

MULTI-STATE PRIORITIES: LANDSCAPES AND FOCUS AREAS

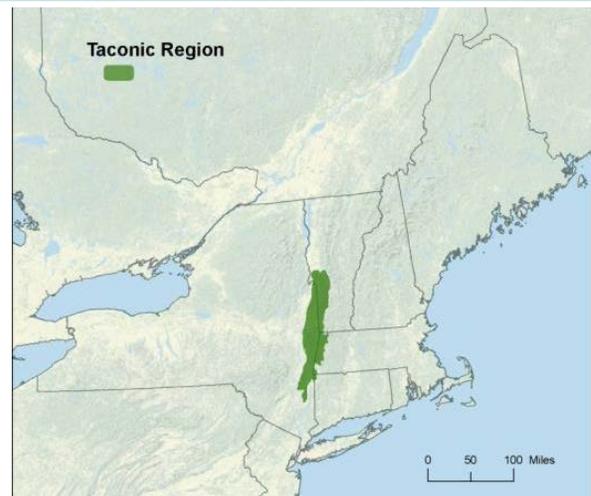
OVERVIEW

Regional and multi-state priority landscapes or focus areas are where states can share resources to address regional threats and opportunities. FPR has a long history of participation in multi-state forest resource projects. These projects have ranged from forest health (for example the North American Maple and the Forest Pest Outreach and Survey projects) and ecological mapping efforts such as the Biophysical Regions project, to participation in the four-state (ME, NH, VT, NY) economic development activities through the North East State Foresters Association. All of these efforts have one thing in common: the need to cooperate across state boundaries to address a pressing regional need. Notably, resource values and threats do not stop at our international border and new initiatives such as the Staying Connected project are an example of this international need. This section incorporates the USDA Forest Service’s “Federally Led Landscape Scale Conservation Initiatives in the Northeast and Midwest” report⁵². This valuable resource will be a guide as FPR pursues common multi-state conservation goals.

! MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPES

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: BERKSHIRE TACONIC

This important forested landscape crosses the mountains of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. The conservation strategy for this area includes land protection, ecological restoration, applied conservation science, collaborative land management, and collaboration with local communities. Efforts in the area include ongoing USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy land acquisition, the New England Governors’ Conference Keeping Forest as Forest grant, and multiple NGO partnerships including the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance.



⁵² Federally Led Landscape Scale Conservation Initiatives in the Northeast and Midwest, USDA Forest Service, 2016, www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability/2016/4283%20FedLedLSCNEandMW_Final_20161019.pdf.

STATES: CT, MA, NY, VT

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: CONNECTICUT RIVER WATERSHED

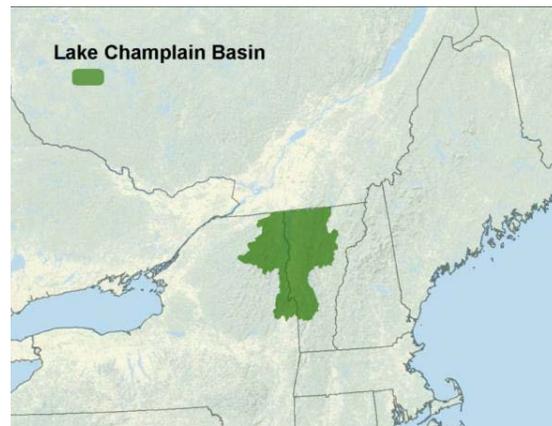
The Connecticut River Watershed is the largest river ecosystem in New England, encompassing approximately 11,000 square miles and spanning four New England states. The Connecticut River was designated as a National Heritage River in 1998, and it is now a national blueway and priority landscape of national significance for the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. This is one of the most at-risk areas of New England for forest fragmentation. Additionally, Congress designated the Mattabesett, Metacomet, and Monadnock (M-M-M) Trails as the New England National Scenic Trail, and this is a multi-state effort including Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. This is an area with multiple federal and state interests, with public land acquisition, access to recreation, and economic interests leading the way.



STATES: CT, MA, NH, VT

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN

This area contains a multi-state, multi-national resource affected by urban development and agricultural runoff. Challenges include maintaining tree canopy and watershed health to reduce pollution and protect water quality. The effort is being coordinated by the Lake Champlain Commission. The basin was also a pilot Signature Landscape of the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. Forestry efforts include the Skidder Bridge Loan Program, which provides logging operations to implement best management practices in an affordable way.



The area has been and continues to be the top priority, and efforts also include an urban green infrastructure initiative in Burlington, VT, which is the most densely populated portion of the basin.

STATES: NY, VT, (Quebec)

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: NORTHERN FOREST LANDS

The Northern Forest Lands region includes 26 million acres stretching from the Tug Hill Plateau in New York, through northeast Vermont, Coos County in New Hampshire, and into the Great North Woods of Maine. Conservation of the Northern Forest has been the subject of much discussion and multi-state cooperation over the last 20 years with the Northern Forest Lands Study and Northern Forest Land Council efforts and continues through several initiatives led by the Northern Forest Center as well as the New England Governors' Conference Commission on Land Conservation.

