



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

June 2, 2025

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order 7:06 pm

- **Stephen Sack Y**
- **Pat Wilson Y**
- **Dave Sagers Y**
- **Ted Newton Y**
- **Kim Hughes Y**
- **Kelly Kennedy Y**
- **Jonathan Ferrigno N**
- **Bernard Pelletier Y**
- **Christy Matthews N**
- **Vacant**
- **Vacant**
- **Staff Liaisons: Katherine Bruns, Catherine Diviney N**
- **Student Reps: Erica Kahn Y, Nathaniel Goldschmidt Y**
- **Public Attendees: Dan Race – Indoor Air Quality Engineer, Conor Schulken (intern), Dan Gleason, Steph Daniel**

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: *Approved (7-0)*.

3. Administrative – vacancies, etc:

- ***Introduced our new intern Conor Schulken***

4. Communications & Community Comment (max 3 min each)

- ***N/A***

5. Ongoing Business

- **Student Rep Reports:**
 - ***Erica Kahn – final trash cleanup at Conard. Earth Week – fast fashion and its environmental impact. Thrift market set up for next year. Kim questioned whether students would have trouble wearing second hand clothes. Erica explained that many students like to “thrift”. Erica will lead the student group next year.***
 - ***Nathaniel – cleanup of parking lot of Eisenhower Park. Leadership set up for next year.***
- **Working Groups Reports**
 - ***Energy – attached. Sustainable Stamford checklist – Mike Cocca working on it.***
 - ***Waste – attached. Monitoring recommendation, discussed later in agenda.***
 - ***Nature Based Solutions – Firefly flyer attached, discussed later in agenda.***
 - ***Communication – attached. Kelly gave latest newsletter stats***
- **Town Engagement**
 - ***Nothing new to report***

- Resident Engagement – newsletter, Instagram, FB, website
 - ***Future discussion items – legislation/advocacy, coordination of volunteers, “partners,” tracking local events to share***
6. New Business
- Highlands Area Resolution –
 - ***Dave notified us that West Hartford could pass a resolution to become a “Highlands Community.” This would enable a funding mechanism for purposes of land acquisition, but does not commit the Town to anything. Dave recommends that the Commission support this to the town. VOTE –The commission recommends that the town accept this resolution and supports sending draft resolution to Town Manager to initiate the Town Council approval process. (7 YES - 0 NO)***
 - Waste Monitoring & Enforcement Recommendation
 - ***Ted presented a recommendation to the town that they work with our waste hauler to create an outreach campaign and provide an incentive to residents to comply with requirements. Recommendation from Ted attached.***
 - ***VOTE: Commission supports to send recommendation to town staff (John Phillips, Director of Public Works). (7 YES - 0 NO)***
 - Cool West Hartford Website mock-up – gaps, edits
 - ***Commission reviewed a draft mock-up of the Cool West Hartford website which is aimed at spurring local climate action among residents and connecting them to resources, as outlined in the Commission’s Report to Town Council.***
 - ***Commission was impressed with the draft website***
 - ***Relabel partners and resources to just be resources***
 - ***Get green light from the town – Dave to talk to Rick***
 - ***1 more month of review – lawn and green space will be reviewed by Kim***
 - ***Longer term – need a project launch plan***
 - Celebrate! WH
 - ***Volunteer Signup: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sS-2XHn8GOWnD7WVBP9isac8jf579rWGS46maPLliyl/edit?usp=sharing>***
 - ***Supplies, tablecloth, banner, HES brochures, QR codes signs, etc. staged in Catherine’s office***
 - ***White board displays / engagement exercise – need to finalize***
 - ***Booths are part of Hunt for Health scavenger hunt***
7. Staff Report
- ***Food drop-off program is exceeding expectations by a factor of 3, yet still need to recognize its overall impact is minimal.***
8. Calendar Updates: 6/7 & 6/8/25 Sa & Su -- Celebrate! West Hartford, 6/7 – Elmwood Clean-up (Kate Farrar)
9. Agenda for Next Meeting – 6/30/25
- ***Legislative results***
10. Adjournment **9:08 pm**

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Energy Working Group Report

May 21 2025

Attendees:

- Catherine Diviney
- Stephen Sack
- Dave Sagers
- Bernard Pelletier
- Michael Cocca
- Dan Gleason
- David Englert

Discussion of building checklist:

- Michael Cocca is working to adapt the Stamford Sustainability Scorecard for Energy and Resilience topics. In addition, he is cross referencing the POCD, Energy Plan, and Climate Emergency document. There is a point system which would score projects. The group recognizes that while this is voluntary it could still have influence. Link to the Stamford Scorecard: <https://www.stamfordct.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/5370/637986838641570000>
- The town is facing real time issues on climate resiliency – specifically street flooding. Some of the resilience topics have implications for energy.
- Other working groups may want to explore the Stamford checklist.
- Mike Cocca plans to have a draft before the next commission meeting
- Screenshot of Stamford scorecard attached below.

