Archaeological Consultants
Ian Burrow, Hunter & Associates
Robert Barth, Canal Society of New Jersey
Jennifer Zorn, Bikers for Open Space
Lauren Moore, NJ Department of Commerce
Rob Sparkes, Friends of Long Pond Ironworks
Michael Van Clef, Ecological Solutions
Kathie Gonick, NJ Pinelands Commission

Dorothy Guzzo, Facilitator, SHPO
Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Highlands Council
Ross MacDonald, Highlands Council, recorder 2nd day
Laura Szwak, Highlands Council, recorder, 1st day

First Day—March 28, 2006

Note: Any statement with a HC indicates that the participants suggested that the Highlands Council take the lead. Numbers in () indicate the amount of votes or dots that suggestion received from the first day’s vote.

Problem Statement 1: How do we identify historic, cultural, aesthetic, scenic and recreation resources in the Highlands region given that many are unknown and some private landowners are reluctant to volunteer presence of resources on their properties?

- Reach out to groups to collect data from constituent organizations, i.e. trails in the Highlands (2)
- Take advantage of data that already exists, such as DEP (GIS) natural resource data to identify scenic areas & lands to preserve. “Externalize” or share DEP data. (1)
- Establish a stable source of funding (at the state level & others) for regional survey/assessment work. (7)

- Engage local bodies/historic groups to help identify resources and to educate the public. (2)
- Establish criteria to survey scenic resources (look at DOT's scenic byway program to start.)
- Develop a database of organization (historic societies, archaeological societies, etc.). Organizations can be conduits or partners for collecting data. Highlands Council should reach out to these entities.
- Need to organize & document existing information. (2)
- Motivate large landowners to identify historic resources/incentives. (1)
- Need to address gaps where local organizations don't overlap or are available—Need for overarching authority to collect comprehensive information
- Require historic preservation elements in each master plan. Conservation elements need to include scenic resources. (6)
- Requirement that a survey be done for state plan endorsement & program for smart growth eligibility. (1)
- Requirement for historic preservation and conservation elements, or at the least an inventory of historic, cultural, aesthetic & archaeological resources, in Highlands Planning Area towns.

Problem Statement 2: How do we promote the protection of cultural, historic, scenic and recreation resources in communities, with a special focus on those areas identified as appropriate for growth?

- Prioritize properties which are not now publicly owned and are at risk. Buy/acquire these properties outright or provide incentives (TDR, easements) to preserve resources (1)
- Highlands awards for good examples
- Work with other conservation groups (farmland preservation, others)
- Designate Historic Districts to promote tourism, recognition (7)
- Ongoing sensitivity training about the importance/specialness of Highlands through experiential tourism (includes education). Highlands has attractions that can be made into a marketable item.
- Property tax break for preserving tourism resources, especially resources that benefit local economy, includes commercial & residential
- Establish historic property rehabilitation credit (11)
- Support tax credit/tourism credits/local business incentives for tourism-related enterprises (1)
- Create Scenic byways—protects & identifies historic resources.
- Involve people who do not live or work in the Highlands to indicate or identify valuable resources for tourism.
- Broaden state tourism program to beyond the shore, to embrace natural, historic and cultural heritage of New Jersey. Change tourism label from Skylands to Highlands
- Adopt a regional tourism approach, includes beyond NJ (6)
- Develop enterprise zones, including business credits, lower sales tax, to encourage tourism, to attract shopping, etc. Promotes buy in from the community. (2)
- Provide resources at the state level available for marketing, etc.
- Fit concept of “special improvement areas” to promote tourism.

- Identify “no promotion zones”—those areas that should not be promoted for tourism to protect natural resources. Balance enterprise & protection zones. Protecting and promoting are not always complementary goals.
- Need for a regional entity to “guide” and direct tourism to areas that can withstand development needed for tourism—entity would keep track of visitation & control. (3)
- Develop a Visitors Bureau to promote major events in the Highlands and establish funding to sustain an organization. (4)
- Consolidate existing information into a Highlands events listing (such as Warren Happenings, etc.)
- Protect resources not at the expense of promotion. Balance ecology and tourism—scenic byways; Pinelands model (7)
- Produce corridor management plans—linked with scenic byway program; needs corridors with themes; process for working with municipalities. (3)
- Examine Watchable Wildlife program (national) as a model/approach that balances ecology & use. Brings people to a place and maintains the ecological integrity as well.
- Use historic structures to accommodate modern uses (such as cell phone towers in steeples)—also generates income. Possible incentive at the local level. (6)
- Develop Highlands Interpretive Plan that links story(ies) to resources to promote visitation, includes necessary interpretation.
- Establish TDR program for historic preservation for private landowners. (3)
- Develop guidelines for accepting new development in a sensitive manner, in the Highlands Planning area. (1)
- Promote State program consistency and coordination to avoid negative impacts on historic preservation. (1)
- Adopt a heritage corridors designations & approach—relies on a comprehensive inventory—for regional features, such as canals, bikeways, trails, etc. and cannot be promoted through municipalities alone—needs regional entity. (1)
- Incorporate heritage corridors into greenway plans/green infrastructure. Should be the basis of Highlands planning.
- Design control on new buildings and renovations. Standards should be outlined in the RMP.
- Establish a Highlands Design Advisory Board to provide municipal guidance. (3)
- Highlands Council should provide experts/resources to municipalities about developing tourism assets of the region—results in knowledge about what each town is doing—promote partnership through consistency of message (water protection). Provide a dose of eco-sensitivity when people visit the region or attend a non-ecotourism event, such as boat racing on Greenwood Lake. (50 million people living within driving distance of the Highlands) (3)
- Use glossy, catchy packaging (Delaware Bayshore book was shown) (1)
- Develop grant incentives to promote wholeness in Historic Districts. How a split between Preservation and Planning Areas will affect ranking bonuses. Example of a historic district split between Preservation & Planning areas and if a ranking bonus for state funds would be possible.

