

RESOLUTION 2023-30
REQUESTING AN ALLOCATION OF A PORTION OF THE NEW JERSEY
WATERSHED MORATORIUM AID FOR HIGHLANDS MUNICIPALITIES THAT
QUALIFY BUT ARE NOT CURRENTLY RECEIVING AID

WHEREAS, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act), N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq., created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council or Council); and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-2 declares that the New Jersey Highlands is an essential source of drinking water, providing clean and plentiful drinking water for one-half of the State's population and contains exceptional natural resources such as clean air, contiguous forest lands, wetlands, pristine watersheds, and habitat for fauna and flora for the citizens of the State; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-2 further created a dedicated source of Watershed Moratorium Aid to compensate municipalities hosting watershed lands to offset the impacts to local taxes arising from the devaluation of watershed lands occasioned by the 1990 moratorium on any conveyance of watershed properties; and

WHEREAS, the intent of the enabling statute was both to allow for applications for aid and for an annual increase in the \$47/ per acre payment based upon the Consumer Price Index; and

WHEREAS, the N.J.S.A. 54:1-85 et seq. created the Highlands Municipal Property Tax Stabilization Board and Fund whose duties included allocating aid each year; and

WHEREAS, there are currently eight (8) Highlands municipalities that have watershed lands but do not receive any watershed aid. The estimated aid is reflected in the below table:

Municipality	Acreage Watershed Lands	Estimated Aid
Ringwood Borough	4,784	\$224,848
Harmony Township	2,514	\$118,158
Wanaque Borough	1,692	\$79,524
Clinton Township	375	\$17,625
Lebanon Township	372	\$17,484
Bethlehem Township	214	\$10,058
Bloomingtondale Borough	197	\$9,259
Franklin Township	168	\$7,896

WHEREAS, the Highlands Municipal Property Tax Stabilization Board currently has no members leaving the above towns with no ability to apply for aid; and

WHEREAS, the Council is the lead state agency qualified to oversee the application for and allocation of Watershed Moratorium Aid; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Highlands Council hereby authorizes the Executive Director to request that the legislature amend the current legislation to authorize the New Jersey Highlands Council to oversee applications for and allocation of Watershed Moratorium Aid; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that as an alternative to a legislative change, the Governor appoint the necessary members to the Highlands Municipal Property Tax Stabilization Board.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 14th day of December 2023.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman

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			✓			