Discussion planned with TPZ and DRAC to explore collaboration on sustainability issues.

Celebrate West Hartford:

- The energy working group will highlight Home Energy Solutions and Home Energy Solutions Income Eligible as its topic
- Dave Englert will develop a third act flyer on its September solar tour.
- Dan Gleason will work with Catherine to develop ways of receiving public input. Ideas so far: white board with sticky notes, possible have laptop to record survey responses, have a board with results of KO survey
- Group was asked to sign up for a 2-hour slot to staff the SWHC booth:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sS-2XHn8GOwnD7WVBP9isac8jf579rWGS46maPLIyl/edit?usp=sharing>

Review of Cool WH website:

- Catherine shared the link to the draft page: <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/cool-westhartford>
- Group agreed to review and provide comments before the 30th of May

	Category	Maximum Score
	BH - Building Health	8 points
	EU - Energy Use	23 points
	LA - Landscaping & Open Space	11 points
	LU - Land Use	17 points
	MO – Mobility	29 points
	RE – Resiliency	11 points
	RM – Resource Management	9 points
	UD - Urban Design	11 points
	WU - Water Use	7 points
	Total	126 points

Waste Working Group Report for 6/2/25

Although the Waste Working Group did not formally meet in May, through email we:

- Refined the proposed recommendation to the Town regarding and education and monitoring campaign around state recycling requirements. (To be reviewed and possibly voted on at our June 2meeting.)
- Identified short segments within the 30-minute Waste Not Want Not presentation on WHCi to be used in our newsletter and social media posts. (Still working with WHCi on segment hosting logistics.)

Once the above two items are completed, the WWG would like to hold a brainstorming session on initiatives to propose to or prod the town on to help drive sustainability.

Waste Working Group Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Sustainable West Hartford recommends that the Town (via request to the head of Public Works and/or the Town Manager) work with our waste hauler to:

- 1) Create an outreach campaign to educate residents about existing recycling and waste requirements.
- 2) Provide an incentive to comply with these requirements by 1) monitoring residents' recycling and trash and 2) adding soft enforcement (e.g., not picking up offending bins) 12 months after the education campaign begins.

Support for this recommendation:

- Recycling is state law! Yet visual observations by town staff, residents, and haulers indicate there is substantial non-compliance and contamination. This is costing the town money, as it's more expensive to dispose of waste than of recycling and will become increasingly more expensive in the future.
- Some level of monitoring and enforcement is provisioned in existing waste hauler contract and in Town ordinance (Chapter 94, Section 94-9).
- The Town and the Commission have an increased level of knowledge and awareness about waste and the ever-increasing costs it imposes on the Town. For example, the Town is proceeding with a food scrap diversion program with four drop-off locations so residents can keep food scraps out of the waste stream.
- The Town and the Commission understand this food scraps program is just one small step (not the last) towards a more comprehensive plan of waste reduction, and are committed to reducing our waste stream.
- Surrounding towns have had success reducing both waste and contaminated recycling through an education campaign followed by monitoring for compliance with requirements.
- The Commission will continue to champion efforts the Town can take to reduce its waste.
- When residents have a "relationship with their trash" they take meaningful steps to reduce it.

Suggestions:

- Prior to initiating monitoring (soft start):
 - The Town and the Commission will create an education campaign around recycling and waste requirements. This would be targeted to all residents, including those living in apartments and condominiums.
 - The hauler, the Town and/or volunteers will do informal monitoring, using educational materials (e.g., "oops" stickers) when seeing recycling and waste violations.
- Upon initiating monitoring:
 - Compare recycling and trash metrics to determine how successful the education campaign has been.
 - The education campaign around recycling and waste requirements will continue (and refined as needed).
 - The hauler will not pick up recycling or waste that appears to violate requirements.
 - The Town will explore ways to communicate expectations with haulers registered with the Town to pick up recycling and waste from apartments and condominiums.
- One year after monitoring begins:
 - Compare recycling and trash metrics to determine how successful the education and monitoring have been.
 - Report metrics to Town Council and publicize results to community.

