



**NEW JERSEY
HIGHLANDS
COALITION**

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Mendham Alliance for Preservation and Conservation recognized by New Jersey Highlands Coalition

Newly formed Mendham Not-for-Profit receives \$5,000 grant in support of Conservation Efforts

(Mendham, NJ) October 13, 2022 The Mendham Alliance for Preservation & Conservation (MAPC) was recognized and awarded a \$5,000 grant from the New Jersey Highlands Coalition's Annual Meeting, held at Kean University's Skyland Campus this week, in recognition of its newly formed community group with environmental preservation pursuits. The MAPC was officially formed in February 2022 and wants to save the Mendhams for future generations (<https://savemendham.org>).

"We are proud to be recognized by the NJ Highlands Coalition and hope its MAPC collaboration will yield innovative solutions to protect the Green Acres, critical habitats and the sacred headwaters of the Passaic and Raritan Rivers!" says Frank Zammataro President and Co-Founder of the MAPC. The funds will be used to bolster the consultants hired by the MAPC focused on projects that will minimize damage to the rural and historic qualities of the Mendhams. NJ Highlands Coalition Executive Director, Julia Somers added "The New Jersey Highlands Coalition welcomes the MAPC to the growing number of community organizations that have become members of the Coalition, all focusing on preserving the New Jersey Highland's natural resources which also provide over 6.2 million people with precious drinking water."

The impetus for the MAPC started in October 2021 when a "200 Foot" notice was distributed to residents of Mendham Borough and Township as well as bordering residents in Bernardsville. The notice stated that the former Irene Spring Tree Equestrian Farm, encompassing 16, ten-acre lots was being up-zoned to 5 acre lots, potentially adding 10 additional lots to the development. After pleas from the community to delay the vote to further study the impact on the headwaters of the Passaic River and connective wildlife habitat, the Township Committee dismissed a formal protest petition signed by over 50 residents and voted 4 to 1 to proceed with the 5-acre ordinance. Overtime, it became clear that COVID reduced the community's ability to stay diligently involved with township planning board and committee activities including pivotal changes to the Township's Master Plan.

In response, the MAPC was officially formed as a charitable, not-for profit corporation and designated by the IRS to accept tax-exempt donations. The MAPC mission is to provide non-partisan support, advocacy and balance for sustainable land conservation, preservation and stewardship. This includes:

- Helping to ensure the preservation of the rural qualities of the Mendhams;
- The preservation and conservation of the most sensitive areas outlined in the August 2004 Highlands Act and subsequent Regional Master Plan;
- Identification of contiguous space that can be preserved in perpetuity;
- Development of new conservation zoning categories which will limit non-restrictive rezoning in the Township and Borough and create valuable sustainable attributes;
- Retain legal, environmental and engineering talent in support of these conservation and preservations goals;

- Seek support from all residents of the Mendhams, as well as neighboring communities that benefit from the Raritan, Passaic and Whippany Rivers, which headwaters all originate in the Mendhams; and
- Establish a guide which can serve as an aid to incorporate more sustainable qualities in the Mendhams.

The MAPC has continued to monitor and research the Spring Tree development which is poised to submit subdivision (major & minor) plans that could potentially grow the 16 lots to 25 lots in the coming months. The MAPC is seeking to minimize density and maximize preservation, finding a good balance with the priority to “vigorously” protect the headwaters and critical habitat, including the trees on and around the properties.

The MAPC also became aware of another proposal from a local entrepreneur seeking to lease public Green Acres lands for private company research while seeking to help reforestation. While the mycorrhizal fungi science appeared interesting, the rush to lease the public lands created questions regarding the entrepreneurs intent, thus resulting in research and communications with the NJDEP to further understand the process and statutes associated with “Change of Use” application requirements for publicly funded Green Acres space. This activity is being watched closely.

Another new project involves new proposed “preserved farm” bill that would expand permissible publicly funded preserved farm activity to include event entertainment as a new form of revenue. Once again, the MAPC sees this may be a good idea but believes there is not enough refinement in the current legislation draft language to maintain the primary mission of publicly-funded farms as agriculturally focused entities. The MAPC is joining other organizations seeking to further refine S757.

The MAPC has recently established a website <https://savemendham.org> and is seeking to meet with more neighbors who cherish the qualities of the towns and seek to limit un-restrictive development. The main activities of the MAPC will be to identify projects which need organizational and expert support to balance potential growth activities. In addition, the MAPC wants to provide “sustainable thought leadership”, educating all residents and leadership about the best practices emerging across the United States to create sustainable communities.

About:

MAPC: Established to provide support and advocacy for sustainable land conservation, preservation and stewardship in Mendham Township & Borough. (<https://www.savemendham.org/>)

NJ Highlands Coalition: The New Jersey Highlands Coalition represents a diverse network of organizations — small and large, local, regional, statewide and national — and individuals. Our mission is to represent their common goal to protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of drinking water both for the 850,000 people in the Highlands as well as the more than five million people in surrounding areas who depend on Highlands water. (<https://njhighlandscoalition.org/>)