

**State of New Jersey
Executive Order #70**

Governor James E. McGreevey

WHEREAS, the Highlands region is an area that extends from northwestern Connecticut across the lower Hudson River Valley and northern New Jersey into east central Pennsylvania and the New Jersey portion of the Highlands region is greater than 1,000 square miles, covering portions of 7 counties and 90 municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region is designated as a Special Resource Area by the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001); and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region is an essential source of drinking water, providing clean and plentiful drinking water for one-half of the State's population, including communities beyond the Highlands region, from only 13 percent of the State's land area; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region contains other exceptional natural resources such as clean air, contiguous forest lands, wetlands, pristine watersheds and plant and wildlife species habitats, contains sites of historic significance, and provides abundant recreational opportunities for the citizens of the State; and

WHEREAS, the approximately 110,000 acres of agricultural lands in active production in the Highlands region of New Jersey are important resources of the State that should be preserved; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region provides a desirable quality of life where people live and work; and

WHEREAS, it is important to ensure the economic viability of communities throughout the Highlands region; and

WHEREAS, since 1984, 65,000 acres - over 100 square miles - of the Highlands region have been lost to development, and sprawl and the pace of development in the region has dramatically increased with the rate of loss of forested lands and wetlands more than doubling since 1995; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the New Jersey Congressional delegation to protect the Highlands region through the introduction of the Highlands Stewardship Act is to be commended; and

WHEREAS, members of the public and local officials have been actively seeking the preservation of the Highlands region for decades, including the recent work of the "Five County Coalition;" and

WHEREAS, maintaining the quality of life and preserving the natural resources of the Highlands region while providing for smart growth opportunities can be best accomplished through the development of a plan to encourage acquisition, regulation and regional planning;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JAMES E. McGREEVEY, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER AND DIRECT:

1. There is hereby established the Highlands Task Force (hereinafter the "Task Force").
2. The Task Force shall consist of:
 - o The Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection;
 - o The Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs;
 - o The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture;
 - o The Commissioner of the Department of Transportation; and
 - o The Chief Executive Officer and Secretary of the Commerce and Economic Growth Commission.

Additional members of the Task Force shall be appointed by the Governor as follows:

- o 6 representatives of local officials;
 - o 4 representatives of statewide or regional environmental organizations;
 - o 2 representatives of the development/business community;
 - o 1 representative of the farming community; and
 - o 1 member of the general public.
3. The Co-Chairpersons of the Task Force shall be the Commissioners of the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Community Affairs.
 4. The purpose of the Task Force shall be to make recommendations intended to preserve the natural resources of and enhance the quality of life in the Highlands region, including an examination of legislation, regulations, model local ordinances or other government action necessary to address, at a minimum, the following topics:
 - o Protection of water quality, drinking water supplies, wetlands, critical plant and wildlife species habitat, vegetated stream corridors, and contiguous forests;
 - o Identification of methods to protect and preserve open space and natural resources of the Highlands region;
 - o Identification of methods to enhance farmland preservation and support the agriculture industry in the Highlands region;
 - o Identification of methods to promote historic, cultural, scenic and recreational resource opportunities that preserve the natural features of the Highlands region; and
 - o Provision of smart growth opportunities, including economic development and redevelopment, in the Highlands region through regional planning, including coordination of transportation and infrastructure investments and administrative agency activities, consistent with State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001).
 5. The Task Force shall schedule public hearings to solicit input from the public and interested parties, including the "Five County Coalition."
 6. The Task Force shall submit a final report containing its findings and recommendations, including an implementation plan, to the Governor within 180 days of this Executive Order.

7. The Task Force is authorized to call upon any department, office, division or agency of this State to supply it with records and other information, personnel or assistance it deems necessary to discharge its duties under this Order. Each department, office, division or agency of this State is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate with the Task Force and to furnish it with such records, information, personnel and assistance as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order.
8. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal, this 19th day of September in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Three, and of the Independence of the United States, the Two Hundred and Twenty-Eighth.

/s/ James E. McGreevey

Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Michael R. DeCotiis

Chief Counsel to the Governor

URL as of 10/26/2004: <http://www.state.nj.us/infobank/circular/eom70.htm>

Governor McGreevey's Highlands Protection Initiative

Task Force Members

- **Malcolm A. Borg**
- **Michele S. Byers**
- **Bradley M. Campbell, Commissioner - DEP**
- **Denise Coyle**
- **Lois A. Cuccinello**
- **David Epstein**
- **Thomas A. Gilbert**
- **Thomas J. Gilmore**
- **Tammie Horsfield**
- **Valerie Vainieri Huttle**
- **Charles M. Kuperus, Secretary - Agriculture**
- **John Lettiere, Commissioner – DOT**
- **Susan Bass Levin, Commissioner - DCA**
- **John Polhemus**
- **Joe Riggs**
- **Jack J. Schrier**
- **Eileen Swan**
- **Frank C. VanHorn**
- **Reverend Dr. William D. Watley, Secretary of the N.J. Commerce and Economic Growth Commission**

URL as of 10/26/2004: <http://www.savethehighlands.org/members.htm>

McGreevey Statement on Passage of Historic Highlands Act

(TRENTON) -- Governor James E. McGreevey today issued the following statement on the Legislature's successful passage of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act:

"New Jersey has been waiting for decades for this day. Local and state officials along with members of the public have sought protection for the Highlands for years, and today, this administration and this Legislature got it done.

"Governors Kean, Florio and Whitman all studied the issue of protecting the Highlands, and I am pleased my administration was able to build on their hard work. However, we realized there was no more time to waste. If we didn't act now, we risked losing this critical region forever.

"This legislation couldn't have passed without the leadership of Senate President Codey, Speaker Sires, the Senate and Assembly Environment committees and the Senate and Assembly Appropriations committees. They showed a great commitment to carrying on the legacy of environmental protection that is the hallmark of this great state of New Jersey.

"New Jersey residents can be especially proud today knowing they live in a state where their elected leaders recognize the importance of preserving open space and ensuring access to clean drinking water, now and in the future."

Highlands Timeline

1907	Potable Water Commission issues report indicating: "The Highlands watersheds are the best in the State in respect to ease of collection, in scantiness of population, with consequent absence of contamination, in elevation, giving opportunity for gravity delivery and in softness as shown by chemical analysis. These watersheds should be preserved from pollution at all hazards, for upon them the most populous portions of the State must depend for water supplies. There has been too much laxness in the past regarding this important matter."
1987	The Skylands Greenway Coalition (later the Highlands Coalition) is founded by a coalition of approximately 50 environmental groups.
1989	Governor Kean initiates a Skylands Greenway Task Force that later produced "A Plan for Action" in 1992.
1992	U.S. Forest Service produces the New York-New Jersey Highlands Regional Study.
1993	Governor Florio establishes a Highlands Trust Advisory Board.
2002	U.S. Forest Service updates its 1992 study.
2003	Governor McGreevey establishes Highlands Task Force
2004	Governor McGreevey's Highlands Task Force delivers its recommendations. Assemblyman John McKeon and Sen. Bob Smith introduce the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.
June 10, 2004	New Jersey Legislature adopts Highlands Act.

URL as of 10/26/2004: http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/governor/newsline/view_article.pl?id=1981