SUMMER 2025



BACKYARD MAGIC



WHERE:
YOUR SUMMER
NIGHTTIME SKY



WHAT:
FIREFLY MAGIC



WHEN:
START TODAY!

It's more about what they DO NOT need! Here are a few tips to make your backyard a habitat for fireflies this summer...and the next!

WHAT DO FIREFLIES NEED?

1

LEAVE THE LEAVES

Rake them into piles around your trees. Make brush piles. Save the cleaning for indoors!

2

LIGHTS OUT

Turn off nearby lights to let the fireflies light the night!

3

PESTICIDE-FREE

Fireflies like a safe habitat free from chemicals like pesticides.

DID YOU KNOW...

INTERESTING FACTS

Fireflies are actually beetles, not flies
Fireflies are carnivores
Fireflies undergo complete metamorphosis - egg, larva, pupa, and adult

HOW MANY CAN YOU COUNT THIS SUMMER?

TAG US @SUSTAINABLEWH

#BACKYARDMAGIC

Cool West Hartford WG Meeting

5/22/25, 6 pm

Attendees: Pat Wilson, Kelly Kennedy, Dave Sagers, Catherine Diviney

Newsletter – Kelly shared a draft of the proposed May Constant Contact newsletter. Group approved to send out to rest of Commission for feedback/approval. Target date for release May 27, b/c of legislative session end, Jun 4. She also wants to establish better timeline for next edition. For Commission - Need to discuss advocacy/legislation.

Instagram – Johnathan set up new Instagram and posted 1st newsletter. For Commission – old Instagram?

Cool West Hartford Website – Catherine, Dan Gleason, and Erin Brown (WH IT Dept) spent time designing simple structure and building mock-up (not live) of website to share with group.

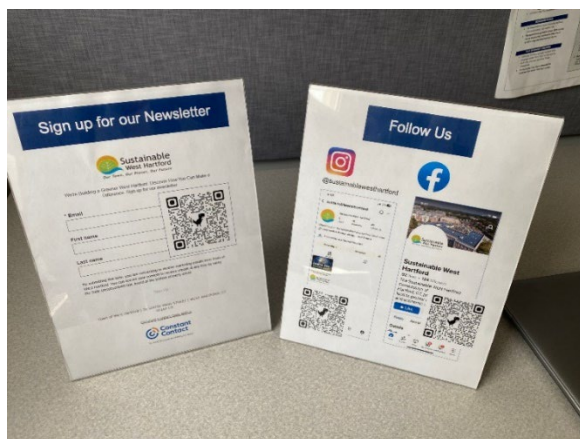
<https://www.westhartfordct.gov/cool-westhartford>

Catherine solicited feedback at Energy WG meeting 5/20 and from Kim Hughes 5/22. Positive general feedback on landing page, and structure of “topic” pages. Language/tone/clarity/content/photos need to be refined. Not as happy with Events and Partners & Resources pages. For Commission – Website will not be ready for June 7. Need plan to fill in gaps, edit language wording. What does it mean to be a partner? Does there need to be a coordinator for partners, volunteers or tracking events if engagement is successful?

Next meeting – Thursday 6/19, 6 pm. Group decided to meet on Thursdays, 2 weeks ahead of Commission meetings.

Celebrate WH – Catherine bought whites boards, markers, tablecloth, sticky notes, pens, etc. for an “engagement” exercise and has made QR codes for newsletter, FB, and Instagram. Volunteer sign up sent out to Commissioners to share with their working groups:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sS-2XHn8GOwnD7WVBP9isac8jf579rWGS46maPLIyl/edit?usp=sharing>





Litchfield Hills Greenprint
Collaborative

COULD YOUR TOWN BE A HIGHLANDS TOWN?



