

Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation 2010 REPORT TO THE GOVERNORS



New England Governors'
Conference, Inc.

July 2010

Cover photos, clockwise for top left. **1:** Lynx cubs. (Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Department photo) **2:** Working in a greenhouse. (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture photo) **3:** A farmland border. **4:** Scaling logs. (Maine Forest Service photo) **5:** River kayaking. (New England Outdoor Center photo.)

New England Governors' Conference, Inc.

Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation

2010 Report to the Governors

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Maine: Hon. John E. Baldacci

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July 2010

Contents

Executive Summary	6
1. Findings & Recommendations	8
2. Basis for Action	12
3. Keep Farmlands in Farming Initiative	16
4. Keep Forests as Forest Initiative	23
5. Connect People to the Outdoors Initiative	28
6. Protect Wildlife Habitat Initiative	33
7. Safeguard Coastal & Estuarine Lands Initiative	37
Appendix: NEGC Resolution of Sept. 15, 2009	41

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- New England Forestry Foundation,
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“Americans are blessed with a vast and varied natural heritage.... Our working landscapes, cultural sites, parks, coasts, wild lands, rivers and streams are gifts that we have inherited from previous generations.... Americans take pride in these places, and share a responsibility to preserve them for our children and grandchildren.... Today, however, we are losing touch with too many of the places and proud traditions that have helped to make America special. Farms, ranches, forests, and other valuable natural resources are disappearing at an alarming rate. Families are spending less time together enjoying their natural surroundings. Despite our conservation efforts, too many of our fields are becoming fragmented, too many of our rivers and streams are becoming polluted, and we are losing our connection to the parks, wild places, and open spaces we grew up with and cherish....”

“Across America, communities are uniting to protect the places they love, and developing new approaches to enjoying and saving the outdoors.... The federal government, the nation’s largest land manager, has a responsibility to engage with these partners to help develop a conservation agenda worthy of the 21st century. We must look to the private sector and nonprofit organizations, as well as towns, cities, and states, and the people who live and work in them, to identify the places that mean the most to Americans, and leverage the support of the federal government to help these community-driven efforts to succeed.”

President Barack Obama,

White House Memorandum of April 16, announcing America’s Great Outdoors Initiative

“Since President Theodore Roosevelt held the first White House conference on conservation in 1908, we as Americans have taken extraordinary steps to protect our land, water, wildlife, and history for future generations, but today the places we love face new challenges that require new ideas and new strategies to solve.”

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar

White House Conference on America’s Great Outdoors, April 16, 2010

President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative will play an important role in confronting the serious challenges our natural resources face today: climate change, air and water pollution, landscape fragmentation and loss of open space. This effort will bring Americans from across the country together to look for new approaches to protect our national treasures. And it will highlight the importance of working across ownership boundaries to restore and conserve both private and public lands in a way that recognizes that conservation and economic vitality are inextricably linked.”

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

White House Conference on America’s Great Outdoors, April 16, 2010

“If you find yourself a mile into the woods and you decide to come out, you’re likely to be a mile getting there.”

Aroostook expression, often cited by Maine Governor John E. Baldacci

Executive Summary

On September 15, 2009, in Saint John NB, the New England Governors called on their responsible Chief State Officers, in collaboration with appropriate partners and the Commission on Land Conservation (CLC), to develop five integrated initiatives to:

- Keep Farmlands in Farming,
- Keep Forests as Forests,
- Connect People to the Outdoors,
- Protect Wildlife Habitat, and
- Safeguard Coastal and Estuarine Lands.

The CLC then established five Working Groups to develop these initiatives, consisting of state and federal officials and private partners, each chaired by a senior state official. In each case, the responsible Chief State Officer responded to the opportunity presented by Governors in the belief that effective regional action will add value and substantially advance their state's related agendas and goals, especially in a time of severe state budget stringency.



Local produce at market. (Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets photo)

This is an auspicious time to undertake these initiatives in light of the federal government's expressed interest in addressing the nation's resource management issues

at landscape and regional scales, especially through demonstration projects that link the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, and honor the nation's heritage of private land ownership. There is, further, strong federal interest today in rural development matters, local agriculture, livable communities, environmental justice, access to the outdoors, and wildlife habitat and coastal protection.

Finally, there is growing evidence of the wisdom of the Governors' Resolution of September 2009, and understanding within professional circles and the general public of the



Loading logs. (Maine Forest Service photo)

need for continuing action in all five, related areas.

The initiatives developed by the Working Groups and described below share a number of important, cross-cutting themes that underlie all. These include a shared determination to:

- 1. Strengthen the connections in their daily lives between our people and the land that supports them and they steward, to the benefit of each;*
- 2. Make the working lands of New England more profitable and financially viable, by strengthening markets for their products and converting their public benefits from liabilities to assets;*
- 3. Encourage the public to see themselves as part of, and not apart from our natural heritage; educate them to its many values and public benefits and wise uses; and cultivate a conservation ethic as an active duty of citizenship;*
- 4. Mindful of global economic and climate change, enhance economic, environmental, and social resilience across the region, to create more prosperous and sustainable industries and communities throughout;*
- 5. Serve the interests of environmental justice, making the landscape and all its benefits more accessible to underserved populations; and our settled places, more livable and healthy, to discourage sprawling development patterns;*
- 6. Assure coordination and collaboration across the five initiatives, to realize their full complement of benefits;*
- 7. Respect the freedom of each state to choose among the individual elements of each initiative, to meet its own challenges and needs as it sees fit; and*
- 8. Accomplish all this only with the substantial and continuing financial commitment of the federal, state, local,*



The working waterfront of Stonington, Maine. (Jennifer Hutchins photo)

private, and philanthropic partners with a stake in the outcome, at a cost of some \$270 million over three years for the five demonstration projects.

In light of these findings and the progress made by each of the five Working Groups, the CLC recommends that the New England Governors' Conference:

- Authorize the Chief State Officers to continue developing the proposals below as a collaborative regional approach, to pursue them on a priority basis in collaboration with partnering agencies, organizations, and the CLC;
- Call upon the Congressional delegations of the several states to support the development and implementation of these proposals; and upon the Obama Administration to apply related federal programs, staffing, and funding across departmental lines in new and creative ways to achieve the goals cited; and
- Authorize the CLC to seek funding from philanthropic sources to support its work on behalf of the NEGC, sufficient to continue its necessary coordination and integration role, and to secure the support of interested federal agencies and the region's Congressional delegation and philanthropic community.

Findings & Recommendations

On September 15, 2009, meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick, the New England Governors by unanimous vote accepted and adopted the report¹ of their blue-ribbon Commission on Land Conservation (CLC) created a year earlier; established the CLC as a standing commission of the New England Governors Conference, Inc; and called upon responsible Chief State Officers of the six New England states, in collaboration with appropriate partners and the CLC, to develop five, integrated initiatives to:

- Keep Farmlands in Farming,
- Keep Forests as Forests,
- Connect People to the Outdoors,
- Protect Wildlife Habitat, and
- Safeguard Coastal and Estuarine Lands.²

This report responds to the Governors' directive to report with recommendations to the 2010 meeting of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers.

Guiding Principles. In its 2009 report the CLC offered a set of core principles to guide its work and the actions of its partners, namely:

- *New England enjoys one of the most privately-owned and -stewarded landscapes in the nation, and the CLC seeks to honor and strengthen this heritage in all its work;*



Working in a greenhouse. (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture photo)

- *It is today insufficient to view land conservation as a “good” solely for its natural benefits; it must today be linked directly with economic and social benefits, as well.*
- *Multi-state collaboration toward New England land conservation, to protect and conserve this important natural heritage at a regional scale, is a matter of national interest, particularly in light of global economic and climate change and their impacts; and is, therefore, deserving of federal support.*
- *Whatever the Governors may ask of the federal government in this regard must be expressed in terms of advancing the national interest, and proposed as a pilot project for the nation.*

We continue to hold to these principles and believe in their efficacy as we collaborate with the several Chief

¹ See Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation, New England Governors Conference, Inc., September 2009, available at www.necg.org and <http://efc.muskie.usm.maine.edu>.

² See Appendix , New England Governors Resolution dated September 15, 2009.

State Officers and their partners in development of the five initiatives.

Findings. In the months following the NEGC Resolution of September 15, 2009, the CLC, in collaboration with the Chief State Officers involved, established five Working Groups to develop the initiatives called for by the Governors. A status report on the work of each is contained in sections 3 through 7 of this report.

In the course of its work, the Commission has found that:

- In each case, the responsible Chief State Officer has responded to the opportunity presented by the Governors, in the belief that effective regional action will add value and substantially advance their state's related agenda and goals, especially in a time of severe state budget stringency and growing awareness of the inter-connections among the region's natural resources and economic opportunities, across jurisdictional boundaries. At the same time, they recognize that effective regional action will take time, careful planning, and trust-building among the public, private, third-sector, and philanthropic sectors.



Assessing a fresh cut. (Maine Forest Service photo)

- In keeping with the CLC's guiding principles, each initiative described below is put forward as a national demonstration project, or as part of one. Each is not now in the same state of maturity, as past efforts at regional collaboration have been uneven, and this is reflected in the five proposals. The most advanced, perhaps, is that of the State Foresters, as

the northern-tier states have been working together with New York for several years on a regional Northern Forest initiative, in collaboration with the USDA's U.S. Forest Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service. The southern-tier State Foresters have now joined in this work, to fashion a New England/New York proposal. Similarly, the New England-wide wildlife initiative is part of a national demonstration project of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife

Service's "Landscape Conservation Cooperatives" initiative, stretching from Maine to Delaware. At a preliminary stage is New England's response to the recently announced White House initiative, "America's Great Outdoors."

The CLC acknowledges that progress on the five initiatives will remain uneven for a period of time, and that patience and persistence on the part of the several states will be required to see them to maturity. We are at the beginning; and only time and continuing commitment will bring these regional collaborations to fruition, make

them self-sustaining, and realize their full potential benefits to the people and natural resources of New England and the nation.

