

Connecticut-New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania Highlands Region

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Regional analysis and conservation of important lands

Description: The Highlands region of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania is an oasis of national significance on the doorstep of an expanding metropolitan area. The 3.5 million-acre region has abundant private and publicly owned natural resources that provide quality drinking water, recreation, and economic opportunities.

The Highlands Conservation Act of 2004 (HCA), PL 108-421, directed the U.S. Forest Service to expand the *New York – New Jersey Highlands Regional Study: 2002 Update* to cover the Highlands in Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The update analyzed the region's natural resources and the effects of land use change. The law also authorizes Federal assistance for land conservation projects; a Highlands State can acquire and permanently protect land or an interest in land from a willing seller.



Federal legislation directed the U.S. Forest Service to expand the New York-New Jersey Highlands Regional Study (light green) to include the Highlands of Pennsylvania and Connecticut (brown).

Key Issue: Despite the critical importance of natural resources in the Highlands region, substantial economic and social pressures threaten to alter existing land uses.

Project Status:

- *Highlands Regional Study: Connecticut and Pennsylvania 2010 Update:* This update is the third Highlands region report published by the U.S. Forest Service, following the original New York-New Jersey study in 1992 and New York-New Jersey Update in 2002. This report contains a Conservation Values Assessment, and a Growth and Impact Analysis. The update also identifies regional conservation focal areas and conservation strategies.
- **Land Conservation Partnership Projects:** Each of the four Highlands States submits projects every year, which are ranked by a seven-person subcommittee of Federal and State partners. Highlands projects must describe management objectives that will ensure permanent protection and compatible land uses. Projects must also be located in high conservation-value areas identified in the Highlands Study 2002 and 2010 Updates. Funds are allocated to eligible projects and administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, with the highest-ranked project receiving the majority of the funds.
- The study update for Connecticut and Pennsylvania was released for public comment in the spring of 2010 and will be completed in the summer of 2010.
- \$9.2 million has been appropriated to date under the HCA to protect land in the four Highlands States. The HCA also authorizes up to \$1 million annually to assist Highlands landowners; no funds have been appropriated as yet.

Future Direction:

- Until Fiscal Year 2014 when Congressional authorization ends, the Forest Service will coordinate the evaluation and ranking of land conservation partnership projects submitted for funding consideration each year with Federal and State partners.
- If funded by Congress in the technical assistance section of the HCA, the Forest Service will assist the Highlands States, local units of government, individual landowners, and private organizations in identifying and using Forest Service and other technical and financial assistance programs.

An interactive map server containing maps from the Highlands Study 2002 and 2010 Updates is available at the Rutgers University Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis (CRSSA) at

<http://www.crssa.rutgers.edu/projects/hi/>.

Kathryn Maloney, Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)
kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Barb Tormoehn, Group Leader
Office of Knowledge Management
811 Constitution Ave.
Bedford, IN 47421
(812) 276-4744 (9-3423-FAX)
btormoehn@fs.fed.us

Martina Barnes, Regional Planner
c/o US EPA, Region 2, 290 Broadway
24th Floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 637-3863 (3887-FAX)
martinabarnes@fs.fed.us