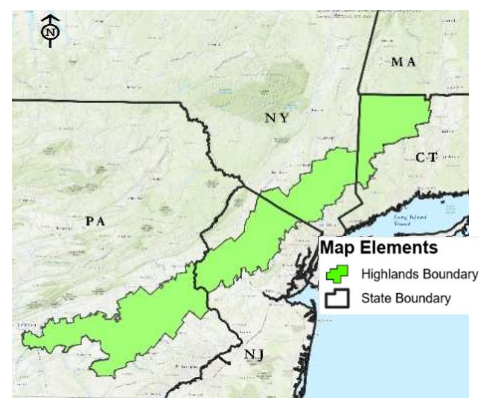
Highlands Conservation Act Objectives:

- * Clean drinking water * Healthy forests * Thriving wildlife populations * Productive agriculture
- * Abundant recreational opportunities

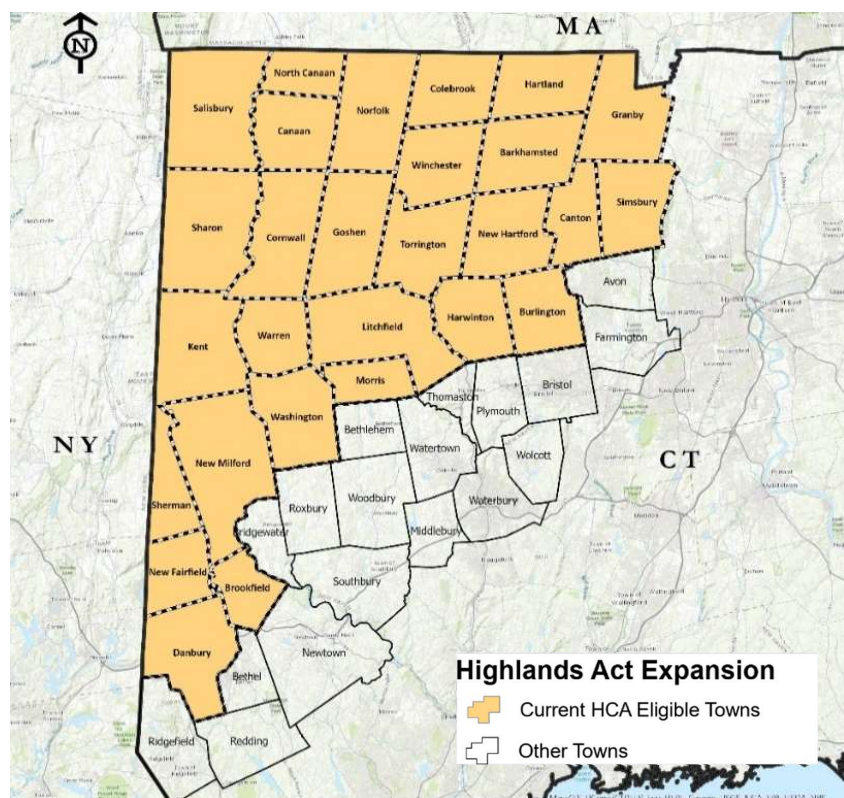
Background: The Highlands region spans 3.4M acres across four states: Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Highlands Conservation Act was first passed by Congress in 2004 to conserve lands with important natural resources in this region. Since that time, it has brought *over \$80 million dollars* in federal conservation funding to the four states for use in Highlands communities. Administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, funds are dispersed by state agencies (in CT, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection), to support land conservation projects that advance Highlands Conservation Act Objectives.

In December 2022, the Highlands Conservation Act was reauthorized with some significant new provisions:

- **Additional Highlands Eligible Towns:** The area eligible for Highlands Conservation Act funding can be expanded to include new towns in the region.
- **Newly Eligible Conservation Interest Holders:** County and municipal government entities can now be recipients of Highlands Act funding for land conservation.
- **Highlands Resource Updates:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife will update its project eligibility criteria in alignment with the conservation objectives, best available data and current science.



What New Towns May Be Eligible For Highlands Act Funding?



The original Highlands Conservation Act identified 28 Northwest CT towns as part of the Highlands Region. Communities southeast of the Rte. 202 corridor in Western Connecticut were left out, although many of these towns have natural resources supporting the conservation objectives the Highlands Act aims to protect. Similarly, in the other three states, towns with Highlands conservation resources were excluded from the Highlands Region.

The reauthorization of the Highlands Conservation Act expansion of the Highlands Region boundary to include additional towns that contain Highlands resources.

We can help your Town apply for inclusion in the Highlands Region (if it is not already) and attract federal conservation dollars for qualified land protection opportunities in your community.

