



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
100 North Road (Route 513)
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322
(908) 879-6737
(908) 879-4205 (fax)
www.nj.gov/njhighlands



PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

CARL J. RICHKO
Chairperson

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

LISA J. PLEVIN
Executive Director

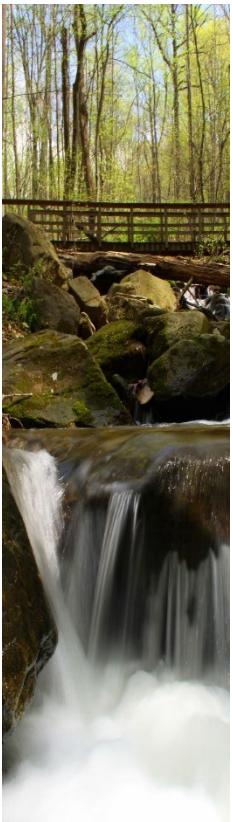
MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 4:00pm

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
3. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT
4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
5. CHAIR'S REPORT
6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
7. APPROVAL OF HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MINUTES – June 16, 2022
8. PRESENTATION by New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
9. BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
 - CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION - Approval to Extend the Fiscal Year Budgets 2022 at the Same Average Monthly Spending Level
10. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
 - a. Executive Session
 - b. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION – Appointment of Executive Director (*voting matter with public comment*)
11. OLD & NEW BUSINESS
12. PUBLIC COMMENTS (*To ensure ample time for all members of the public to comment, we will respectfully limit comments to three (3) minutes. Questions raised in this period may not be responded to at this time but, where feasible, will be followed up by the Council and its staff.*)
13. EXECUTIVE SESSION, *if deemed necessary*
14. ADJOURN

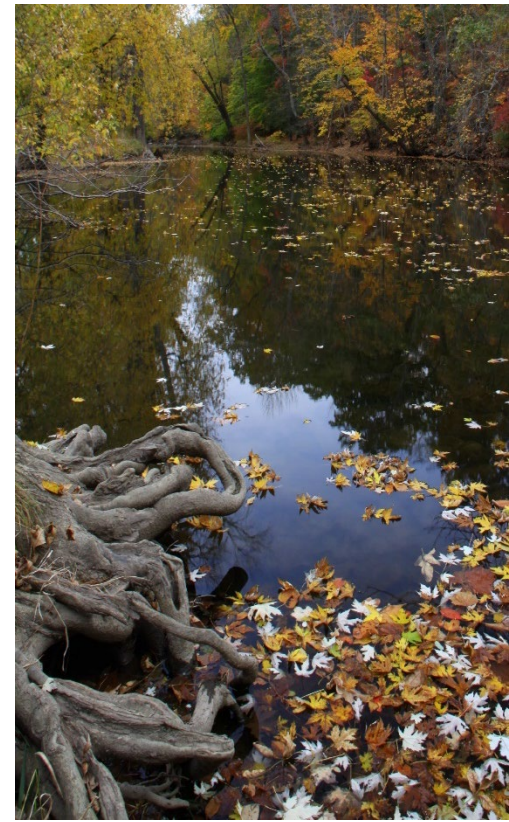
Masking Guidance

This meeting of the Highlands Council will be held in person, at the Highlands Council office in Chester, NJ. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), masks are recommended in indoor public settings during periods of elevated community transmission when the CDC's COVID-19 Community Level is high (orange). At this time, the Community Level in Morris County is reported as high. Therefore, masking is recommended—though not required—at this meeting.



New Jersey Highlands Council Meeting

Thursday, July 21, 2022





The New Jersey Highlands Trail

July 21st, 2022

New Jersey Highlands Council Meeting

Presented by Zachary Cole
Long-Distance Trails Program Coordinator



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Overview

- What is the New York- New Jersey Trail Conference?
- What is the Highlands Trail?
- What is new on the trail thanks to the Highlands Council?
- How does the trail benefit the New Jersey Highlands?