- This is a most auspicious time to undertake these initiatives, in light of the federal government's own agenda and expressed interest in addressing the nation's resource management issues at landscape and regional scales, through demonstration projects that link the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, and honor the nation's heritage of private

land ownership. This is well-expressed in the words of Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to the recent White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors:

“President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative will play an important role in confronting the serious challenges our natural resources face today: climate change, air and water pollution, landscape fragmentation and loss of open space. . . . And it will highlight the importance of working across ownership boundaries to restore and conserve both private and public lands in a way that recognizes that conservation and economic vitality are inextricably linked.”³

There is, further, strong federal interest today in rural development matters, local agriculture, livable communities, environmental justice, access to the outdoors, and wildlife habitat and coastal protection. The Administration in Washington seeks to overcome traditional bureaucratic boundaries and bring new, interagency partnerships to bear, within and among the silos of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, Defense, Housing & Urban Development, and Transportation, and the EPA. This is manifest in the energetic federal engagement in each and all of the CLC’s five Working Groups. There is need now for this interest to be expressed in direct federal support for each of these initiatives, both in cash and, more importantly in the near-term, in kind.

- Finally, there is growing evidence of the wisdom of the Governors’ Resolution of September 2009 and of growing understanding in professional circles and among the general public of the need for continued and concerted action in all of the five, related initiatives. Many recent publications on their topics point to increased concern for the condition of these resources and the fate of the industries and communities that depend on them. The 2005 U.S. Forest Service publication, “Forests on the Edge,” indicated that, nationally, 44.2 million acres of private forest land was projected to experience substantial increases in residential development in the coming decades, the largest to occur in the Northeast. Increased housing density and development can lead to altered hydrology and climatology, decreases in forest health and wildlife and plant habitat, and changes in traditional uses of forests. Recent studies, widely reported and commented upon in the press, could be cited for each of the other areas of our concern – agriculture, access to the outdoors, and wildlife habitat and coastal conservation.⁴



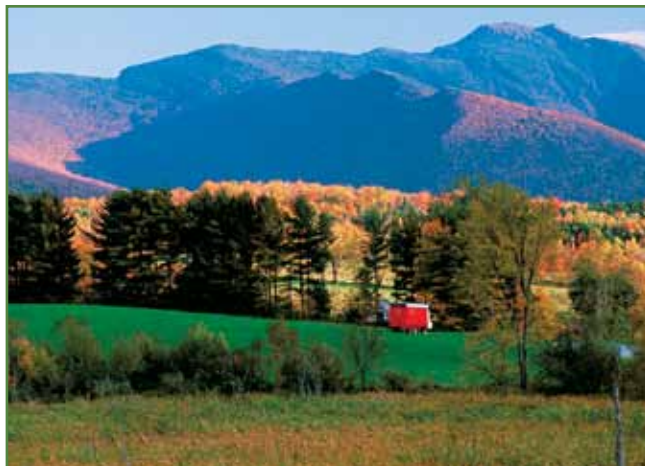
Lupines at the edge of farmland. (New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food photo)

³ Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, White House Conference on America’s Great Outdoors, Washington DC, April 16, 2010.

⁴ Stein, Sarah, et al., U.S. Forest Service, 2005. See also, for example, Christina D. Economos et al., “Tipping the Scales in Favor of Our Children,” The Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, Wellesley MA, June 2008; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative,” November, 2009; and Rhode Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy et al., “” December 2009.

Common Themes and Commitments. By design, the five initiatives developed by the Working Groups and described below share a number of important, cross-cutting themes that underlie all. These include a shared determination to:

- 1. Strengthen the connections in their daily lives between our people and the land that supports them and they steward, to the mutual benefit of each;*
- 2. Make the working lands of New England more profitable and financially viable by strengthening markets for their products and converting their public benefits from liabilities to assets;*
- 3. Encourage the public to see themselves as part of, and not apart from our natural heritage; educate them to its many values and public benefits and wise uses; and cultivate a conservation ethic as an active duty of citizenship;*
- 4. Mindful of global economic and climate change, enhance economic, environmental, and social resilience across the region, to create more prosperous and sustainable industries and communities throughout;*
- 5. Serve the interests of environmental justice, making the landscape and all its benefits more accessible to underserved populations; and our settled places, more livable and healthy, to discourage sprawling development patterns;*
- 6. Assure coordination and collaboration across the five initiatives, to realize their full complement of benefits;*
- 7. Respect the freedom of each state to choose among the individual elements of each initiative, to meet its own challenges and needs as it sees fit; and*
- 8. Accomplish all this only with the substantial and continuing financial commitment of the federal, state, local, private, and philanthropic partners with a stake in the outcome, at a cost of some \$270 million over three years for the five demonstration projects.*



Farmland in Pleasant Valley, Vermont. (Dennis Reeder photo, courtesy of American Farmland Trust)

Recommendations. In light of these findings and the progress made by each of the five Working Groups, the Commission recommends that the New England Governors' Conference:

- Authorize the Chief State Officers involved to continue developing the proposals below as a collaborative regional approach, to pursue them on a priority basis in collaboration with partnering agencies, organizations, and the CLC;
- Call upon the Congressional delegations of the several states to support the development and implementation of these proposals; and upon the Obama Administration to apply related federal programs, staffing, and funding across departmental lines in new and creative ways to achieve the goals cited; and
- Authorize the CLC to seek funding from philanthropic sources to support its work on behalf of the NEGC, sufficient to continue its necessary coordination and integration role, and secure the support of interested federal agencies and the region's Congressional delegation and philanthropic community.

Basis for Actions

New England today faces unprecedented and profound threats to its land and natural resource base. Climate change and its impacts, fragmentation of the landscape from sprawling development and the generational turnover in farming and forestry operations, and insatiable demand for coastal property threaten the viability of the resource-based industries, plants, and animals that depend on these lands. They also threaten the human experience of our natural world. As an historic marker of change, tourism now eclipses forestry and farming as a source of employment in the region's rural places; and tourism depends directly on these very qualities of the landscape and rural industry.

This landscape may also be viewed as the green infrastructure that future generations of our citizens will require for health, well-being, and prosperity. The New England experience of place – human in scale, with close-by access to the land – resonates widely among Americans at large. As the nation urbanizes, efforts to re-create elsewhere what New England has long enjoyed come at a time when our

own qualities of the landscape are in peril. Happily, growing public awareness of climate change and its impacts, the role farms and forests play as carbon sinks, the greatly increased demand for locally-grown foods and resurgence of small-scale, community-supported agriculture, all raise the urgency of and public receptivity to thoughtful conservation initiatives.

New England has for at least a century been a national leader in maintaining and renewing the human benefits of land conservation. A highly developed New England land trust community and creative uses of the conservation easement – both New England inventions – are powerful assets now in use across the country. New England may once again lead the nation, this time through a collaborative partnership among the public, private, and non-governmental actors necessary to effective land use and conservation in the 21st century.

This is, moreover, a critical time to engage the next generation of citizens of New England to care about our landscape and quality of place as an active duty of citizen-

ship. With a public that is increasingly urban and suburban, more ethnically diverse, and in many cases with limited access to the outdoors, there is compelling need across the region to engage a new generation in land conservation. A lost generation at this juncture will prove devastating to them, to the landscape, and to the industries that depend on it.

The Commission continues to believe that the time is now for a high priority and broadly-conceived land conservation effort that transcends state boundaries and the public and private sectors; and will build a lasting legacy of its wise use



Shopping for greens at a Maine farmers' market. (Jennifer Hutchins photo)

for future generations. We need nothing less than a paradigm shift that fully recognizes the economic, social, and natural benefits the public receives from our diverse landscapes, and an ambitious, pan-New England approach to land conservation that will reflect the importance of the resource to future generations.

Many worthy federal, state, local, and private efforts over the past two decades have attempted to address the growing threats to the New England landscape and the industries it supports, but have proven insufficient to the objectives at hand, at the required scale. Effective action must go well beyond incremental change and improvements to existing programs.

The time is right for New England to set an ambitious agenda, one that will require unprecedented collaboration among local, state, and federal interests, and engage private landowners with public agencies and non-profit organizations. A new funding model is required, as well, a true and lasting federal, state, local, private, and philanthropic partnership that may serve as a national model for other regions.

Forward-thinking policies can inform events and shape outcomes. The outcomes we foresee for this effort, in terms of both quality and quantity, promise a strong, self-renewing legacy on the New England landscape. These include:

- *Farms and forests* – a new, national model to increase reliance on the region’s privately-owned farms and forests; to grow, produce, and consume more local agricultural and forest products; and to displace building materials with carbon footprints that vastly surpass that of wood;
- *Climate change mitigation and adaptation* – maintain



Skidding logs. (Maine Forest Service Photo)

large, contiguous tracts of farmlands and forests, increase their carbon storage capacity, facilitate their adaptation to climate change, and mitigate their loss with new forest cover in cities, suburbs, and marginal farm land;

- *Energy* – exploration and development of greatly increased renewable and sustainable energy resources across the region, where consistent with other values;
- *Sustainable development* – maintenance of a diverse landscape on which economic opportunity, environmental integrity, and community development are effectively linked and integrated across the region, in both urban and rural places;
- *Biodiversity* – conservation of the existing natural landscape and effective adaptation of plant and wildlife habitat adversely affected by development, climate change, and invasive species;
- *Culture and recreation* – maintenance and enhancement of the natural landscapes’ cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities; and
- *Public education* – greater opportunity to experience and learn from nature close to home, wherever one may live or visit in New England.

Keep Farmlands in Farming. New England’s farms are keystone to the region’s identity, landscape, economy, environment, and public and community health. The family farmers who steward the region’s farmlands have close ties to their communities and a strong conservation ethic. While these farms produce myriad public benefits and sustain the region’s land, air, water and wildlife resources, their economic viability continues to be imperiled by global competition, rising production costs, the weight of regulations, and the challenges of farming on the urban edge.

The over-riding challenge facing New England agriculture today is farm profitability. The Commission seeks to increase farm profitability, stabilize the land base on which farms rely, expand the region’s agricultural capacity and food security, and protect the activities that keep working landscapes working. We see important economic opportunities associated with ecosystem services, local agriculture, agri-tourism, and value-added and institutional markets; and believe significant new investments will be needed to rebuild the region’s deeply impaired food systems.

Keep Forests as Forests. Bold action is needed today to keep one of the region’s signature resources – its forests – intact and financially viable, and to maintain the many values and public goods they provide. In the face of anticipated changes in the global climate and economy, each acre of forest is important, has value, and contributes to sustaining the health and well-being of the region’s citizens, communities, forest products industry and forest-based tourism, and ecosystems.

Healthy forests are inextricably linked to healthy communities. Today, while there are exceptions, much of this forest is threatened by conversion to other uses and further fragmentation. Facing an uncertain future of climate and environmental change, an intact natural landscape offers

the best opportunity for both mitigating and adapting to climate change. A top priority for all New Englanders must be to ensure that this globally-important forest resource will remain indefinitely intact, healthy, productive, profitably and sustainably managed, and accessible to all segments of society.