Frequently Asked Questions

- (1) What does my town need to do?
Town leadership (town council, first selectman, mayor) needs to state (e.g. through a letter or resolution) willingness to be added to the Highlands Region.
- (2) How can my town position itself to be eligible for Highlands Act funding?
Indicating your town's willingness to be added to the Highlands Region is the first step in enabling conservation projects in your town to receive Highlands Conservation Act funds.
- (3) Does this commit my town to anything?
No. It will enable your town to be eligible for funding only. It does not commit the town to applying for funding, nor does it guarantee funding.
- (4) Would this impact the town's grand list or mill rate?
No. Being included in the Highlands Region allows for the potential use of federal Highlands funding in efforts to protect property with willing landowners in the community. The funding passes through to qualified state, county or municipal government entities that will purchase conservation land (through ownership, conservation easement, or both in combination).
- (5) Does this add regulations or oversight in my town?
No. If your town is added to the Highlands Region, there will be no additional regulations or oversight, just the potential to access federal funding.
- (6) Is every undeveloped parcel in my town potentially eligible?
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has eligibility criteria based on the Highlands conservation objectives. These criteria are being updated based on the 2022 reauthorization language. We expect along with this update, the criteria will expand to new Highlands towns.
- (7) What happens next?
If your town leadership indicates willingness to be added to the Highlands Region, the letter or resolution will be forwarded to the Connecticut DEEP. The State will make a recommendation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife will have final approval.
- (8) Is there a deadline or a window of opportunity to state my town's willingness to be added?
There is currently no deadline to indicate your willingness to be added to the Highlands boundary. We anticipate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will review requests periodically. There is likely benefit to indicating willingness sooner (e.g. Spring 2023) rather than later.
- (9) How does my town become a conservation interest holder? What does that entail?
While permitted in the 2022 reauthorization language, the details of municipal and county governments receiving Highlands funds for land conservation are still being worked out.

Who can I contact with additional questions?

Housatonic Valley Association
Tim Abbott
(860) 605-5625 | tabbott@hvatoday.org



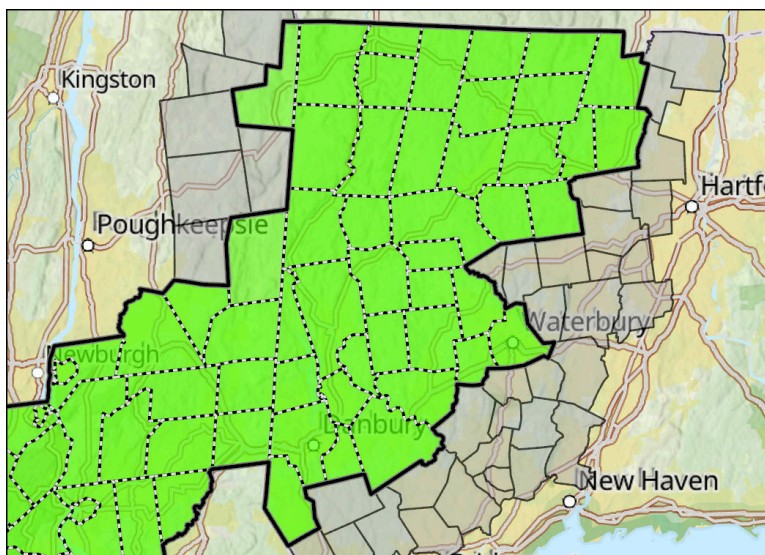
Highlands Conservation Act in CT



Funding Overview

The Highlands Conservation Act (HCA), signed into law in 2004, encompasses 3.4 million acres across four states: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. Administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this funding program protects threatened and endangered species, ensures clean drinking water, creates outdoor recreational areas, and sustains forests and farms. Through a public-private partnership, this critical funding source has supported conservation projects in all four states. In collaboration with the nonprofit land conservation community, it has conserved over 17,000 acres, including over 7,250 acres in Connecticut alone.

Highlands Region & Expansion



- Highlands Conservation Act Region
- Potential Highlands Communities

In December 2022, the Highlands Conservation Act was reauthorized, allowing for the expansion of the Highlands Region.

In 2024, 11 towns in Connecticut were added to the Highlands region. Towns in grey are eligible to be added to the region.

Eligible Projects

Available funds can be used for the purchase of conservation properties or conservation easements within the Highlands Conservation Act Region (see map above).

