

**New Jersey Highlands Council
Chair Report for Plan Development Committee Meeting
of June 23, 2005**

On June 23, 2005, the Plan Development Committee held a meeting at the Ramapo College of New Jersey. Notice of the meeting was provided to the public on the Highlands Council's web site. Council members present at the meeting were: John Weingart, Chair, Lois Cuccinello, Ben Spinelli, and Tim Dillingham. Council staff members present were: Adam Zellner, Dante DiPirro, Tom Borden, Steve Balzano, and Maryjude Haddock-Weiler.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the best way to proceed with the development of the scientific data needed for the regional master plan, including staff recommendations for updating existing sources of data and for identifying agencies and consultants that already possess significant experience and expertise in the Highlands region.

Steve Balzano began the discussion with an overview of plan development. Staff is exploring producing a regional master plan that would consist of three parts: (1) the regional master plan document – a concise, readable document which is targeted to municipal officials and contains the goals, policies and objectives for the plan; (2) the technical basis for the master plan – a series of technical reports that support the major elements of the master plan; and (3) an implementation element – including both a land capability map, which will show the smart growth components and will identify lands appropriate for development and those not suitable for development, and the specific standards or ordinance provisions to implement the land capability map.

The data and analysis needed to develop such a plan is as follows:

- Water resource assessment update of safe yield and base flows
- Digital parcel coverage to fill data gap on 10 municipalities
- Integrate MOD4 data (appraised value, sales price, etc.) with parcel coverage
- Digital stream coverage including the delineation of headwater streams/seeps
- Critical habitat/natural area (biodiversity) coverage
- Update 2002 Land Use Land Cover mapping
- Capacity analysis of transportation corridors
- Infrastructure capacity analysis for and distribution of water/wastewater
- Digital elevation and slope map
- Financial analysis and appraisal analysis for TDR and financial element
- Historic and Scenic Resource Inventory and mapping
- Master Plan production and communications support
- Data and information management system for application review and tracking
- Planning advice from an experienced regional planner to guide development of the plan

Much of this data has been developed in part and would need to be updated (such as the water resource assessment that was done for the 2002 US Forest Service report) and other data must be developed for the first time (such as the financial analysis of the plan and TDR program). Given the great volume of the data and analysis that need to be developed, the short time available to develop it (six months until the data and analysis needs to be completed so that plan writing and public involvement can take place) and the availability of established, recognized and expert entities to update previously-developed bodies of work such as the Highlands work already completed by the United States Geological Survey and Rutgers University, the staff recommended the use of consultants for data development/analysis. Consultants would be given specific scopes of work from the plan development committee and staff. The data and policy analysis would be developed through the TACs and the work of staff, and then brought up to the plan development committee and full council as the plan is developed.

It was pointed out that a majority of the consultant contracts would be with made with State, federal or public agencies. Taken together the proposed contracts would be expected to cost approximately \$1.8 million with deliverables spread over the next year.

The Committee members asked staff to make a presentation outlining the proposed roles of consultants, the TACs and the staff. The Committee further requested information regarding each contract that would be proposed. Since time is of the essence, they suggested that staff might want to present a list of those contracts that need to get let right away at the Council meeting on June 30th (other contracts might wait until later in the summer). Staff will prepare a resolution for the June 30th meeting.

The Committee also discussed the status of the upcoming Technical Advisory Committees (TACs). Invitations will be sent out next week to the list of people being asked to serve on the various TACs. Should an individual agree to serve, it was pointed out that there would be no loss of ability to do work in the Highlands in the future. The TACs will serve in a strictly advisory capacity.

The Plan Development Committee will try to meet next on June 30th before the regular Council meeting.