Connect People to the Outdoors. Growing urban populations, suburban sprawl, and diminished opportunities for young people to experience and enjoy our natural environment have contributed to a growing lack of public awareness regarding conservation and resource stewardship matters. In the long-term, the preservation of our natural world will be linked to the connections our citizens feel with nature. This in turn will be linked to the political and financial will to protect and conserve natural places. Connecting a younger, culturally diverse citizenry to nature will require innovative programs, public outreach, and new approaches to land use and land planning.

Natural places offer people the opportunity to invigorate the body and refresh the spirit, a refuge and respite from the demands of daily life. Close to home, these parcels may inspire their users with a love of nature and the outdoors, and become a nursery of conservationists who will think on a regional, national, and global scale. Opportunities to visit and learn about landscape-scale conservation where natural



Rhode Island shore. (Nat Rea photo)

processes, plants, and wildlife remain largely intact and public values are maintained, are as important and influential as a visit to a local green space.

Protect Wildlife Habitat. The conservation of our region's wildlife resources is an economic as well as a biological necessity.⁵ The goals of sustainable economic and community development, mitigating and adapting to climate change, efficient transportation planning, development of alternative energies, and broadening a public constituency for wildlife will all be enhanced by bringing to bear the best available knowledge to inform decisions at all levels, and by effectively balancing the conservation of plant and animal habitats with these objectives. There is compelling need for a collaborative initiative to encourage and energize this decision-support system.

The northeastern states have made great progress of late on a number of related fronts, including developing regional definitions for standardized characterization of habitats; coordinating the development of consistent approaches to link habitats across political boundaries; development, with public participation, of comprehensive State Wildlife Action Plans that detail species most at risk, habitats that these species depend on, and priority tasks for their conservation; and collaborative

⁵ According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, approximately \$5,311,377,000 was spent in the New England states in 2006 for wildlife related recreation, including angling, hunting, and wildlife watching.

approaches to critical fish and wildlife habitat conservation at landscape-scale across political boundaries, including the impacts of climate change on habitat conservation approaches.

Safeguard Coastal & Estuarine Lands. New England's coast and estuaries are at once among our most beautiful, fragile, and ecologically and economically important assets; they are also the most densely populated part of the five states fronting saltwater. They are a magnet for recreation, host to significant historic resources, the site of many unique environmental functions, and an economic engine for fisheries, tourism, shipping, and other valuable pursuits. Because of so many amenities and opportunities, the coastal area especially suffers from overdevelopment that can cause irreparable harm to important natural systems and built assets, and public access to these. Impacts from climate change are already seen along our coasts, on land that is particularly sensitive to the resulting elevated sea level



River kayaking. (New England Outdoor Center photo)

and increased storm frequency.

Land conservation plays a particularly critical role in meeting coastal resource protection and management objectives, from water quality protection to public and commercial fishing access. Conservation of coastal and estuarine lands helps achieve multiple objectives of resource protection, public access, floodplain management, and storm and scenic character protection; and will be especially important as the region works actively on climate change adaptation.

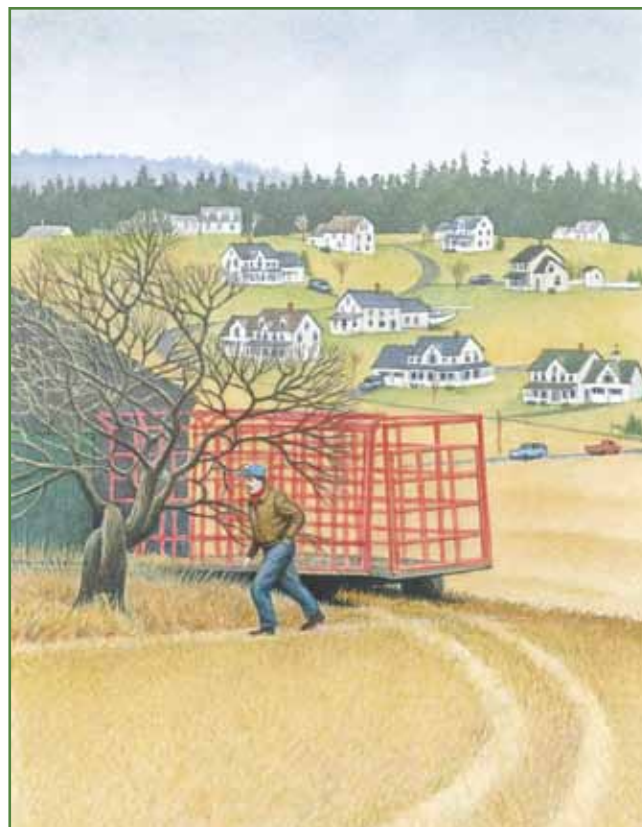
KEEP FARMLANDS IN FARMING INITIATIVE

A New England Farm & Food Security Initiative (NEFFSI) to Strengthen New England's Food System and Improve the Region's Economy, Environment, and Public Health

Agriculture has shaped New England's economy, identity and self-reliance for centuries. After decades of steady loss of the region's farmland and farm infrastructure, New England agriculture is today at a most promising crossroad. Surging demand for local food is providing exciting new market opportunities. Growing obesity rates and the lack of access to healthy and affordable food for many of the region's residents foster new partnerships between the agricultural and public health communities to combat food deserts and increase the availability of local fruits and vegetables in schools and other institutions.

Rising demand for renewable energy is fueling development of methane digesters and on-farm wind and solar projects, while research suggests potential for future renewable energy generation opportunities from biomass grown on the region's marginal agricultural land. New marketing models have encouraged a new generation of direct market-oriented farmers and significant growth in new farms in the region.

Heightened public consciousness about food safety and security, climate change, and shrinking carbon footprints offers a vital window of opportunity to address and improve New England's food resiliency. Overly reliant on a global supply chain for its food and energy needs, New England now produces less than 10 percent of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the region, and barely half of



(John Luoma illustration)

the milk and cheese.⁶ Increasing the region's capacity to feed its 14 million residents and ensuring the sustainability of the region's farms and farmland needed to produce food and renewable energy in the future is the focus of this initiative.

Goals

In September 2009 the New England Governors' Conference tasked the six state Chief Agricultural Officers to develop a New England Farm and Food Security Initiative "to keep Farmland in Farming that will protect the region's agricultural land base; determine the region's capacity and barriers to increased production, use, and consumption of New England grown farm and food

⁶ Presentation by Tim Griffin, Tufts University Agriculture, Food and Environment Program, Concord, NH, January 29, 2010



Walking the fields.

products; and identify barriers to and opportunities for expanding regional agricultural production and consumption.”

The New England Farm and Food Security Initiative (NEFFSI) offers an unparalleled opportunity and potential model for multi-state collaboration and cooperation around a region’s food system. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be a critical partner in this effort, as will the region’s universities, philanthropic community, and the New England Governors’ Conference and its Commission on Land Conservation. Over the next three years, NEFFSI will focus on regional-scale research, projects, investments, and policies to:

- Enhance and strengthen New England’s food system infrastructure,
- Spur job creation and economic growth in the region’s farm and food sectors,
- Retain and protect the region’s working farmland resources,
- Improve access to nutritional foods in the region’s urban and rural communities,
- Strengthen the profitability and sustainability of the region’s dairy farming industry,

- Foster long-term farm profitability and sustainability, and
- Expand farm production capacity.

Harnessing Momentum Around Local and Regional Food Systems

Growing demand for locally-grown food and farm products has fueled new market opportunities for the region’s 33,000 farms and spurred significant increase in new farm businesses. Direct-to-consumer sales in the region increased 62 percent from 2002 to 2007, helping to increase by 30 percent the total market value of agricultural products sold.⁷ Each of the six New England states has developed programs to encourage direct marketing and expand sales to schools and other institutions, making the region a national leader in delivering local food and farm products at the retail and institutional level.

Indicators suggest a continued upward demand curve for local farm and food products, and for the land needed to sustain this production. Commitments to source locally are driving the region’s food distributors and food service providers to explore processing, freezing, and storage options that will extend and expand their local product offerings. Expanding participation in the *Keep Local Farms*⁸ program suggests strong retail and institutional interest in

⁷ 2007 Census of Agriculture.

identifying with regionally-produced milk and consumer willingness to support the region's dairy farms, to ensure a continuing supply of fresh, regionally-produced milk and dairy products. Emerging carbon credit markets and state mandates on the percent of renewables in their energy portfolios will continue to foster investment in on-farm energy generation; while efforts to improve public health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables will likely drive an expansion in regional fruit and vegetable production.

Accordingly, there is new emphasis throughout the region on local and state planning around food systems. In Vermont, for example, the Farm to Plate initiative is drafting "20 Big Goals for 2020," including ambitious goals to reduce food insecurity, increase the percent of local food in state residents' diets, and protect farmland as part of a statewide, ten-year strategic plan to strengthen Vermont's farm and food sector.⁹ The newly-formed Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership, in collaboration with the state Division of Agriculture, is at work on a five-year strategic plan to guide investments in the state's agricultural industry



Market day in Boston. (American Farmland Trust photo)

and capture new market opportunities. Legislative efforts are underway in Massachusetts to create a Food Policy Council that combines agricultural, public health, and nutrition interests. Local and sub-state efforts to scale-up production and consumption of locally-produced farm and food products abound.

Creating a robust and resilient regional food system could stimulate significant economic growth. Vermont's Farm to Plate initiative estimates that doubling the consumption of VT-grown food by VT residents from 5 to 10 percent, would recycle an additional \$100 million in food dollars through the state's economy.¹⁰ Similarly, data produced by food system analyst Ken Meter shows that a 20 percent increase in the local food served in New England's public schools could return an additional \$30 million to the region's farm economy.¹¹ The University of New Hampshire,

through its Food Solutions New England project, recently reviewed the economic contribution of the local food system to the New Hampshire economy, and concluded that increasing the contribution from the state's farm and food manufacturing sectors to the state's economy, from \$560 million to \$700 million (a 25 percent increase) by 2015 is an ambitious but achievable goal.¹²

Regional Opportunity and Federal Synergy

As demand challenges the region's food production, processing, and distribution capacity, the need for regional-scale strategies to complement state actions has

⁸ See: <http://www.keeplocalfarms.org/>

⁹ See: Projects | Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See: Dorothy Brayley presentation, January 29, 2010, Northeast Farm to School Network Steering Committee

¹² See: Home Grown: the Economic Impact of Local Food Systems in New Hampshire, Food Solutions New England, University of New Hampshire, April 2010

grown ever-more apparent. This is especially true in the areas of research and extension, processing, distribution, branding, and procurement. Maximizing economic opportunities in the region's farm and food sectors will require greater policy harmonization among the states and increased adaptability and flexibility in federal farm, nutrition, and food safety programs and regulations.