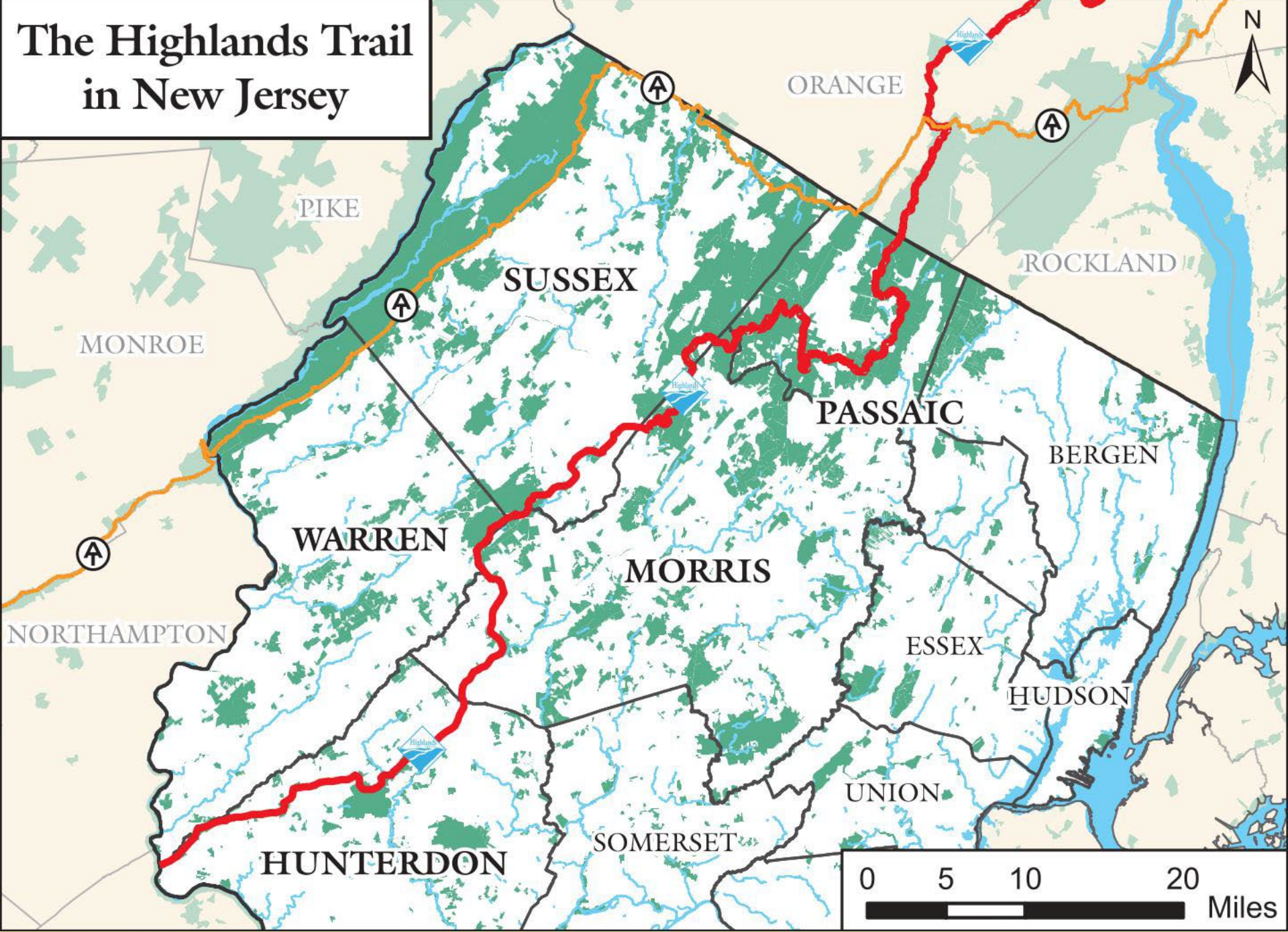


Connecting People with Nature since 1920

The Trail Conference

- The Trail Conference is a volunteer-lead organization partnering with land managers and regional authorities to build and protect public trails throughout the New York Metro Area.
- We use trails to promote strategic conservation and build community outdoors.
- We are also a trusted resource for maps and books that guide public use of more than 2,000 miles of trails.

The Highlands Trail in New Jersey





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Monksville Reservoir, Long Pond Ironworks State Park



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Little Windbeam, North Jersey District Water Supply Commission



What's New?

