



HIGHLANDS ACTION ALERT!

Last September, Governor McGreevey appointed a Highlands Task Force to identify ways to protect the region. In March, the Task Force released comprehensive recommendations (report accessible at www.savethehighlands.org). If enacted, these recommendations would be a monumental step forward in protecting the most important lands and natural resources in the Highlands! They include:

- A core preservation area encompassing half of the Highlands Region (350,000 to 390,000 acres) with stringent and mandatory protections, aggressive land acquisition and transfer of development rights programs;
- A regional planning council and plan whose authority over land use would be mandatory in the core preservation area and implemented outside the core preservation area through incentives;
- Increased regulatory protection for steep slopes, water, forests and other natural resources.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION IS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THESE STRONG TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HIGHLANDS.

Bi-partisan legislation has been introduced to protect the region – S-1/A-2635, The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act!

Senator Bob Smith (D-17 – Middlesex and Somerset), Chair of the Senate Environment Committee, and Assemblyman John F. McKeon (D-27 – Essex), Chair of the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, with Senator Robert J. Martin (R-26 – Morris and Passaic), are sponsoring this legislation. Five joint hearings before the Senate and Assembly Environment Committees have been scheduled to consider these recommendations.

PLEASE ATTEND ONE OF THE 3 REMAINING IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS ON S-1/A-2635!

- April 12, Morristown, Morris County, 7 PM, Frelinghuysen Arboretum
- April 15, Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County, 7 PM, Voorhees High School
- April 22 in Trenton, 10 AM, Committee Rm. 4, Statehouse Annex

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED AT THE PUBLIC HEARINGS!
Strong public support is critical to pass this landmark legislation.

Please RSVP that you will attend a hearing(s)! RSVP to Dawn Serra at the Highlands Coalition (609) 737-7263 or highlandsc@earthlink.net regarding which hearing(s) you will attend. We will send you additional information about the hearing and the legislation. **Directions** to the hearing locations can be found at www.njsendems.com.on the Senate Environment Committee page.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY AT THE HEARING?

- **First express your strong support for S-1/A-2635, legislation to enhance the legislative and regulatory protections for the NJ Highlands as recommended by the Highlands Task Force, and to protect the water supply for over half the State's population.**

Put the points into your own words, try not to duplicate the points made by the person speaking immediately prior to you, and pick one or two other points to make:

- The most important goal of this legislation is to permanently protect the remaining undeveloped land in the 350,000 to 390,000 acre preservation area through acquisition, transfer of development rights, and enhanced regulation.
- As recommended by the Task Force, a regional planning council should be created to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire NJ Highlands, with mandatory authority in the preservation area and an advisory role outside of it; and
- The NJ Department of Environmental Protection should have enhanced regulatory authority to change development patterns that threaten water quality and the Highlands' natural resources.

IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE HAVE A TREMENDOUS PUBLIC TURNOUT AT THESE HEARINGS!

Interests that support the status quo are working to oppose any legislative action to protect the region. Calls are going in to legislators in opposition to this effort to protect the Highlands region.

We have an historic opportunity to protect the Highlands that is not likely to happen again! It is important that we all do EVERYTHING we can to succeed.

OTHER THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE

Please contact your own state Senator and two Assembly persons!

Every legislator needs to hear from his or her constituents with a message of support for the Task Force recommendations and the legislation to implement them. Let your Senator and two Assembly Members know you are a constituent and urge them to support S-1/A-2635, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. ***It is very important to reference the bill number so that they know you support specific legislation and not just Highlands protection in general.*** Give some examples of why protecting the Highlands is important (see letter writing points, page 4). Personalize your concerns if you can.

To find your district and legislators (if they are not on this alert), or for mail or email addresses, go to the Legislature's web site at www.njleg.state.nj.us or contact the NJ League of Women Voters at 1-800-792-VOTE.

After you contact your legislators, please let us know via mail, phone, fax or email at The Highlands Coalition, P.O. Box 118, Titusville, NJ 08560. Phone: 609-737-7263 Fax: 609-737-7264
highlandsco@earthlink.net

Highlands Legislators:

District 16 (parts of Morris & Somerset Counties)

Senator Walter Kavanaugh (908) 526-4222
Assemblyman Christopher Bateman (908) 526-3600
Assemblyman Peter Biondi (908) 252-0800

District 24 (Sussex County and parts of Hunterdon and Morris Cos.)

Senator Robert Littell (973) 827-2900
Assemblywoman Alison Littell McHose (973) 726-0954
Assemblyman Guy Gregg (973) 584-5422

District 21 (parts of Essex, Morris, Somerset & Union Cos.)

Senator Thomas Kean Jr. (908) 232-3673
Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (joint office w/Sen. Kean)
Assemblyman Eric Munoz (joint office w/Sen. Kean)

District 40 (Parts of Bergen, Essex & Passaic Cos.)

Senator Henry McNamara (201) 828-9600
Assemblyman Kevin O'Toole (973) 696- 2323
Assemblyman David Russo (201) 444-9719

District 23 (Warren County and part of Hunterdon Co.)