Needed public and private investments in food system infrastructure will be more effectively targeted and leveraged through strategic regional planning and cooperation. The influence of the region's sizeable Congressional delegation in Farm Bill and other federal policy deliberations will be more fully felt if coordinated around a shared regional food system agenda.

Seldom has the potential for federal-regional-state collaboration around New England's farm and food sectors been stronger. Three major initiatives of the Obama Administration provide immediate opportunity to develop shared goals and implementation strategies across the region. The first, the national *Let's Move!* Campaign recently launched by First Lady Michelle Obama to pursue recommendations from the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, offers promise to increase production of fruits and vegetables and create greater access to local and healthy foods.¹³ The second, *America's Great Outdoors Initiative* launched at the recent White House conference, will focus in part on strategies to help advance state and local conservation priorities, which in New England include farmland protection, land access and transfer strategies, and increased technical assistance.¹⁴

Some funding has already flowed to New England through the third Administration initiative, USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* program. Earlier this year,

¹³ See: White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Report to the President

¹⁴ See: America's Great Outdoors

¹⁵ See: Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food - Our Mission



Pumpkin cultivation. (New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food photo)

cost-share assistance was made available to producers for season-extending "high tunnels," and some research funding was provided last year to assess the capacity of the Northeast to produce enough food locally to meet market demand. In focusing USDA resources on efforts better to connect farmers with consumers, the initiative is a natural fit for strategies aimed at scaling up regional food production and consumption.¹⁵ Deputy USDA Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, who spearheads the initiative, joined the first meeting of the NEFFSI in January 2010 in Concord NH to brainstorm the potential for collaboration between the two initiatives. At her suggestion, the NEFFSI recently produced for USDA a list of twelve, near-term actions (the "Do-Able Dozen") that USDA can take within existing authority to help build a stronger and more resilient food system for New England.

NEFFSI Focus Areas and Projects

The six state Chief Agricultural Officers have developed six areas of focus for the NEFFSI. Additional focus areas and projects will be added as resources permit. The six focus areas, with examples of current and potential projects and projected funding needed for the next two years, are:

1. Regional Assessment of Current and Future

Capacity. Current research efforts are focused on developing a baseline of regional production, consumption and self-sufficiency data, and assessing the capacity of the region's land base, marketing, and processing infrastructure to support increased production of local foods. Additional research is needed to assess regional job and economic growth potential associated with increased regional food consumption.

Funding needed: \$100,000 annually for two years

2. Farm to Institution.

The NEFFSI is currently coordinating with the Northeast Regional Farm to School Network on a region-wide, \$250,000 USDA-Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) proposal. Grant funds would be used to encourage more locally-sourced foods in the region's public schools through the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh program, and explore freezing and light processing for institutional markets at two regional food processing centers. Other identified projects include:

- USDA commodity and DOD Fresh supply chain mapping;
- Supply and demand analyses for local foods, including fruits, vegetables, seafood, beans, grains, dairy and meat products; and
- Continued capacity building for Farm to School programming, networking, information ser-

vices and technical assistance in the region.

Funding needed: \$1,000,000 annually for two years

3. Food Safety. Work in this area is likely to focus on federal and state-level Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

and other protocols to meet pending legislative and regulatory proposals regarding food safety, particularly for small processors and produce farmers. Projects are likely to include:

- Analysis of state-level GAP programs and their compatibility with federal FDA standards;
- Development of a regional GAP standard and work with individual commodity groups who may wish to pursue commodity-specific GAP certification; and
- Creation of a regional training and cost share program.

Funding needed: \$500,000 annually for two years



Arranging flowers at a Maine Farmers' market. (Jennifer Hutchins photo)

4. Dairy. Severe financial

strain on the region's dairy industry has caused the loss of 150 dairy farms in New England in the last two years alone, and could mean the loss of another 10 percent or more in the next year. Given the importance of these farms to the region's economy, environment, and land base, the NEFFSI will continue to urge immediate short-term federal action to address dairy farm viability in New England, as it did in its April 21, 2010, letter to Deputy

Secretary Merrigan.¹⁶ The NEFFSI will also focus on longer-term policy reforms and options at the federal and state level, and opportunities to engage consumers and institutions directly in the marketplace through the Keep Local Farms program.

In addition to the above, current projects include:

- Research on potential institutional demand around the region for locally-grown and processed dairy beef, and an accompanying pilot project involving a processing facility in Westminster, VT;
- A regional “milkshed” study to help consumers understand where their milk comes from and assess new market opportunities for dairy farmers;
- Promoting and seeking funds for the *Keep Local Farms* program, a regional pilot program that connects consumers with dairy farmers through education and direct support.

Funding needed: \$600,000 annually for two years, plus a minimum of \$4,000,000 for Keep Local Farms payments of an average \$2,000 per farm.

5. Meat Processing. Lack of slaughter and processing capacity in the region is a serious impediment to increased consumption of regionally-produced meat. Current and potential projects include:

- Continued region-wide dialogue with USDA over federal Food Safety and Inspection Service regulations around slaughter and processing facilities;
- A New England pilot to allow the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat or, alternatively, development of a regional meat inspection model;
- Coordination of regional programs and training for current and prospective plant owners.
- A regional livestock processing assessment, to exam-



An orchard-side table. (New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food photo)

ine potential regional livestock production capacity and slaughter and processing infrastructure needed to meet increased production.

Funding needed: \$250,000 annually for two years

6. Farmland Protection. The high cost of land and continued conversion of farmland to development threaten the long-term viability of farming and food production in New England. Permanent protection of farmland resources with agricultural conservation easements that support current and future agricultural use is critical to preserving these irreplaceable regional assets and to encourage new farm businesses and the transfer of farms from one generation to the next. The 2007 Natural Resources Inventory by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service shows a 7 percent drop in New England’s cropland acreage in the last five years, continuing a decline and conversion of nearly 300,000 acres of farmland to development since 1982.

¹⁶ See letter from Chief Agricultural Officers Bradstreet, Merrill, Allbee, Soares, Ayars and Prelli to Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, April 21, 2010.

Projects in this area will include:

- Mapping the region's strategic agricultural resources and examining land availability near and in the region's metro areas;
- Addressing land access and affordability through expanded regional land-linking and new policy tools
- Development of a model federal Debt for Working Lands program;
- Assessment of new farmer training programs around the region, and the potential for cross-state education opportunities;
- Renewed priority on and major funding for protection of agricultural lands by and in all six states.

Funding needed: \$150,000 annually for two years, plus an additional \$50 million annually to purchase agricultural conservation easements in the six-state region.

What Is Required Now To Advance This Initiative?

The Chief Agricultural Officers of New England will lead implementation of the NEFFSI, in collaboration with the NEGC/CLC, and with support and facilitation from the New England Office of American Farmland Trust. An additional \$50,000 will be needed annually to match AFT's current in-kind staff contribution and maintain its current level of support and facilitation.

A task group has been established for each focus area, which will convene and finalize projects and a two-year work plan for each focus area by September 2010. Regional stakeholder input will be solicited through each task group. The Chief Agricultural Officers plan a regional Funder's Summit for Fall 2010 to engage the philanthropic community in this initiative, and encourage the participation of the NEGC and CLC in the summit.



With the herd. (CT Farmland Trust photo)

Members, Keep Farmlands in Farming Working Group:

*(*connotes task group coordinator)*

Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner, NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food (chair)

Seth Bradstreet, Commissioner, ME Dept of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources

Roger Allbee, Secretary, VT Agency of Agriculture

Scott Soares, MA Department of Agricultural Resources

Ken Ayars, Chief, RI Division of Agriculture

Phil Prelli, Commissioner, CT Department of Agriculture

*Russell Libby, ME Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (Food Safety)

*Diane Bothfeld, Deputy Secretary, VT Agency of Agriculture (Dairy)

*Chelsea Lewis, Tufts Agriculture Food and Environment Program (Meat Processing)

*Dana Hudson, VT FEED (Farm to Institution)

*Cris Coffin, American Farmland Trust (Farmland Protection)

*Tim Griffin, Tufts Agriculture Food and Environment Program (Regional Assessment)

Stephanie Gilbert, ME Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources

KEEP FORESTS AS FOREST INITIATIVE

The citizens of the New England/New York region today have an historic opportunity to secure for the future the economic benefits and natural values of the region's forests. As is the case with our farmlands, the key to capitalizing on this opportunity is to make it financially rewarding for the region's private forest landowners to keep forests as forests.

In 2008, the North East State Foresters Association (NEFA) launched an effort to identify means to maintain the region's forested landscape, increase the quality of stewardship of these lands, and strengthen the rural economy of the region. The project became known as the Northern Forest Keeping Forests as Forests initiative (NF KFAF), including New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

NEFA invited representatives of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the US Forest Service to participate. At the same time, the New England Governors' Conference established its blue ribbon Commission on Land Conservation (NEGC/CLC). Recognizing this important opportunity, NEFA elected to coordinate its efforts with those of the NEGC/CLC.

As a result of the combined efforts, in September 2009 the New England Governors' Conference called upon the region's State Foresters to develop "a New England Forest Initiative to Keep Forests as Forests that will constitute a new blueprint to protect the region's forest land-base and ensure the sustainability of these lands, as a public policy appropriate to all New England; and identify barriers to

and opportunities for sustaining forestlands that are in private ownership and expanding forest products production and consumption." With this charge, the NF KFAF initiative expanded at their request to include the southern New England State Foresters.

Mission & Vision

The mission of the New England/New York Forest Initiative is to establish a regional pilot demonstration program to strengthen markets for forest products, strengthen forest stewardship, and conserve the many values of the region's forest landscape for future generations. Guiding principles for achieving this mission include:

- Spur job creation and maintenance by improving the forest-based economy;
- Build a landscape-scale effort that emphasizes connectivity to Keep Forests as Forests;
- Create meaningful and effective partnerships across agencies, borders, and sectors;
- Enlist significant contributions from the private and philanthropic sectors; and
- Achieve significant contributions to alternative and renewable energy sources.



