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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 16, 2015

Highlands Council Approves Boonton Township Petition, Elects Officers

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) approved its 48th Petition for Plan Conformance, adding Boonton Township in Morris County to the list of Highlands municipalities that have aligned local regulatory and planning documents with the land use and resource management requirements of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Boonton Township's Petition included the municipality's Highlands Preservation Area lands only and the Township was previously approved by the Highlands Council for the 'Checklist Approach' to Plan Conformance.

"Boonton Township's Preservation Area lands account for just nine percent of the municipality, and much of that land is either preserved or otherwise undevelopable," explains Highlands Council Chairman Jim Rilee. "For this reason the municipality was approved to proceed with this simplified approach to Plan Conformance that will ensure the protections of the Act are in place without creating added work for the municipality in the future."

The Checklist Approach allows municipalities with very few or no developable lots that would trigger a review using the Highlands Land Use Ordinance (LUO) in conforming areas to adopt a simpler Highlands Checklist Ordinance in place of a full LUO. Should any development applications trigger a LUO review, the review will be done by Highlands Council staff instead of the municipality.

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“We’re very pleased that Boonton Township recognized the benefits of moving forward with Plan Conformance in this way and we look forward to continuing work with them on full implementation of the RMP,” said Highlands Council Executive Director Margaret Nordstrom.

Also at its April meeting, the Highlands Council voted to reappoint Kurt Alstede as Vice Chairman and Robert Holtaway as Treasurer. In other administrative matters, the Council voted to accept its FY2014 Audit Report and to renew the authority of the Executive Director to review and approve certain matters on behalf of the Council. The Council also voted to transition a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Feasibility grant from the City of Paterson in Passaic County to the County itself, following a request from the municipality and county for this change.

Actions taken by the Council at this meeting will take effect following the Governor’s review and consideration of the meeting minutes, up to 10 business days from receipt of the minutes. Materials related to this meeting including resolutions, presentations, audio and minutes will be posted at: www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/index.html (click on April 16 meeting).

The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency, established in 2004 with the passing of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at www.nj.gov/njhighlands.

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