Projects with strong alignment will support some (or all) of the following:



Biodiversity

Rare species, high quality habitat, species diversity, climate resilience, alignment with State Wildlife Action Plan



Forests

Large forest blocks, connectivity, carbon sequestration, and areas with limited remaining forests



Water

Rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, ponds, drinking water and associated buffers



Recreation

Proximity to existing recreation, scenic views, potential to provide recreation



Agriculture

Existing farmland, prime agricultural soils



Cultural

Within under-resourced communities, risk of development, historic or other cultural value

Funding Breakdown

Each year, Congress appropriates funding from the Land, Water and Conservation Fund for the Highlands Conservation Act. In recent years, Congress has consistently appropriated \$10 million in funding. Thanks to advocates for this funding, in 2019, Congress authorized \$20 million in funding.

Who is eligible for funding?

State agencies
County governments
Municipal governments

What does funding cover?

50% of fair market value of
conservation interest purchased

Base Funding

\$1,460,000

Granted to each of the 4
states if they are able to
demonstrate a conservation
project pipeline justifying
these funds.

Competitive Funding

\$4,800,000

Applied for in a competitive
process between the 4 states.
Awarded to projects with the
highest conservation
resources aligned with HCA.

*Note: dollars represent typical HCA funding allocations, which are subject to change and are at the discretion of US Fish and Wildlife Service in alignment with the Highlands Conservation Act Program

Example Projects

CT OSHA Funds & Highlands

Land Trust A seeks to purchase 100 acres

- Land Trust applies to OSHA for funding up to 65% of fair market value
- Project is included in the State's Highlands Base Funding application for the State to purchase a conservation easement. This may provide up to 50% of fair market value of the conservation easement (valued at \$650,000)
- State and federal funding combined cannot exceed 90% of the fair market value

Purchase Price: \$1,000,000

OSWA: \$650,000 (up to)

Highlands: \$325,000 (up to)

Private Fundraising: \$100,000

Total Federal & State Dollars: \$900,000

State of CT Open Space Watershed and Land Acquisition (OSWA) Grant program provides funding to land trusts and municipalities for purchasing protected open space.

Municipal Purchase of Conservation Land

Town B seeks to purchase 10 acres for a continuing a greenway, and OSHA is not a great fit due to the intensive use.

Purchase price: \$400,000

Highlands: \$200,000

Local/other: \$200,000

CT DEEP Purchased Conservation Easement

Town C has a municipal-run water company totaling 1,300 acres. The Town wishes to protect their public water supply, and the State agrees to purchase a conservation easement on the property, allowing the continued use of the water company

Conservation Easement Purchase Price: \$750,000

Highlands: \$442,500

State: \$132,500

Private Fundraising: \$175,000

Interested in Applying or Have Questions?

The Housatonic Valley Association partners with the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to facilitate the Highlands Conservation Act program in CT. For questions or to explore if Highlands is right for your project contact:

Tim Abbott
Conservation Director
tabbott@hvatoday.org
(860) 605-5625

OR

Julia Rogers
Sr. Land Protection Manager
jrogers@hvatoday.org
(717) 881-4518

Template Municipal Resolution

Template Municipal Resolution.docx

WHEREAS, the Highlands region, encompasses more than three million acres of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region is an area of national significance, possessing substantial natural beauty, containing contiguous forest and productive farmland, numerous cultural and historic sites, plentiful recreation opportunities, and the protection and supply of important drinking water sources for over fifteen million people; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress, in bipartisanship, passed the Highlands Conservation Act, Public Law 10-421 that was signed into law by the President of the United States on November 30, 2004, designating the Highlands as a significant national conservation priority region; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Conservation Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to Highlands States to preserve and protect high priority conservation land in the Highlands region; and

WHEREAS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service manages a voluntary grant program to assist Highlands States, local units of government, and private forest and farm landowners in the conservation of land and natural resources in the Highlands region in coordination with willing sellers; and

WHEREAS, land preservation efforts in the Highlands region should link the parks, historic sites, wetlands, wildlife habitats, streams, rivers, reservoirs, watershed, trails, scenic and natural lands and other protected areas unique to the region for the enjoyment of future generations; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that _____ supports being officially included in the federal Highlands boundary, as maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Highlands Conservation Act grant program, thereby qualifying for financial and technical assistance provided by the U.S. Congress.