The view of southwestern New Hampshire from the top of Silver Mountain, part of the Ashuelot River Headwaters project that lies at the heart of the Quabbin-to-Cardigan conservation initiative. (Jerry and Marcy Monkman EcoPhotography, courtesy of Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests)

The New England/New York region is now 80 percent forested and includes 52 million acres of forest land. Forests have made a remarkable recovery in the region since the 19th century when portions of the region were reduced to just 20 to 30 percent in forests, largely due to clearing for agriculture. These forests are quite diverse,

ranging from fire-dependent stands of pitch pine on sandy coastal soils to the spruce-fir krumholtz of the region's high mountain peaks, from broadleaf deciduous forests on rich bottomlands to spruce-fir flats and cedar bogs.

We believe that New England and New York's forests define the very character of the region, are integral to its economy, and sustain many of its communities. Today they:

- Provide a sustainable source of forest products that meet regional and national needs, contributing over \$20 billion annually to the local and regional economies, and sustaining over 100,000 jobs in the woods, mills, and supporting services.
- Host a wondrous diversity of plant and animal life that inhabit the largest intact temperate broadleaf forest in the nation, and one of the largest in the world.
- Serve as the source of clean water for our rivers, lakes, aquifers, and reservoirs, safeguarding drinking water sources for millions of residents.
- Provide an important source of renewable energy that will reduce dependence on fossil fuels and enhance national security.
- Offer outdoor adventures unsurpassed in the eastern United States, and support an emerging forest-based recreation and tourism economy valued at more than \$5 billion annually; and
- Store great quantities of carbon and sequester approximately 10 percent of the region's annual greenhouse gas emissions each year.



Logging operation. (Maine Forest Service photo)

The seven State Foresters' shared vision is to maintain and enhance a diverse and robust forest products industry, and improve the stewardship of our forest resources for the many benefits they provide. The region's forests are largely privately-owned, and our vision sees this proud tradition being carried forward into the future with incentives and assistance to forest landowners who choose to maintain and enhance the public benefits their forests provide. In particular, we envision maintaining unbroken forests as the dominant feature of the NE / NY landscape by rewarding private landowners for maintaining and enhancing the values that the region's forests provide and their importance to rural economies, both those that use the forests' raw

materials and those based on their recreational opportunities.

Unpredictable Future, Unusual Opportunity:

These extraordinary values in a region so densely populated present a great opportunity to have the best of both worlds: a vital built environment that includes large metropolitan

areas as well as historic villages and hamlets, while securing for present and future generations the economic benefits and natural values the region's forests and their stewardship provide. Further, all indications are that, provided they are fairly rewarded and compensated, there are more persons and organizations interested in keeping their forests as forests than ever before.

At the same time, the region's forests are subject to a host of new pressures that make their future uncertain. Proposals to subdivide, develop, and convert forest tracts are greatest in the south, but present throughout the region.

- Over the past two decades, fully two-thirds of the Northern Forest has been sold at least once. From 1997-2003, nearly 400,000 acres of forest land have been converted to development uses across New England and New York.
- Since 1993, the average size of forest ownerships dropped across the region, as forested tracts are subdivided and sold.
- A 2006 US Forest Service survey of forest landowners found that 86,000 landowners in New England/New York, owning 2.77 million acres, plan to sell some or all of their lands within five years. Some 35,000 landowners, owning 869,000 acres of forest land, indicated they planned to subdivide their forest lands over the same period.
- Due to the aging of landowners, intergenerational transfers of forest land will occur at an unprecedented rate over the next two decades.
- In much of the region, there is a wide and growing gap between the timber value of forest land and its value for development. Increasingly, timber management returns cannot justify current prices for forested acreage, even in parts of areas where timber has been and continues to be the primary use.



Scaling logs. (Maine Forest Service photo)

These uncertainties are matched only by the opportunity that exists to maintain the exceptional economic and environmental values and traditional uses of the region's forests, as many current landowners are interested in arrangements that will maintain their lands as forests for the indefinite future.

Recommendation: Pilot Demonstration Projects

The essence of the seven State Foresters' recommendations is to initiate, in partnership with private landowners and federal agencies, pilot projects across the region that will test new and innovative approaches to enhance the financial returns to forest landowners, strengthen forest stewardship, and use forests as the foundation for more prosperous rural economies. Based on the results of these pilot projects, we propose to evaluate the effectiveness of these new approaches

to achieve these objectives; and, if successful, to extend their application in the region. This effort will involve the following:

- Create a collaborative effort among federal, state, private, and philanthropic partners to implement pilot projects that will use federal and state programs in new, creative, and more flexible ways to:
 - o Engage private landowners on a voluntary basis;
 - o Provide incentives to keep forests as forests, including but not limited to tax incentives, rewarding stewardship that provides public benefits, making management for forest products more profitable, and paying willing landowners fair market value for development options;
 - o Maintain diverse and robust markets for primary forest products to enhance the returns landowners can achieve from timber management, and encourage nature-based tourism; and
 - o Create a new model for promoting exemplary stewardship among private landowners.

- Each state will assess which approach or approaches will work best, given its particular circumstances, and be free to choose which of these they wish to pursue;
- Test these approaches in at least one pilot project in each state, emphasizing where possible trans-boundary pilot projects; and
- Initiate several region-wide efforts to support the region's forest products industry, improve landowner stewardship efforts, and evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the techniques employed and the feasibility of their extension to other privately-owned landscapes.

The Pilot Projects

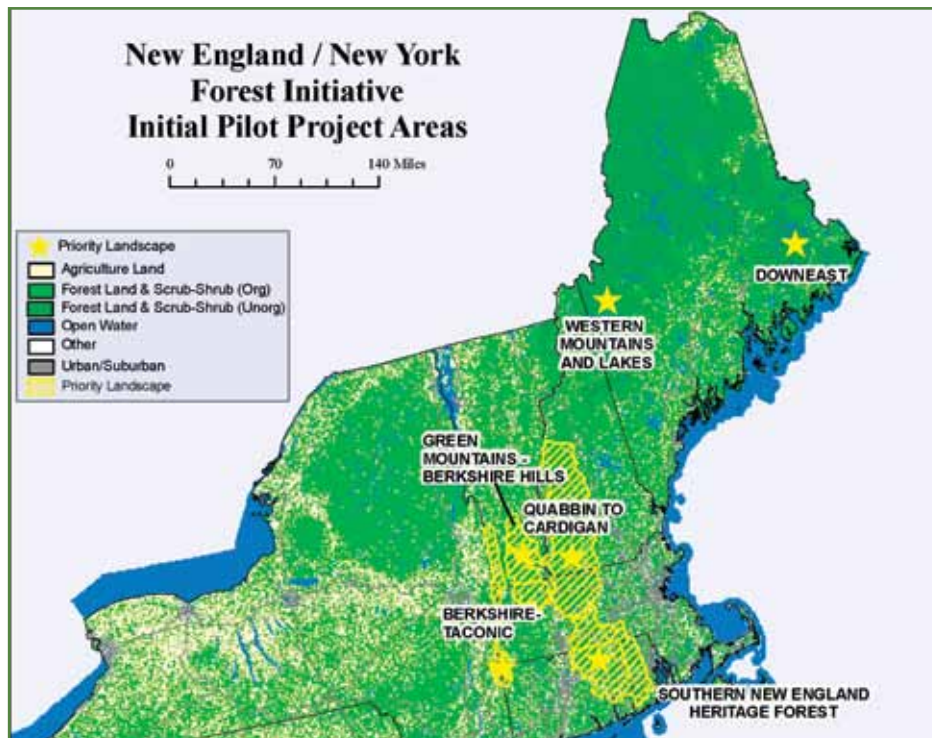
Each of the demonstration landscapes identified below includes a pilot project where willing landowners have indicated interest in participating:

- **Quabbin to Cardigan.** A three-pronged strategy of core-area land conservation (30,000 acres), forest stewardship practices (170,000 acres), and forest industry assistance across a 2 million acre landscape of working forests, water supplies, and unfragmented forests spanning western New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts. The pilot project in this demonstration landscape would require approximately \$21 million.
- **The Berkshire Taconic Landscape.** A 230,000 acre landscape containing an extraordinary number of rare species threatened by development and climate change. Efforts here will focus on restoring ecosystem functions through on-the-ground stewardship and protection of large unfragmented forest blocks including land conservation (10,000 acres), invasive removals (5,000 acres), forest stewardship practices (155,000 acres) and wildlife highway passage structures. The pilot project in this demonstration landscape would require approximately \$20 million.
- **Southern New England Heritage Forest.** The

1.4 million acre area will receive focused land-use planning assistance, with a variety of land conservation tools to protect the working heritage of the last remaining rural landscape in Southern New England. The pilot project in this demonstration landscape would require approximately \$22 million.

- **Green Mountain and Berkshire Hills,** a “programmatic” working forest stewardship approach over the unfragmented forest of southern Vermont and Western Massachusetts. The pilot project in this demonstration landscape would require approximately \$22 million.
- **Keeping Maine's Forests.** Two pilot projects are proposed as part of a collaborative effort to maintain the economic and environmental integrity of the Maine Woods: one in the Western Mountains and Lakes demonstration landscape (2 million acres), the other in the Downeast demonstration landscape (2.6 million acres). The pilot projects involve both a pilot stewardship initiative and conservation acquisitions. The cost to initiate the two pilot projects is \$25 million over the next three years.
- **Vermont Conservation Easement Stewardship Project.** Development of a model conservation easement monitoring and stewardship program for the working forests of Vermont, involving the 140,000 acres of forest lands under easement for which the State has stewardship responsibilities. The pilot project would require approximately \$570,000 over the first five years.

In addition, several region-wide programmatic efforts will aim to strengthen the forest products industry, monitor and increase stewardship on private forest lands, and ensure a strong university-based research and evaluation effort to measure progress toward the goals and assure that we will learn “what works.” These efforts will require approximately \$2.8 million/year plus one-time costs of \$1.6 million.



What Is Required Now To Advance This Initiative?

- A commitment on the part of federal and state agencies, in particular the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, to apply their programs and funding sources in new and creative ways, to achieve the objectives outlined above.
- An estimated \$110 million from federal, state, and philanthropic sources over the next three years to implement the pilot projects proposed for the demonstration landscapes identified;
- An estimated \$9 million in federal funding for the region wide efforts to strengthen forest based economies and develop a new model for stewardship; and
- State support and local champions for each of the pilot projects and a commitment to match federal funding.