Senator Leonard Lance (908) 788-6900
Assemblyman Michael Doherty (908) 835-0552
Assemblywomen Connie Myers (908) 995-0066
Assemblyman Richard Merkt (973) 895-9100

District 25 (Part of Morris County)

Senator Anthony Bucco (973) 627-9700
Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll (973) 539-8113

Please Contact the Environment Committee Members!

Thank the Chairs of the Environment Committees (see below) for sponsoring legislation to protect the Highlands and for scheduling hearings. Contact the offices of the other Members of the Environment Committees, and make the following points:

- The Highlands provide drinking water for more than half of New Jersey's residents, over 4 million people, most of whom live outside the Highlands. * Residents of the Committee Member's district drink Highlands water.
- Without state action, the quality and quantity of that drinking water will be degraded by sprawl, deforestation, impervious cover and nonpoint source pollution;
- You support the recommendations of the Highlands Task Force; and
- You urge the Environment Committee to release S-1/A-2635 from committee.

Senate Environment Committee:

CHAIR: *Senator Bob Smith, D-Dist. 17 (Part of Middlesex Co., Franklin Twp./Somerset Co.): (732) 752-0770

V-CH: * Senator Stephen M. Sweeney, D-Dist. 3 (Salem Co., parts of Cumberland & Gloucester counties): (856) 251-9801

*Senator John H. Adler, D- District 6 (Part of Camden County): (856) 489-3442

Senator Andrew R. Ciesla, R- District 10 (Parts of Monmouth and Ocean Counties): (732) 840-9028

*Senator Henry P. McNamara, R- District 40 (Parts of Bergen, Essex and Passaic Counties): (201) 848-9600

Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee:

CHAIR:*Assemblyman John F. McKeon, D - District 27 (Part of Essex County): (973) 275-1113

V-CH: *Assemblyman Michael Panter, D - District 12 (Parts of Mercer and Monmouth Cos): (732) 741-5599

*Assemblyman Larry Chatzidakis, R - District 8 (Part of Burlington County): (856) 234-8080

*Assemblyman Robert M. Gordon, D - District 38 (Part of Bergen County): (201) 703-9779

*Assemblyman Reed Gusciora, D - District 15 (Part of Mercer County): (609) 292-0500

*Assemblyman Louis Manzo, D - District 31 (Part of Hudson County): (201) 309-0770

*Assemblyman John E. Rooney, R - District 39 (Part of Bergen County): (201) 967-8910

Thank you for your help with this once in a lifetime opportunity!!

For further information:

Tom Gilbert, Highlands Coalition Director, 609-818-1776 tgilbert@igc.org

Paul Chrystie, The Highlands Coalition, 215-563-1927 pchrystie@att.net

Wilma Frey, Highlands Coalition/NJ Conservation Foundation, 908-234-1225 wilma@njconservation.org

(Letter writing points)

FORMAT:

Honorable NAME

New Jersey (Senate or Assembly, as appropriate)

Address

Dear Senator/Assembly(man/woman) NAME:

CONTENT:

1. Urge your legislator to pass The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, Senate 1/Assembly 2635 that will protect the New Jersey Highlands' most threatened forests and waters.

2. Tell your legislators that it is critical to enhance the legislative and regulatory protections for the Highlands (see “What Should I Say at the Hearing?” on page 2 of this alert).

3. Give a few examples of why protecting the Highlands is important. Put the points in your own words and if you can, personalize your concerns. Some suggested points are below:

- The region’s most significant natural resource -- drinking water – is supplied to over 4 million people, over half of New Jerseyans, most of whom live outside the region.
- The Highlands – and its water – are under threat from rapid population growth, residential and commercial development, deforestation and sprawl. Between 1990 and 2000, the NJ Highlands population increased nearly 12%. In the same decade, the rate of forest loss in the region quadrupled. Forests provide the BEST protection for ground and surface water supplies.
- The Highlands region was recognized as a “landscape of national significance ” in a federal report, the 1992 *New York-New Jersey Highlands Regional Study*, USDA/Forest Service, while the 2001 New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan recognized the Highlands as a “Special Resource Area.”
- The Highlands possesses the greatest natural diversity of any region in NJ. The State Plan maps 70% as environmentally sensitive (PA-5) and much of the rest as Rural (PA-4). Some 370,000 acres are forested. Nearly 150 threatened or endangered plant and animal species find suitable habitat. A thriving agricultural sector sustains itself on 92,000 acres of agricultural land. The region also contains some of the State's most valuable historical and cultural sites.
- New Jersey’s three largest industries – food processing, tourism and pharmaceuticals – are all water-dependent. M&M’s, Valium, Viagra, Haagen-Dazs, Progresso Soup, Budweiser, Michelob, and Goya Beans are all manufactured with clean NJ Highlands water!
- The Highlands is an integral component of New Jersey’s eco-tourism economy, offering hiking, camping, fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing, farm recreation, birding and wildlife watching, photography, antiquing, and enjoyment of rural and village environments.
- Between 1995 and 2000, the Highlands lost 17,000 acres of forest and 8,000 acres of farmland. With growth pressures continuing, land consumption is expected to average 5,000 acres every year. Currently, at least 5 NJ Highlands municipalities are zoned in a manner that would allow more than a tripling of their population. Unless these trends are altered and an effective regional approach to the Highlands adopted, the harm to the region will be severe and permanent.