Problem Statement #3: How do we ensure that the security and safety of sites are not compromised when resources are publicly identified?

- Encourage Volunteer site stewards (Palisades Interstate Park Commission as a model) (2)
- Limit development to accommodate public access to sensitive areas. (3)
- Increase number of park rangers. (2)
- Engage police departments (on public lands only)
- Develop protocol for access to survey information or let everyone know!
- Instill sense of community value for historic places by promoting local investments in these places so looting is just “not done” (littering, as an example).
- Use NJ curriculum standards to sensitize and educate fourth graders.
- Highlands to promote standards (such as not removing hedgerows) as part of the RMP
- Encourage registration & increased enforcement of off-road vehicles and all terrain vehicle use. Adopt enforcement with “teeth”, including confiscation of vehicles. Use New Hampshire’s state program for registration as a potential model.

Problem Statement #4: How do we develop a regional identity for the Highlands to promote tourism and in the process protect historic, cultural scenic, archaeological and recreation resources?

- Develop a series of Highlands Visitor Centers at major gateways. (3)
- Promote concept of various transportation nodes to intersect with & connect with greenways—need knowledge of where trails begin & end (3)
- Build on regional initiatives already existing--Highlands Trail, book on hiking the Highlands, etc.
- Produce consistent, accurate signage—needs to coordinate with the state signage program. (4)
- Develop RV friendly areas—use “stickers” to identify these areas.
- Develop a branding campaign to match Highlands story (2)
- Redefine & rename state tourism regions, esp. naming one for the Highlands (5)
- Develop a National Heritage Corridor designation for the Highlands
- Establish Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) for Highlands. Deal with confusion at state tourism level. Sharing a name with the Skylands dilutes Highlands identify/brand

Problem Statement #5: What mechanisms and resources are needed to support stewardship of historic, archaeological, cultural and recreation resources on public lands? How do we reconcile potential conflicts between activities that promote tourism and recreation and natural/historic resource protection goals of the Highlands?

- Use of local Open Space Trusts for stewardship (2)
- Create separate trust for maintenance & repair of facilities at the local government level. (1)
- Change the “water fee legislation” so that 75% of the proceeds are used for land acquisition, not 25% as the current legislation reads.
- Promote volunteer stewardship on public lands, similar to adopt a trail; adopt a historic structure is not as encouraged (1)

- Simplify lease process to encourage use of historic structures. Need for long-term lease problematic. New enabling legislation to split up liability and simplify the leasing program. (6)
- Develop management agreements to allow nonprofit/volunteer stewards to help interpret/manage resources (1)
- Expand friends groups into county and local level.
- Share information about successful practices among counties, municipalities, such as use of low income housing on county parkland historic structures
- Develop management plans for all public parklands (1)
- Establish guidelines for dealing with historic bridges, such as Memorandum of Understanding with DOT or some other mechanism to preserve these structures, including money available to protect historic bridges.

Strategic vision:

The Highlands is about our heritage. We are losing money by not capturing, retaining and promoting the character of the region. Historic resources leverage private investment. We need to create a Highlands tourism entity to attract funding, promote redevelopment, reduce loss of resources, and educate the public about the value of historic resources. We need to be more central in the planning process. Resources have value sustained over time. Priority leads to the perception that we are saving everything.

Overall Strategies for the Highlands Council to Reach their Mission

Day 2: Voting Items

#1:

Stable source of funding for inventory and survey needed as a basis for protection, management, education and utilization. (8)

Require/encourage (?) historic preservation elements in municipal master plans. (5)

Require/encourage (?) conservation elements that include scenic areas in municipal master plans. (0)

#2:

Designate historic districts to promote tourism, recognition, preservation/categorization for tourism potential. (3)

Adopt historic property reinvestment tax credit to leverage private investment.

Promote regional tourism and beyond NJ's boundary by creating a Highlands Regional Tourism Council. (24)

Use historic structures to accommodate new uses and generate income.

Balance ecology and tourism; balance promotion and protection. (8)

#3: Problem statement just got a few votes.

#4:

Redefine/rename state tourism regions. Highlands vs. Skylands identity. Identify & develop themes to promote (combine with #2).

#5:

Simplify state lease process to encourage use/preservation of resources **(6)**

Stable source of funding for stewardship of historic resources. **(5)**