Members, Keep Forests as Forest Working Group:

Alec Giffen, ME State Forester (Chair)
 Brad Simpkins, Interim NH State Forester

Steve Sinclair, VT State Forester
 Rob Davies, NY State Forester
 Christopher Martin, CT State Forester
 Paul Dolan, RI Acting State Forester
 Mike Fleming, MA Regional Planner
 Bob O'Connor, MA Exec. Office of Environmental Affairs
 Juan Hernandez, ME State Conservationist
 Rick Ellsmore, NH State Conservationist
 Astor Boozer, NY State Conservationist
 Christine Clark, MA State Conservationist
 Vicki Drew, VT State Conservationist
 Douglas Zehner, CT State Conservationist
 Tom Wagner, Supervisor, White Mountain National Forest
 Colleen Madrid, Supervisor, Green Mountain/Finger Lakes National Forest
 Anne Archie, USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry
 Bruce Wight, NRCS National Forester
 Charles Levesque & Jerry Bley, consultant staff

CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS INITIATIVE

Pursuant to the September 15, 2009, Resolution of the New England Governors' Conference, the Commission on Land Conservation (CLC) assembled a Working Group to put forward means better to connect the residents of the region to the outdoors. The Working Group has taken its charge with utmost sense of urgency and purpose, recognizing its economic, social, and environmental implications for the region's future; and offers this report and recommendation to advance the Governors' goal.

By Spring 2010 the Working Group had moved to develop a multi-state strategy focused on getting families and (especially) youth outdoors through adult and youth conservation organizations, outdoor and environmental education, and full funding of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). As they have since 1965, the LWCF's matching requirements from state and local governments and philanthropies create a strong sense of place-based stewardship and double the impact of the LWCF dollar.

To bring this strategy to the ground, the Working Group recognized New England's historic water corridors and coastline as the appropriate focus to link the region's urban places and the great outdoors.

On April 16, 2010, flanked by four members of his Cabinet at the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors, President Barack Obama declared that,

“Americans are blessed with a vast and varied natural heritage.... Our working landscapes, cultural sites, parks, coasts, wild lands, rivers and streams are gifts that we have inherited from previous generations.... Americans take pride in these places, and share a responsibility to preserve them for our children and grandchildren.... Today, however, we are losing touch with too many of the places and proud traditions that have helped to make America special. Farms, ranches,



Fishing for stripers. (Nat Rea photo)

forests, and other valuable natural resources are disappearing at an alarming rate. Families are spending less time together enjoying their natural surroundings. Despite our conservation efforts, too many of our fields are becoming fragmented, too many of our rivers and streams are becoming polluted, and we are losing our connection to the parks, wild places, and open spaces we grew up with and cherish....”

The President went on to establish his “America's Great Outdoors Initiative,” led by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and implemented in coordination of other federal agencies. The goals of the initiative are to “reconnect Americans, especially children, to America's rivers

and waterways, landscapes of national significance, ranches, farms and forests, great parks, and coasts and beaches by exploring a variety of efforts, including:

- Promoting community-based recreation and conservation, including local parks, greenways, beaches, and waterways;
- Advancing job and volunteer opportunities related to conservation and outdoor recreation; and
- Supporting existing programs and projects that educate and engage Americans in our history, culture, and natural bounty....¹⁷

The month previous, on March 18, 2010, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, in his Fiscal Year 2010 Certificate of Apportionment for the Land And Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Grant (State-side) program, informed the Governors that,

“In anticipation that LWCF funds will grow in the coming years, we have an opportunity to develop a more vibrant State-side program that will meet the needs of the 21st century.... In particular, I would like to discuss how we can best use our fiscal resources to promote parks and open space in urban and rural areas, fight childhood obesity, and connect our young people with the great outdoors. I believe that the State-side LWCF could play a role in:

- Reconnecting people in urban and rural communities with the outdoors;
- Creating and expanding open spaces, parks, and river greenways in urban and rural areas, so that millions more Americans can have a place nearby to exercise and improve their health; and
- Increasing opportunities for service, learning, and

¹⁷ See Presidential memorandum, “A 21st Century Strategy for America’s Great Outdoors,” April 16, 2010

¹⁸ See letter of March 18, 2010, to Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, et al.

engagement with cultural, historic, and natural resources.”¹⁸

The issues raised in the Secretary’s letter closely parallel those identified by the Working Group.

We propose to offer New England as a pilot project to demonstrate the potential role and strategic national value of the LWCF for these purposes. These funds continue to play a pivotal role in both urban and rural New England. The National Park Service 2009 LWCF Annual Report estimates that the New England states have an unmet need of \$130 million for outdoor recreation and education. The total of the six states’ 2010 LWCF apportionment is just under \$3 million. Money, however, is not the sole solution to our shared concerns and goals. Public funding, philanthropy, the private sector, and individual sweat equity will all have a necessary role to play.

New England is long blessed with a partnership approach to conservation. Units of the National Park, National Forest, and National Wildlife Refuge systems were first established here nearly 100 years ago. New England is proud of its state and local park systems and many conservation NGOs, dating back to the 1891 creation of the nation’s first land trust, The Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts. Today in each state, numerous urban and rural land trusts and youth and adult conservation, education, and recreation organizations work in partnership



Kayaking along the Rhode Island shore. (Nat Rea photo)

with federal, state, and local governments, and with private landowners. Representatives of all these are present in the five Working Groups of the NEGC/CLC.

For more than two centuries, the region's natural resources sustained a strong economy in forest products, water-powered industry, farming, shellfish and maritime fisheries, outdoor recreation, and heritage tourism. Today, increased demands on our resources, climate change, and a changing economy require a new blueprint to sustain both employment and these natural resources into the future.

In the big picture, the mountains and forest still dominate the northern landscape; and the legendary Androscoggin, Merrimack, Blackstone, and Connecticut Rivers, once corridors of historic settlement, hydropower, and commerce, provide opportunities to reinvest in more livable communities – places where people can be connected to the outdoors for education, public health, and outdoor recreation.

The Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service are invited to join us in shaping New England's 21st land conservation agenda and, in doing so, to outline a strategic national role for a fully-funded LWCF.

Goals and Objectives.

With a focus on natural connectivity and corridors, and appreciation for the region's historic heritage, the Working Group's proposed demonstration project will forge linkages among the region's urban centers, rural communities, and pristine natural resources to promote more livable and sustainable communities, and foster the next generation of environmental stewards. In particular, the goals of the

project are:

- **Conservation Corps.** To provide employment opportunities in the outdoors through the creation of a regional partnership with third-sector programs organized and promoted by New England's many youth and adult conservation and education organizations. The corps would be multi-faceted: some crews will work in urban areas along the corridors described below, while other crews work in the more rural areas along these same corridors – providing training, outdoor education, and employment to participants;
- **Livability.** In concert with the Keep Farms in Farmland initiative, to create opportunities to develop community and urban gardens that will serve as a



Whitewater rafting. (New England Outdoor Center photo)

source of both nutritional food and educational opportunity;

- **Recreational Opportunity.** To help communities along the corridors develop a wide range of recreational opportunities, including urban and community parks and

greenways, and inter-urban and urban-to-rural connecting greenways and trails, with results measured in acres rehabilitated or developed, populations served, and trail miles completed or developed.

- **Environmental Education.** Building off existing outreach and education initiatives such as Connecticut's "No Child Left Inside" program, to collaborate with agencies, organizations, and communities to introduce the public to the outdoors and generate greater awareness of and interest in the natural sciences. These efforts will complement the development of the Conservation Corps and help build

bridges from these community settings to state and national recreational areas, with technology used to create and strengthen the connections; and

- **Healthy Consequences** – provide opportunities, primarily through recreation, agricultural endeavors, and education that will contribute to healthy lifestyles for Americans.

A National Demonstration Project.

A national demonstration project is proposed to advance these goals along seven regional corridors that will connect many if not most of the region's population:

River and Heritage Corridors. The great waterways of New England have long served as vital linkages for the region's residents. For centuries, inhabitants of the region looked to these for settlement, commerce, and recreation. To build off of these historic connections, the Working Group proposes to focus on five of the region's historic waterways, namely, the:

- Connecticut River in VT, NH, MA, and CT;
- Merrimac River in NH and MA;
- Blackstone River in RI and MA;
- Androscoggin River in NH and ME; and
- Champlain Valley in VT and NY.

Trail Connections. In addition to highlighting the recreational and resource assets of the region's waterways, the Outdoor Initiative will bring greater focus to the many and growing greenways and trails throughout New England. As is the case with the region's waterways, a network of greenways and trails has forged linkages among many of the region's communities, large and small. This network continues to expand throughout the region, providing



Hiking above treeline. (New England Outdoor Center photo)

a wide variety of recreational opportunities to millions of individuals. In an effort to highlight the increasingly important role greenways and trails may play – enhancing recreational opportunities while supporting local economies – the Working Group proposes to develop demonstration programming along a designated greenway and a

canoe trail in the region. To launch the corridor initiative, the Working Group proposes the:

- East Coast Greenway in ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, and NY; and
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail in NY, VT, PQ, NH, and ME.

The East Coast Greenway is a 3,000-mile corridor running along the Eastern Seaboard from Florida to Canada's Maritime Provinces.

Within New England, the East Coast Greenway links communities in five of the six states. Because of this connectivity, the East Coast Greenway serves as a natural linkage to develop and implement conservation, resource protection, recreation, and education programs that will generate employment opportunities while enhancing recreational and resource protection endeavors.

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT) links the



Enjoying raspberries. (New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food photo)

waterways of New York, Vermont, Québec, New Hampshire and Maine. It offers maps, books, and web-based tools to help visitors and residents connect to a 740-mile paddling route that traces a compelling history from early Native Americans through European settlement. NFCT also introduces visitors to places and people that make waterway destinations along the Adirondacks and Northern New England inviting and exciting today. The variety of flat water, swift water, and whitewater, on a range of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, provides extensive opportunities for canoe and kayak recreation. Communities along the way offer inns, B&Bs, and camping facilities, as well as other recreational, educational, and heritage attractions.

These five waterways and two trail systems will serve as the “backbone” or “spine” for creating and enhancing recreation and education programs in communities, especially the many historic urban centers, along the corridors. Along these, state and federal agencies, in partnership with non-profit organizations, municipalities, and the private sector, will identify communities to launch a comprehensive suite of outdoor recreational, education, and employment programs. The effort will focus on bringing together

a number of state and federal programs and building on them with private and nonprofit partners to demonstrate their effectiveness.

What Is Required Now To Advance This Initiative?

- Continuing commitment to this initiative on a priority basis by the New England Governors’ Conference, Inc.
- Commitment on the part of the Secretary of Interior to assign modest staff time to work with the Working Group to flesh out the details of this proposal.
- Commitment on the part of the Obama Administration then to apply federal programs and funding across departmental lines, in new and creative ways, to achieve the goals outlined above.
- The Governors’ and the President’s continuing commitment to and Congressional approval of full funding of the LWCF at \$900 million per year by 2014, as well as of the Administration’s request for additional funding for the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program.



