

Northern Highlands, New Jersey

Project Details

Location:

Jefferson Township, Morris County; Sparta Township, Sussex County

Acreage:

1,144

HCA Request:

\$2.5 million

Project Highlights

- Protection of ecologically important water resources
- High biodiversity value
- Extensive regional public recreation opportunities
- Continuous with 62,000+ acres of protected land
- Four nearby NJ Registered Historic Places



Lake on the Northern Highlands tract
By Jada Jackson, State of NJ Div. of Parks & Forestry

The State of New Jersey requests Highlands Conservation Act funds to protect the 1,144-acre **Northern Highlands** project, in the heart of NJ's Highlands Preservation Area (designated by the NJ Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act). The tract in Jefferson and Sparta townships is contiguous with the Rockaway River, Weldon Brook and Sparta Mountain State Wildlife Management Areas, and

connects more than 62,000 acres of protected land.

This forested site contains a 12-acre lake, offering boating, swimming and fishing, a Category-1 waterway (NJ's highest ranking), wetlands and vernal pools. Federally listed endangered and threatened species—the Indiana bat and the bald eagle—are found here. Three NJ Audubon Society Important Birding Areas are near the project: the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area, the Pequannock Watershed and the Picatinny Arsenal North/Denmark Lake.

There is an extensive hiking system on the property, with the Highlands Millennium Trail transecting its entire length. The Highlands Trail runs 150 miles through NY and NJ, and connects more than 50,000 preserved acres.

The area is rich with history. Nearby NJ Registered Historic Places include: Dover Milton Historic District; Alfred T. Ringling Manor and R.T. Richards Circus Winter Headquarters; Talmadge Archeological and Historical Complex; and Edison's Iron Ore Concentration Plant.

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The Highlands region is 3.5 million acres of forest, farmland, and rugged hills extending from south-central PA, through NJ and NY into northwestern CT. These eastern-most ridges of the Appalachian Mountains form a greenbelt for the Philadelphia-New York City-Hartford metropolitan area. The Highlands provide clean drinking water for more than 15 million people and are home to more than 250 endangered, threatened, and rare species.

