

MONTGOMERY APPROVES SOURLANDS RESOLUTION

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By Jill Matthews, Staff Writer, 08/27/2004

A MOVE BY A NUMBER OF TOWNS TO WIN DESIGNATION AS STATE SPECIAL RESOURCE AREA.

Montgomery - The Planning Board unanimously approved a resolution Monday supporting the identification of the Sourland Mountains as a Special Resource Area in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

The 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan established the concept that in addition to Planning Areas, regions with unique characteristics or resources of statewide importance in New Jersey should be identified as Special Resource Areas, according to the resolution.

Most of the Sourlands region is already identified on the State Plan Policy Map as an Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, or PA5, and a Rural/Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, or PA 4-B, according to the resolution. And the preliminary plan released by the state listed the Sourlands as among the important preservation and conservation areas with unique characteristics, like the Highlands and Pinelands.

Through a Natural Resources Inventory of the entire mountain area, it was discovered that there are five threatened resources there, Planning Board Chair Steve Sacks-Wilner said. They include the groundwater, surface water, local threatened and endangered species, birds on the Atlantic Flyway, and the historic and recreational areas of the Sourlands.

Municipalities that include part of the Sourlands have individually designed plans to protect their portion of the mountain area and are now working together, with the Sourland Planning Council taking an informal lead, to design a regional approach to protecting the area, Mr. Sacks-Wilner said.

"The Sourland Planning Council and the towns are pursuing this in a different way than the Highlands," he said.

Under New Jersey law, the State Planning Commission is required to prepare, revise and adopt the State Development and Redevelopment Plan every three years to ensure that statewide planning policies are coordinated and consistent with local policies. The last State Plan

was adopted in March 2001.

Municipalities are given an opportunity to comment on the State Plan under a cross-acceptance process.

The cross-acceptance process is conducted under the state Department of Community Affairs' Division of Open Space.

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