Bird hunting. (New England Outdoor Center photo)

Members, Connect People to the Outdoors Working Group:

- Matt Fritz, CT Office of the Governor (Chair)
- Ed O’Leary, VT Director of Operations, DFP&R
- Joseph Dias, RI Chief, Div. of Planning & Development
- Alan Stearns, ME Deputy Director of BPL
- Bob O’Connor, MA EOE
- Gail Wolek, NH Deputy Director of DPR
- Carol Ash, NY Commissioner of OPR&HP
- Erik Kulleseid, NY LWCF Liaison Officer
- Amey Marrella, CT Commissioner of DEP
- Diane Joy, CT DEP State Parks Assistant Director
- Tom Tyler, CT DEP State Parks Acting Director
- Susan Frechette, CT Deputy Commissioner of DEP
- Bob McIntosh, National Park Service, Northeast Region

PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT INITIATIVE

In September of 2009 the New England Governors charged the Chief Wildlife Officers in each State to create a new partnership among the New England states, the federal government, local communities, and conservation partners, and establish the scientific foundation for regional work to conserve the region's diverse plant and wildlife species and habitat.

Large, intact, and functioning ecosystems, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and public access to natural landscapes contribute greatly to New England's economic well-being and quality of life. The integrity of New England's ecosystems is at risk from increasing human activity that fragments remaining important habitats and the connections that enable habitats to function on a landscape scale. Aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity across the region is critical if we are to ensure that species remain common and adapt under shifting climatic conditions, and that people have access to these important resources. The region's complex mix of private, state, and federal ownerships and home rule authority presents serious challenges to developing a coordinated approach to fish and wildlife conservation.

At the same time, conservation of our region's wildlife resources is an economic as well as biological necessity. The goals of sustainable economic and community development, mitigating and adapting to climate change, efficient transportation planning, development of alternative energies, and broadening a public constituency for wildlife will be enhanced and improved by bringing to bear the best available knowledge to inform decisions at all levels. The compelling need for collaborative initiatives to encourage and energize this decision-support system has resulted in this initiative by the New England Governors' Conference.

Goal and Objective

The long-term goal of this initiative is to facilitate

conservation of the region's diverse plant and wildlife species and habitat. The immediate objective is to *create the scientific foundation for regional work on landscape habitat conservation that will inform land use and public infrastructure investment decisions at the local, state, and regional levels.*

Background

The fish and wildlife conservation agencies in the Northeast have recognized the need for a landscape-scale habitat conservation approach; and to that end, have laid a strong foundation to achieve this objective. Several related initiatives are now underway that have a direct bearing on New England and offer opportunity for a coordinated approach to fish and wildlife conservation across the region.

The Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies includes thirteen states in the region from West Virginia to Maine. The association initiated a program several years ago that directly aligns with the objective of this initiative. Recognizing that developing the science to drive decisions and methods of conservation delivery is both larger than any one state's capacity and redundant if each state develops its own information, the state fish and wildlife directors decided to pool four percent of some federal grant funds



Lynx cubs. (Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Department photo)

available to each state into a single fund that could be directed at the most urgent science needs for the region.

This effort, the *Regional Conservation Needs* program (RCN), has evolved into an annual cooperative consensus of priorities among projects that contribute to development of landscape conservation design tools, analyses of impacts of climate change that will need adaptive strategies, and identification of regional corridors and linkages necessary for effective regional conservation. This ongoing program distributes some \$450,000 annually to these most important research and management topics.

The *Atlantic Coast Joint Venture* is a cooperative organization of seventeen states, four federal agencies, and several wildlife conservation organizations along the U.S. portion of the eastern seaboard from Maine to Puerto Rico. It has as its mission to plan, implement, and evaluate landscape-scale conservation for all bird species in the Atlantic Flyway. This cooperative has been funding work for several years to design habitat conservation plans that will help ensure the future of birds across the eastern seaboard states. The group also provides input into conservation priorities for the region, to guide the distribution of \$5-10 million of acquisition funds through various federal programs such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. The New England states typically realize about \$3 to 5 million annually from these habitat conservation programs.

In recent years, the Joint Venture has discussed at length the merits of an evolution from the scope of landscape-scale habitat conservation for bird species to habitat conservation



A raccoon takes stock. (Pam Richardson photo, courtesy of the Maine Wildlife Park)

for all fish and wildlife species. There is considerable merit to this approach because of the overlap of bird habitat with that for other wildlife species, and the efficiencies of planning, implementing, and evaluating habitat conservation for all wildlife species concurrently. In December 2009 the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture board voted to support an effort to bring together conservation for all wildlife species through Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and to take a lead role in this approach. Since the New England states are an integral part of this Joint Venture, any regional approach to wildlife habitat conservation will clearly benefit the New England states.

The *Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* (LCC's) represent the third initiative, developing nationally in response to the need for landscape-scale habitat conservation. The LCC's are, in fact, a national outgrowth of the RCN and Joint Venture models of cooperative development of science and methods to achieve habitat conservation on a regional scale. The U.S. Department of the Interior, primarily through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and with science support from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), is facilitating a national network of cooperatives

between states, federal agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, with the mission of developing the science and tools needed to achieve landscape-scale conservation, especially with initial emphasis on incorporating strategies to adapt to climate change stressors.

This year, the USFWS is facilitating the startup of eight LCC's across the nation. One of these cooperatives, the North Atlantic LCC, covers a similar region to the North-east Association's RCN program – namely, the coastal region from Virginia to Maine, including all of the New England states and New York. The USFWS has committed \$2.2 million to this first year of the North Atlantic LCC. Almost \$1 million has already been committed to develop science that supports existing landscape scale efforts initiated by Joint Venture and the RCN program. By so doing, they have demonstrated a facilitative role in providing the information needed to accomplish regional habitat conservation.

As these three initiatives demonstrate, there is a clear need and desire for a coordinated approach to landscape-scale habitat conservation in New England and the Northeast.

Implementation

Our proposed route to implement the charge of the New England Governors is to bring these initiatives together under the most comprehensive umbrella, that of the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. This program, while larger than New England alone, brings the highest level of engagement, funding potential, and scope of all-species conservation to one place. It also creates a clear path for Federal engagement to enhance the science capacity of the New England states, and for states to participate in the national policy dialogue on landscape habitat conservation and climate change. The Regional Conservation Needs Program and the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, as part of the network of the North Atlantic LCC,

will address the goal and objectives of the New England Governors Wildlife Habitat Initiative.

The product of this work will take some time to realize, since we are addressing thousands of species on a landscape that is mostly privately-owned. However, the combined efforts of the states, federal agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector will ensure that our efforts are complementary, based on best science, and not redundant. We anticipate that work on common habitat classifications, habitats most at risk, and landscape designs that connect key landscape features and regions are products that will soon be available. There are several states that are poised to combine information with adjoining states in New England to achieve these products. The LCC approach will enable the New England states to combine their efforts with the larger group for the most effective use of available funds.

The LCC's will facilitate development of the science needed to provide interested states and other partners in the Northeast with information that will allow them, among other things, to:

- Draw upon and augment the expertise and resources of partners to maximize the use and efficiency of their



A cow and twins. (New England Outdoor Center photo)

- collective resources to meet conservation goals;
- Provide decision support tools to managers to use in establishing biological objectives and to inform land use and public infrastructure investment decisions at the local, state, and regional levels;
- Develop shared conservation goals and science needs among partners, and facilitate strategic conservation at landscape scales;
- Provide science support for conservation activities that address threats to species and habitats and incorporate changes anticipated by climate change into conservation design strategies;
- Identify key wildlife corridors and habitats across the region;
- Coordinate implementation of conservation tools to conserve priority habitats, based on State Wildlife Action Plan priorities; and



A coyote on alert. (Pam Richardson photo, courtesy of the Maine Wildlife Park)

- Develop plans for increasing opportunities for wildlife movements in relation to transportation infrastructure.

What Is Required Now To Advance This Initiative?

To facilitate implementation of this initiative, the Fish and Wildlife Directors of the New England states will require:

- Support for the New England Fish and Wildlife Agencies staff to engage fully in the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative; and for other state agency cooperation and facilitation of landscape-scale conservation planning, such as DOT agencies, state forestry programs, and regional and municipal planning programs; and
- Continued strong support for national climate change legislation that will provide substantial additional funds to states for landscape-scale fish and wildlife habitat conservation.

Members, Protect Wildlife Habitat Working Group:

Ken Elowe, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (Chair)

Glenn Normandeau, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

Wayne MacCallum, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Wayne Laroche, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

William Hyatt, Connecticut Bureau of Natural Resources

Catherine Sparks, Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife

Marvin Moriarty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5, Hadley MA

Scot Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute

SAFEGUARD COASTAL & ESTUARINE LANDS INITIATIVE

The New England Governors' September 15, 2009, charge to the region's Coastal Program managers creates an opportunity to connect and integrate state and federal efforts to protect significant coastal habitat and respond to emerging climate change impacts through land conservation measures and programs.

Each of the New England coastal states participates in the NOAA-administered Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) with appropriate linkages to other state and federal land protection programs, to achieve conservation of important coastal resources, including critical habitats for significant coastal wildlife species. Each state, moreover, is actively studying the impacts of climate change on coastal environments, and how best to incorporate climate change adaptation strategies into its coastal zone management program and land conservation efforts.

New England has a strong regional coastal identity, experience in managing threats associated with a mature coastal environment that has endured over 300 years of intensive human manipulation, and a history of responding to conservation threats of regional importance through a coordinated, inter-state approach. These make it uniquely qualified it to develop a regional-scale coastal resource conservation strategy, relying on the coordination of the premier coastal conservation goals and activities of the individual states. The proposed strategy will

result in conservation projects of national significance, derived through a coordinated, regional approach, using the latest climate change adaptation framework based upon the best available science, and will serve as a model for regional climate change-driven coastal resource conservation for the nation.

Working in partnership, state Coastal Programs and related agencies, conservation organizations, and supporting federal programs can establish regional conservation priorities, leverage resources, and contribute to the success of coastal conservation efforts nationally in the face of climate change.



On the clam flats. (Maine Coastal Program photo)

Demonstration Project Proposal. The New England Coastal Program managers seek support for a collaborative, pilot demonstration project to integrate state CELCP plans, Wildlife Action Plans, Climate Plans, and others to establish regional conservation priorities, strategies, actions, and measurable outcomes, especially to incorporate climate change adaptation and

wildlife habitat protection strategies into active land conservation programs.