- Highlands Trail-specific signs installed along the whole length of the Trail add a layer of consistency across multiple park units and the entire region.
- A dedicated landing page hosted on the Trail Conference website with map resources and detailed information for hiking the Trail.
- Brochures about the Trail and the Highlands Region produced and distributed in high-visitation locations along the Trail.



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Blazing the Trail!



Highlands Trail Blaze



Highlands Trail Spur Blaze



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Highlands Trail Sign Campaign



Long Distance Trail Sign



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Highlands Trail Sign Campaign

THE HIGHLANDS TRAIL

The Highlands Trail extends roughly 180 miles to connect the Delaware and Hudson Rivers, then continues beyond both into Pennsylvania and Connecticut. It showcases the natural beauty of the Highlands Region and connects local communities with the incredible recreational opportunities in their own backyards.

The Highlands Trail is built and maintained by partnerships between land managers and people just like you. To learn more, find maps, and get involved as a volunteer, visit TheHighlandsTrail.org.



This sign was funded by the New Jersey Highlands Council

Trailhead Sign



Parking & Trail Directional Sign



How Many?

Sign Type	Number Installed
Long Distance Trail Signs	11
Trailhead Signs	40
Directional/ Parking Signs	10

37 unique locations were scouted for potential signs along the length of the trail.



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Long Distance Trail Sign



Long Distance Trail Sign mounted to kiosk,
Schooley's Mountain County Park



Tree-mounted Long Distance Trail Sign,
Long Pond Ironworks



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Examples of Trailhead Signs



Sign mounted to post on the east bank of Riegelsville Bridge



Sign mounted to kiosk, Schooley's Mountain County Park



Trailhead sign at Salt Gastropub, Stanhope



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Landing Page & Mobile Website



9:47 AM



nynjtc.org



LOGIN CART SEARCH
DONATE MAPS HIKE



The Highlands Trail currently extends approximately 180 miles through New Jersey and New York, from the Delaware River in the south to the Hudson River in the north. An extension through Putnam County, New York is a work in progress.

This scenic trail showcases the natural beauty of the local Highlands Region in New Jersey



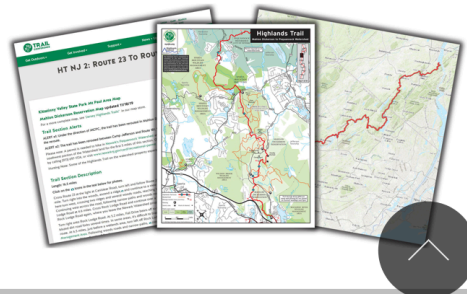
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Highlands Trail Guide and Maps

Our online Highlands Trail Guide is your key to exploring the Highlands Trail. It now includes new maps in a variety of formats, including downloadable PDFs, an interactive map, and Avenza Maps app maps. View the latest trail alerts and step-by-step directions to plan your next Highlands Trail adventure.

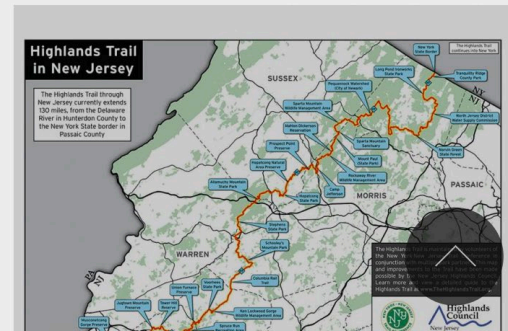


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Overview Maps



Navigating the Trail

- The Highlands Trail free digital map available through Avenza is fully interactive with the ability to zoom in and out to different sections.
- Pinpoint your location on a map, even without cell or Wi-Fi connectivity, using your device's GPS function.
- The map also features a built-in compass and coordinates.
- Add personal data points with photos and track your hikes in real time.





The Trail and the Highlands

- Trails serve as educational resources raising awareness about the geographical, historical and ecological significance of a location or region.
- Trails foster sustainable economic development and promote equitable access to nature.
- Long-distance trails are drivers for preservation of contiguous high conservation value lands adding connectivity between parks and open space.
- The Highlands Trail represents a thread through the whole region giving visitors an opportunity to experience and learn about the Highlands region.



