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Comments for Hearing on for Highlands Protection Act

- The Highlands were protected for a reason - public health, public water supply! The reason has not gone away, so neither should the protections.
- I'm sure that "cost effective" and "common sense" were terms used a lot in the Flint Michigan case, where the water supply was switched from a clean supply to the Flint River which has caused a myriad of public health problems that all rising to public scrutiny now.
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- Quote from DEP Highlands Water Protection & Planning Act Guidance: "The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq. protects drinking water for over 5.4 million people and helps preserve New Jersey's dwindling open space. "
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- Over 5.4 million people depend on the Highlands for their water. Flint, MI has a population of 102,434. We have over 50x the number of people depending on the Highlands for water.
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- If Developers are allowed to invade the Highlands protected forests, we have the potential to create a public health catastrophe 50x that of Flint Michigan.
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- If Developers want to develop properties - turn their attention to the brown fields in the urban areas. Urban areas are growing faster than the remote, or suburban areas of NJ. Pay attention to demographic changes - millennial are choosing to live in cities, not suburbs.
- Vernon is the fastest shrinking town in NJ right now. Pay attention to trends and the big picture: we need the trees, the forest floor, we need the continuous habitat, and more people want walkable urban areas not suburbs.
- DEP works for the public, not land developers. DEP's mission is to protect the environment, not the business climate. It is a different world from 1996 when the last Water Supply Master Plan was published. Think of the growth in North Jersey, especially Jersey City.
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- Development of suburbs is a giant ponze scheme that leaves the tax payer paying for it for years afterwards (in terms of diminished water quality, traffic, etc) : and now by proposing that will degrade water quality, the public will have to buy individual water treatment systems which is a burden on the homeowner and consumer. All because a few developers have their eyes on the protected area of the Highlands.

- Quote from the Water Supply Master Plan Executive summary of 1996: “ Northeastern NJ provides clear evidence of one major success for the 1982 plan. With three new water supplies, no regional deficits are forecast based on the model used. The Hackensack and Lower Passaic/Rahway River areas will likely experience increased use of supplies from the Upper Passaic area, according to projections, but those supplies are available . However, extreme caution is necessary in this region, which is the most highly and densely populated area of NJ. The projections need to be continually checked against new data, and improved modeling is needed. Conservation and integrated reservoir management will still be needed during drought periods. Sub-regional issues such as ground water depletion will also be a continuing concern in this area. Still the water supply situation has greatly improved since 1982.”

Do you really want to be known as the DEP that sold out the Highlands because of some pressure from business interests? It is time for the scientists to revolt and take back the DEP and it's work, and free it from the nonsensical policies it has been proposing lately.