



State of New Jersey

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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: RMP Amendment Committee
From: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director
Subject: RMP Amendment Committee Meeting – November 27, 2023
Date: December 6, 2023

An RMP Amendment Committee meeting was held on Monday, November 27, 2023, at 10:00 am via Zoom video conference.

RMP Amendment Committee Members present: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Alstede, and Committee Members Sebetich, Holtaway, Vohden and Van Abs.

Staff Members present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Judy Thornton, Corey Piasecki, Carole Ann Diction, Carolyn Klaube, Jocelyn van den Akker, Alex Hascha, Weston Strubert, Karolyn Garcia and Karen Castanhas.

Committee Chair Alstede called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

At this time Committee Chair Alstede introduced Executive Director Ben Spinelli.

Mr. Spinelli presented a summary of the agenda items for the meeting, which centered on three (3) proposed amendments to the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP). He reminded members of RMP Addendum 2018-1, adopted by the Highlands Council in 2018, which sets forth procedures for amending the RMP. Accordingly, he indicated that Council staff are recommending the introduction and release for public comment of the following documents, each proposed for ultimate adoption by the Highlands Council as an amendment to the RMP:

- Highlands Region Forestry and Wetlands Best Management Practices
- Policy Standards for Warehousing in the NJ Highlands Region
- Updated Land Use Capability Zone Map and Technical Report

At this time Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, gave a detailed presentation of the Regional Master Plan Amendment process. Mr. Piasecki suggested the following timeline:

- Public Comment Open: December (after the December 14th Highlands Council meeting)
- Public Hearings: January/February 2024
- Revision/repost: February/March 2024
- Highlands Council vote: April/May 2024

Mr. Humphries added that each individual amendment is intended to stand on its own. The amendments would be considered together only to streamline the amendment process, thus reducing the required number of public hearings and optimizing staff time and resources.

Committee Chair Alstede questioned the timing of the Forestry RMP amendment proceeding with the others as it is the most controversial.

Council Chair Richko asked for a brief history of who Council staff had met with to discuss the forestry proposal. Mr. Spinelli explained that staff reached out to multiple stakeholders and spent over 80 hours conducting meetings with them.

Member Van Abs noted that he needed to leave the meeting by 11am.

Highlands Region Forestry and Wetlands Best Management Practices

Carolyn Klaube, Senior Natural Resource Specialist, gave a detailed presentation on the Highlands Region Forestry and Wetlands Best Management Practices.

The best management practices will be used in the following ways:

- Supplement statewide guidance with Highlands specific regulations and requirements.
- Assist property owners (state, local, public/private) and licensed consulting foresters in developing plans to align with existing regulations regarding forest management and stewardship in the Highlands.
- Assist state-level reviewers for all Forest Management/Stewardship plans prepared for the Highlands region forest to ensure alignment.

Ms. Klaube explained that currently approved woodland management plans/forest stewardship plans would not be impacted by the Highlands Region Forestry and Wetland BMPs and that it would not affect private landowners' farmland assessment. Any plans written after the adoption of the Highlands Region Forestry and Wetland BMPs, however, would need to comply with the BMPs.

The updated Highlands Region Forestry and Wetlands Best Management Practices will be sent to the RMP Committee members after the meeting.

Committee discussion followed the presentation concerning the RMP amendment timeline. Member Vohden recited a section of the Highlands Act which requires that all amendments to the RMP that are presented to the Highlands Council for consideration be accompanied by a detailed analysis and justification.

Member Van Abs stated he had to leave the meeting and was good with the next two (2) amendments.

Member Van Abs left the meeting at 11:05am.

Standards for Warehousing in the NJ Highlands Region

Judy Thornton, Principal Planner, gave a detailed presentation about the Policy Standards for Warehousing in the NJ Highlands Region.

- Distribution warehousing and goods movement guidelines were released and adopted as policy by the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) in September 2022.
- The Highlands Council authorized release of policy standards for warehousing in the Highlands region in April 2023.
- The document has since been updated with minor edits, but is substantially the same as the April 2023 version.
- The standards address warehouse siting issues with respect to Highlands Preservation v. Planning Area, Land Use Capability Zones, Highlands Resources and Resource Areas, transportation network accessibility, and the availability of other supporting infrastructure. They also include site planning recommendations and provide municipalities with a roadmap for updating local master plans and regulatory provisions to incorporate the standards.

There was discussion of possible TDR monitoring for development land.

Land Use Capability Zone Map and Technical Report Update

Jocelyn van den Akker, GIS Manager, gave a detailed presentation about the Land Use Capability Zone Map and Technical Report update.

- Land Use Capability Zone (LUCZ) is a guiding policy map for region.
- Adopted in 2008, much of the underlying data has since been updated.
- Land Use Capability Map will reflect most current available data.

Council staff also recommend:

1. Addition of FEMA Flood Hazard Data (including the 500-year flood plain).
2. Removal of Public Water EAS (existing data was inaccurate and updated data was unavailable).

Next Steps

Following discussion, the Committee decided to hold off on the forestry best management practices at this time, and present only the warehouse guidelines and land use capability zone map update to the Council at its December 14, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 11:33am.