Connecting People with Nature since 1920

Questions?



Scenic Overlook, Allamuchy State Park



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Chair

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Executive Director

Contact:

Carole Ann Dicton, Manager of Communications
(908) 879-6737 ext. 105 or caroleann.dicton@highlands.nj.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2022

Highlands Council Names Ben Spinelli Executive Director

*Former Highlands Council Member and Chester Township Mayor to
Lead Regional Planning Agency*

CHESTER, N.J. —At its most recent meeting, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) appointed Ben Spinelli to the position of Executive Director. Spinelli will lead the 23-person staff and report directly to the Chairman of the Highlands Council for an annual salary \$135,000. In addition to being one of the original members of the Highlands Council, Spinelli brings an exceptionally strong background in public policy and land use management to the role.

“When we began this search we were committed to finding someone with meaningful experience in the Highlands region and we were fortunate to have several very qualified candidates come forward,” said Carl Richko, Highlands Council Chairman. “Ben’s tenure on the Highlands Council certainly set him apart, but he also brings deep expertise in environmental policy, municipal land use law, sustainable local, regional and state-wide land use practices, land preservation, agricultural retention and strategic planning. His experience and ties to the region are just excellent.”

Spinelli began his career as a county prosecutor and trial attorney, later entering public service as an elected official, holding the office of Mayor in Chester Township, Morris County for three terms from 1998 until 2007. During his tenure as Mayor, Spinelli joined the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth as Chief Counsel and Director of Policy, later taking on the role of Executive Director for the agency before transitioning into the nonprofit sector and ultimately private consulting. It was also during his

time serving as Mayor that Spinelli was appointed to the Highlands Council, where he served from 2004 until 2006.

“I’ve always understood the importance of protecting the natural resources of the Highlands for people living both within and outside of the region,” said Spinelli. “It’s where I’ve lived with my family for the past 32 years and where I’ve invested my time, effort, and passion for building a sustainable society. It all comes full circle with the chance to serve in a position that will draw upon all of my knowledge, talents, and experience”

In 2015, after serving as a Senior Policy Advisor on a presidential Task Force for Disaster Recovery, Spinelli co-founded a consulting partnership providing services to businesses, landowners and government entities on matters of land use, land conservation, agricultural retention, regulatory matters, strategic planning, and policy. That business merged with Greener by Design in 2017, where Spinelli has served as principal working with multi-national corporations, energy partnerships and an ever-growing portfolio of governmental entities. Spinelli is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Chemistry and Environmental Science at NJIT, and an adjunct professor of Sustainability Studies at Kean University.

“Everything that I have worked on for the past two decades has prepared me for this position,” he said. “I’ve dedicated a significant portion of my professional career to sustainable planning issues, and in particular protection of the resources of the Highlands region. From being the mayor of a Highlands community, to advocating for the protection of the Highlands and sitting as a Highlands Council member, I have been deeply involved in the important issues facing this region. This is an incredible opportunity for me to continue to ensure that the Highlands will meet the needs of New Jersey’s residents for generations to come.”

Spinelli is expected to take over the role in August following the retirement of current Executive Director Lisa J. Plevin, who has held the role since 2018. Under her leadership, the Council advanced numerous significant regional projects, including a number of important lake, watershed, and stormwater management plans that help municipalities address the root causes of Harmful Algal Blooms; the development of an Interactive Environmental Resource Inventory application; and the completion of a trail signage and digital mapping project for the New Jersey portion of the long-distance Highlands Trail. Plevin also worked to greatly increase the Council’s outreach efforts with municipal, county, state and community partners resulting in more than 20 municipal and county planning grant awards for projects that advance the goals of the Highlands Act and Regional Master Plan.

“Lisa’s contributions to the Highlands Council during the past four years have been tremendous and will have a lasting impact not only on the agency, but on the region as a whole,” said Richko. “Her engagement with municipal and county officials has resulted in greater trust and a stronger spirit of collaboration that is essential to implement of the Highlands Act and Regional Master Plan.”

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 July 21 meeting).

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

ATTACHMENTS:

Ben Spinelli Bio and headshot.