The demonstration project would allow New England's Coastal Programs to:

- Jointly review CELCP, WAP, and CAP plans for common goals and regional priorities, working with federal program managers and other public and private partners;

- Identify and address data needs and shortcomings to refine shared conservation priorities and targets;
- Create a regional overview of common threats and conservation needs; and
- Develop coordinated regional strategies and priorities for coastal conservation efforts that will contribute to meeting state, regional, and federal goals and objectives.
- Protect and enhance public access to the coast;
- Provide land to accommodate migration of coastal habitats, especially for salt marshes, beaches, dunes, and tidal creeks in the face of sea level rise; and
- Protect high risk and hazard-prone areas to reduce risk and vulnerability, especially flood plains and high erosion coastal areas.

Long Term Goals for Coastal Conservation. The New England Coastal Programs strive to assure healthy and functioning ecosystems, and to achieve balance between protection and conservation of critical resources and the sustainable use and development of marine resources and coastal lands.

Conservation objectives related to climate change and habitat protection will include development of regional strategies to:

- Protect remaining unfragmented and undeveloped blocks of coastal lands;
- Protect critical habitats and species vulnerable to climate change, especially common and representative coastal habitats;



The dunes of Rhode Island. (Nat Rea photograph)

Intended Products of the Demonstration Project.

- A regional overview with statement of shared values and goals;
- Maps and reports with related statistics to support development of regional strategies to achieve priority conservation goals;
- Strategies to be developed in collaboration with local and state agencies, conservation organizations, and federal partners, for incorporation into coastal conservation plans and programs; and
- Evaluation of the demonstration project as a model for use in other coastal regions of the nation.

Implementation of a Demonstration Project (Two-Year Effort)

A. Project Management

- The project would be overseen and directed by a small steering committee comprised of key coastal managers or their designees, and conducted in partnership with NOAA, USF&WS, state and federal wildlife program managers, TNC and other public and private interests.
- The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) will be the sponsoring or host entity, adopting the project as a program task, in collaboration with the NOAA, OCRM Office of Program Evaluation, and the U.S. EPA New England Environ-

mental Finance Center (NE/EFC) at the Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, for purposes of project design assistance, coordination, and evaluation.

B. Evaluation and Assessment.

- Working with existing reports and plans, develop a set of regional conservation priorities for New England that:
 - o Review state CELCP plans and other coastal conservation efforts, with a climate change (sea level rise and temperature) filter, to incorporate appropriate climate change actions;
 - o Review state Climate Change Action Plans for mitigation and adaptation actions that can be addressed by coastal land conservation efforts; and
 - o Review state Wildlife Action Plans, including climate change vulnerability assessments, for species of greatest conservation need and threatened and endangered plant species.
- Using available spatial data, prepare an inventory and analysis (maps, data, text) of priority ecosystems, natural resources, and coastal environments vulnerable to sea level rise and the impacts of climate change, including:
 - o Coastal marshes and wetlands, beaches and dune systems, estuaries and coastal rivers and streams, erodible bluffs and uplands, and associated buffer areas;
 - o Coastal recreational uses, including water access needs; and
 - o Commercial water-dependent uses and needs.
- Develop regional assessment criteria for identifying the highest priority conservation areas that will achieve protection of agreed-upon, regionally significant resources. Criteria will be based on threat,



Islands of the Maine coast. (Peter Weed photo)

proximity, landscape position, regional significance, etc., for prioritizing regionally significant areas for conservation

- Implement pilot application of the criteria in a data-rich geography to identify and document data gaps and information needs, additional analysis and refinement of coastal impacts mapping, and on-going identification of coastal conservation targets or priority areas.

C. Development of a Strategic Regional Initiative.

- Review coastal management issues, coastal program objectives, and conservation priorities leading to identification of common goals and the basis for strategic regional effort;
- Coordinate with complementary conservation programs and efforts, such as USF&WS North Atlantic LCC, TNC, and GOM initiatives;
- Conduct a stakeholder process to identify coastal conservation targets or project areas of regional significance in mitigating and adapting to anticipated sea level rise;

- Compile a list, with supporting data, of project areas of regional significance to inform and guide coastal land conservation programs and efforts in the region; and
- Coordinate with related efforts, such as development of COAST (Coastal Adaptation to Sea-level rise Tool) by the New England Environmental Finance Center.¹⁹

D. Evaluation of the regional demonstration project

as an effective model to advance land conservation priorities and programs in coastal regions of the nation, conducted by the NE/EFC with advisory support from NOAA, OCRM Office of Program Evaluation.



Tidal water. (Nat Rea photo)

E. Time-line: Beginning in Fall of 2010 and in place in time for the FY 13 CELCP solicitations.

F. Budget: The initial budget estimate is between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in cash and kind (approximately two-thirds in-kind), including:

- Project management: A small steering committee will oversee work of assigned staff and/or planning consultant. Contributed time used as match;
- Consultant services: Acquire services as needed of planning consultant to work with the steering committee, assemble available information, prepare working draft reports, conduct or direct GIS support personnel in analysis tasks, organize and conduct

working group meeting and sessions, direct and coordinate state program contributions to the work, conduct needed research and evaluation of alternatives and options for a regional program, and prepare project reports;

- Planning and GIS support: Planning and GIS-based mapping and analysis services contributed through coastal program service providers (NOAA CSC, and state GIS centers, and NE/LCC), with financial

support as needed. Preliminary mapping and analysis to support refinements in the prioritization of vulnerable coastal resources at sufficient detail to support land conservation proposals targeting regionally significant resources;

- Project evaluation through staff and graduate assistants at the NE/EFC; and
- Other expenses: Meetings, mailings, etc., and overhead.

Members, Coastal Initiative Working Group

- Kathleen Leyden, Director, ME Coastal Program (Chair)
 Ted Diers, Director, NH Coastal Program
 Bruce Carlisle, Assist. Director, MA Coastal Program
 Dave Janik, MA Coastal Program
 Jim Boyd, RI Coastal Resources Management Council
 David Kozak, Manager, CT Office of Long Island Sound Programs
 Jim Connors, Senior Planner, ME Coastal Program
 Janet Coit, RI Chapter, TNC
 Kate Barba, NOAA, Ocean and Coastal Resource Management
 Adrienne Harrison, NOAA, Coastal Services Center

¹⁹ This tool portrays place-specific cost/benefit profiles of potential adaptation actions, under different sea level rise and storm surge scenarios. It can incorporate ecosystem services and natural features modeling; and could become a useful means of visualizing economic losses associated with inland migration of wetland boundaries, and potential natural resource gains associated with adaptation actions communities might undertake.

Appendix. NEGC Resolution of Sept. 15, 2009

WHEREAS, New England today faces serious challenges to its land resource and related industries from the impacts of climate change, sprawling development, and dramatic economic, fiscal, and demographic change; and

WHEREAS, the New England states share a heritage of leadership in land conservation and a culture closely tied to the land, the working landscape, its natural resources, and the many, irreplaceable benefits these provide to the people of the region and nation; and

WHEREAS, the New England Governors recognize the challenge of maintaining these benefits, their scope, and their impact on New England's quality of life and economy, as did their predecessors a century ago at the first meeting of the New England Governors in 1908, to great and lasting effect; and

WHEREAS, at their meeting in Bar Harbor, Maine, on September 16, 2008, the Governors established a Blue Ribbon Commission to identify today's major issues in New England land conservation and develop recommendations for working together as a region, better to protect and conserve our natural heritage;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Governors identify land conservation as a critical issue facing the region; recognize the importance of public-private-philanthropic partnerships to conserve our natural heritage; and commit the New England states to working together to conserve, restore, and advocate for conservation of this heritage for its many benefits to the region, the nation, and generations to come;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governors call upon the following officers of the six New England states, within their available resources and in collaboration with appropriate partners, to develop the following New England-wide initiatives and report with recommendations not later than to the 34th NEG/ECP meeting in 2010:

1. The State Foresters – a New England Forest Initiative to Keep Forests as Forests that will constitute a new blueprint to protect the region's forest land-base and ensure the sustainability of these lands, as a public policy appropriate to all New England; and identify barriers to and opportunities for sustaining forestlands that are in private ownership and expanding forest product production and consumption;

2. The Chief Agricultural Officers – a New England Farm and Food Security Initiative to Keep Farmlands in Farming that will protect the region's agricultural land base; determine the region's capacity to increase production, utilization, and consumption of New England-grown farm and food products; and identify barriers to and opportunities for expanding regional agricultural production and consumption;

3. The State Liaison Officers to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund – a New England Outdoor Initiative to Connect People to the Outdoors that will establish six-state priorities for outdoor recreation and education; address urban

as well as rural needs, and engaging younger generations in land conservation; and identify priority issues and recreation land conservation projects common to two or more states;

4. The Chief Wildlife Officers – a New England Wildlife Habitat Initiative to Protect Wildlife Habitat that will make use of each state’s Wildlife Action Plan as the foundation for regional work on habitat connectivity and inform land use and public infrastructure investment decisions at the local, state, and federal levels; and

5. The Coastal Program Managers – a New England Coastal Initiative to Safeguard Coastal and Estuarine Lands that builds on each state’s Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and Wildlife Action Plan, and the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers regional Climate Change Action Plan, a regional strategy to address joint goals in coastal conservation and land acquisition for climate change adaptation and habitat protection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these several initiatives might serve as the basis for authorizing legislation to advance and support New England’s role in fulfilling its own priority needs and serving as a national model for regional landscape conservation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governors call upon appropriate agencies of the federal government and the New England Congressional Delegation to help maintain and fully fund essential land conservation initiatives. These include the Forest Legacy Program, the Farmland Protection Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the State Wildlife Grants Program, the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program, and New Markets Tax Credits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governors call upon New England’s Congressional Delegation and the Obama Administration to develop federal climate change legislation that will provide funding for forest, farm, outdoor recreation and education, wildlife, and coastal conservation initiatives; and, through what are called “offset projects” as well as more traditional programs, to realize the important climate change mitigation and adaptation opportunities that landscape-scale conservation in New England promises, and have New England designated a national demonstration area to pursue these opportunities through a coordinated, regional effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governors accept and adopt the report of the Commission on Land Conservation dated September 15, 2009, and establish it as a standing Commission of the NEGEC to continue its work, implementing its recommendations, coordinating the initiatives cited above, and identifying other opportunities for regional collaboration, to the extent funding allows.

Adopted at the meeting of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers in Saint John, New Brunswick, September 15, 2009.