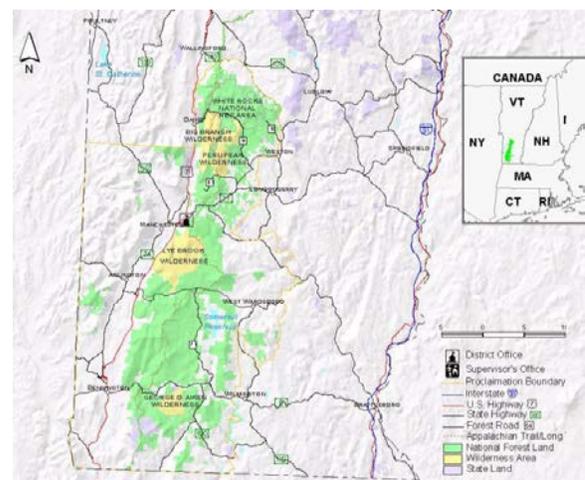


Additionally, these states have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service to actively cooperate in the conservation and management of working forest landscapes in the area. Pilot projects are designed to demonstrate how partners can pool resources and coordinate their efforts in priority areas to protect them from conversion to other uses. The effort is currently engaging stakeholders in developing an implementation strategy. Issues needing attention include forest land conservation, economic development, and community infrastructure.

STATES: ME, NH, NY, VT

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: GREEN MOUNTAIN - BERKSHIRE HILLS

This area is one of the largest (700,000 acres), most heavily forested, and least fragmented working forests in south-central New England. Nearly 70,000 acres have been identified as rare species habitat. It includes the entire watershed of the Deerfield River in Massachusetts and the West River in Vermont.



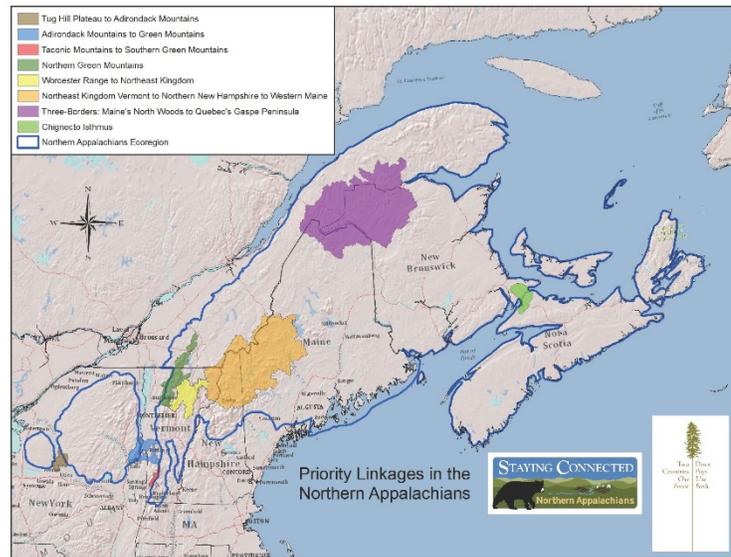
Audubon Vermont has partnered with FPR to create the Foresters for the Birds initiative, which is designed to develop tools and training for foresters who want to help landowners manage their forests with bird habitat in mind. This effort has partnered with Massachusetts Audubon to preserve and enhance habitat in this area. Additionally, the Staying Connected Initiative, an international collaborative effort to conserve, restore, and enhance landscape connectivity with partners that include state

agencies and several nongovernmental organizations, identified this area as a priority. Conservation efforts in this area will help to connect the Connecticut River Watershed and Berkshire Taconic landscapes, and discussions are ongoing related to the development of an easement-based National Forest in the area. Additionally, emerald ash borer was identified in this area of Massachusetts in 2012.

STATES: MA, VT

MULTI-STATE PRIORITY LANDSCAPE: STAYING CONNECTED INITIATIVE

The Staying Connected Initiative began in 2009, when a 21 member, 4 state partnership of state fish and wildlife agencies, state transportation agencies, and nonprofit conservation groups received a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the Nature Conservancy took the lead on this visionary partnership working to restore and enhance landscape connections for the benefit of people and wildlife across the Northern



Appalachian/Acadian region of the eastern U.S. and Canada. The Division is now working with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Vermont nonprofits to be a part of this landscape-scale conservation effort.

An international collaboration, the Staying Connected Initiative (SCI) seeks to conserve, restore, and enhance landscape connectivity across the Northern Appalachian/Acadian region of the U.S. and Canada for the benefit of nature and people. Sustaining connectivity safeguards native wildlife and plants from the impacts of habitat fragmentation and climate change, and supports human activities and values that are tied to the forested landscape. SCI unites its U.S. and Canadian partners to focus the tools of conservation science, land protection, community outreach, land use planning, transportation, and policy to meet its mission.

STATES: NH, NY, ME, VT