#

RESOLUTION 2022-13
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING
COUNCIL COMMENDING LISA J. PLEVIN FOR HER LEADERSHIP AND
DEDICATION TO THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL AND ITS MISSION AS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2018-2022

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act) has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act empowers the Highlands Council to appoint an Executive Director to serve, at the pleasure of the Council, as its chief administrative officer; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Director plays a vital role in implementing policies established by the Highlands Council, identifying new initiatives, and managing and providing leadership to the staff of the Highlands Council; and

WHEREAS, Lisa J. Plevin has been the Executive Director for the Highlands Council for the past four years having been appointed in July of 2018; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin brought to the Highlands Council a wide breadth of experience working on varied environmental matters;

WHEREAS, over the course of four years as Executive Director, Ms. Plevin has ably assisted the Highlands Council and has led the Highlands Council staff in its mission to implement the goals of the Highlands Act and the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP); and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin's commitment and dedication to the mission of the Highlands Council has served to guide its efforts and established the tone for all Council activities; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin has sought to encourage significant public participation in the Council's operations and has endeavored to involve all stakeholders in Council initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin provided exceptional leadership of the Highlands Council team during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was perhaps the most challenging time the organization has faced since the development of the RMP; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin was the driving force behind an incredibly successful effort to engage municipal and county partners in implementation of the RMP; and

WHEREAS, based on these efforts, several Petitions and Amended Petitions for Plan Conformance came before the Council and were approved, strengthening collaborative implementation of the Highlands Act and RMP; and

WHEREAS, during Ms. Plevin's tenure more than 20 municipal and county planning grants were approved for work including Water Use and Conservation Management, Stormwater Management,

RESOLUTION 2022-13
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING
COUNCIL COMMENDING LISA J. PLEVIN FOR HER LEADERSHIP AND
DEDICATION TO THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL AND ITS MISSION AS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2018-2022

Transportation Planning, Lake and Stream Management, Economic Sustainability Planning, and more; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin spearheaded the completion of an effort that began in 2007 to have the Regional Master Plan endorsed by the State Planning Commission, which results in significant benefits for Highlands municipalities and counties; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin quickly ramped-up outreach to municipal and county partners experiencing Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) to facilitate grant funding for watershed assessments, lake and stream management plans, and stormwater management plans to help identify and address many of the root causes of HABs; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin has significantly contributed to furthering the goals of the Highlands Act and the Highlands RMP, and has left a solid foundation for future activities of the Highlands Council; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Plevin has many other accomplishments that distinguish her tenure as Executive Director and will have a lasting, positive impact on the Highlands Region; and

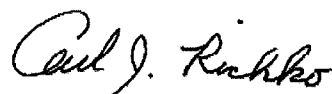
WHEREAS, the Highlands Council wishes to publicly and formally acknowledge Ms. Plevin's accomplishments as Executive Director, and the legacy she leaves to the future of the Highlands Council and the Highlands Region generally;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Highlands Council hereby commends Lisa J. Plevin for her outstanding service as Executive Director of the Highlands Council and her service to the people of the State of New Jersey;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Governor Philip D. Murphy recognizing Ms. Plevin's achievements as Executive Director of the Highlands Council from 2018 to 2022.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its meeting held on the 21st day of July 2022.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman

RESOLUTION 2022-13
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING
COUNCIL COMMENDING LISA J. PLEVIN FOR HER LEADERSHIP AND
DEDICATION TO THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL AND ITS MISSION AS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2018-2022

Vote on the Approval of This Resolution	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede	√		√			
Councilmember Dougherty			√			
Councilmember Dressler			√			
Councilmember Francis			√			
Councilmember Holtaway		√	√			
Councilmember James			√			
Councilmember Sebetich						√
Councilmember Van Abs			√			
Councilmember Visioli			√			
Councilmember Vohden			√			
Chairman Richko			√			

RESOLUTION 2022-14

NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL APPROVAL TO EXTEND THE FISCAL YEAR BUDGETS 2022 AT THE SAME AVERAGE MONTHLY SPENDING LEVEL

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act) has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

WHEREAS, Section 6.g of the Highlands Act authorizes the Highlands Council to conduct its business as needed to effectuate the purposes of the enabling legislation; and

WHEREAS, to satisfy its duties, responsibilities and obligations under the Highlands Act, the Highlands Council desires to prepare General Operating and Grants Budgets for Fiscal Year 2023; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey State Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 has only recently been passed; and

WHEREAS, several material budget components for Fiscal Year 2023, while substantially complete, remain subject to final determination and, in an effort to avoid subsequent revisions, Highlands Council staff is requesting the extension of the current Fiscal Year 2022 General Operating and Grants Budgets until the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget is approved; and

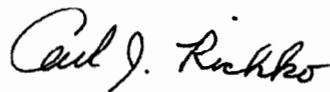
WHEREAS, the Budget and Finance Committee recommends the approval of the extension of the approved General Operating and Grants Budgets for Fiscal Year 2022; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:20-5.j, no action authorized by the Highlands Council shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the Governor shall approve same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Highlands Council hereby approves the extension of the approved Fiscal Year 2022 General Operating Budget at the same average monthly spending level of \$232,420 and the extension of the approved Fiscal Year 2022 Grants Budget at the same average monthly encumbrance level of \$71,922.40 until such time as the Highlands Council adopts a General Operating Budget and Grants Budget for Fiscal Year 2023.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 21st day of July, 2022.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman

RESOLUTION 2022-14
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
APPROVAL TO EXTEND THE FISCAL YEAR BUDGETS 2022
AT THE SAME AVERAGE MONTHLY SPENDING LEVEL

Vote on the Approval of The Resolution	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede			✓			
Councilmember Dougherty			✓			
Councilmember Dressler			✓			
Councilmember Francis			✓			
Councilmember Holtaway	✓		✓			
Councilmember James			✓			
Councilmember Sebetich						✓
Councilmember Van Abs			✓			
Councilmember Visioli		✓	✓			
Councilmember Vohden			✓			
Chairman Richko			✓			

RESOLUTION 2022-15
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., permits the holding of closed sessions by public bodies in certain circumstances, and the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (“Council”) is of the opinion that those circumstances presently exist; and

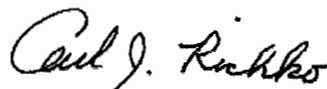
WHEREAS, the Council will discuss personnel matters concerning a prospective employee within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(8);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council may enter into closed session at its public meeting of July 21, 2022 for that purpose. It is anticipated at this time that the nature of the closed session will be made public upon completion or resolution of the issues to be discussed, except any matter protected by the attorney-client privilege will not be disclosed.

This Resolution shall become effective upon a roll-call vote of the Council.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the Resolution adopted by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council at its regular meeting held on the 21st day of July, 2022.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman



**RESOLUTION 2022-15
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Vote on the Approval of The Resolution	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede			✓			
Councilmember Dougherty			✓			
Councilmember Dressler			✓			
Councilmember Francis			✓			
Councilmember Holtaway			✓			
Councilmember James		✓	✓			
Councilmember Sebetich						✓
Councilmember Van Abs	✓		✓			
Councilmember Visioli			✓			
Councilmember Vohden			✓			
Chairman Richko			✓			

RESOLUTION 2022-16
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act) empowers the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) to appoint, retain and employ personnel as it may require without regard to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes but within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available for those purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act authorizes the Highlands Council to conduct its business as needed, subject to the statute, to effectuate the purposes of the enabling legislation; and

WHEREAS, Section 5.g. of the Highlands Act provides for the Highlands Council's appointment of an Executive Director to serve, at the pleasure of the Council, as its chief administrative officer, and shall be a person qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Highlands Act, the Highlands Council has adopted bylaws which provide for the appointment of an Executive Director whose duties are enumerated in said bylaws and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED


1. The Highlands Council hereby appoints Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq. as its Executive Director, at an annual basis of \$135,000.00.
2. The Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to exercise all of the duties and responsibilities as set forth in the bylaws.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its meeting held on the 21st day of July, 2022.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman



RESOLUTION 2022-16
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Vote on the Approval of The Resolution	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede		√	√			
Councilmember Dougherty			√			
Councilmember Dressler			√			
Councilmember Francis			√			
Councilmember Holtaway			√			
Councilmember James	√		√			
Councilmember Sebetich						√
Councilmember Van Abs			√			
Councilmember Visioli			√			
Councilmember Vohden			√			
Chairman Richko			√			