

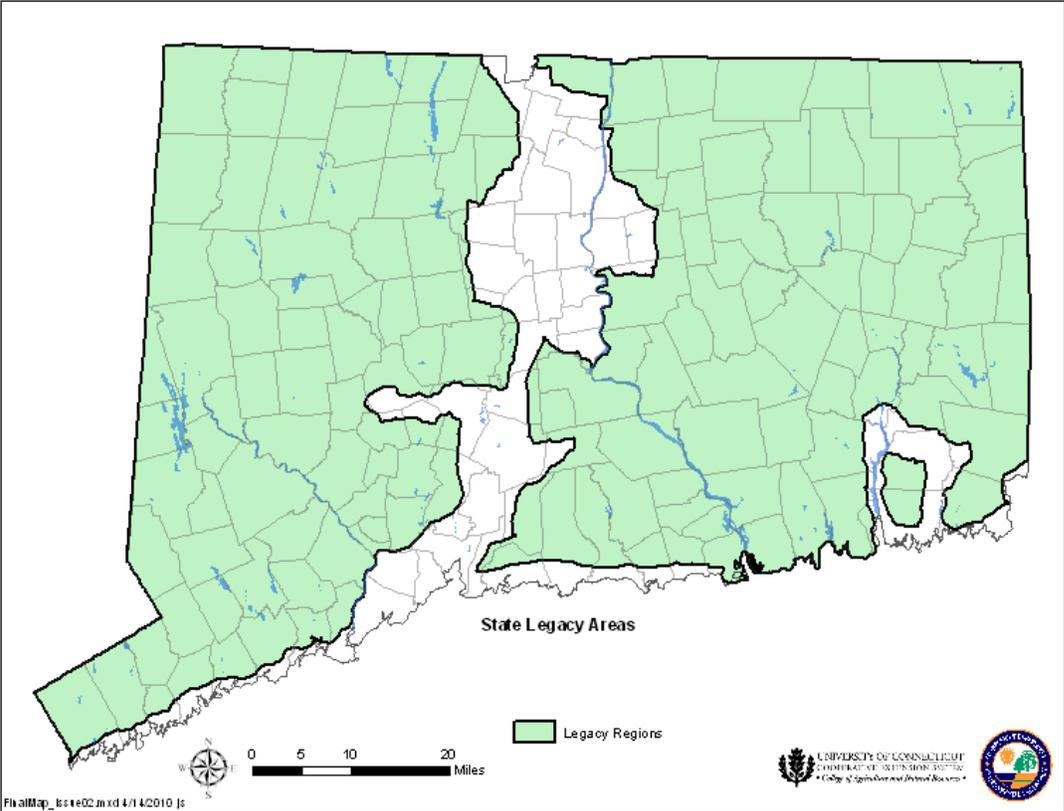
SECTION 3. Connecticut Forest Legacy Program Integration

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection partners with the USDA Forest Service to implement the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The Forest Legacy Program is a program that helps identify and conserve environmentally important forests from conversion to non-forest uses. The main tool used for protecting these important forests is conservation easements. The Federal government may fund up to 75% of program costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state or local sources (USDA FLP). The Forest Legacy Program protects “working forests”, which are defined on the national Forest Legacy Program website as “those that protect water quality, provide habitat, forest products, opportunities for recreation and other public benefits”. The program “encourages and supports acquisition of conservation easements, legally binding agreements transferring a negotiated set of property rights from one party to another, without removing the property from private ownership. Most FLP conservation easements restrict development, require sustainable forestry practices, and protect other environmental values” (USDA FLP).

Approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in 1994, the Connecticut Assessment of Need (AON) was developed to document the need for Connecticut to be included in the Forest Legacy Program through an evaluation of existing forests, forest uses, and the trends and forces causing conversion to non-forest uses. The AON defined the Eligibility Criteria that was used in the identification of important forest areas that became the Western and Eastern Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in which Forest Legacy activities can occur (Figure 50) ; and determined through analysis what defines “threatened” and “environmentally important forests”; and outlined the State’s project evaluation and prioritization procedures. The AON was developed in consultation with SFSCC and approved by the State lead agency (USDA FLG).

To make the determination as to whether the AON needed to be updated for inclusion into the Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy, or whether it could be “incorporated” as is, the Connecticut State Forest Stewardship Committee met and discussed the matter on March 23, 2010. It was determined at the meeting that it could be “incorporated” as is. Therefore, the Connecticut Forest Legacy Program will be implemented according to the Connecticut Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Assessment of Need (AON), which was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture on October 26, 1994 and again approved as needed on July 6, 2001 by the Chief of the Forest Service. The AON includes the approved Eligibility Criteria for the Forest Legacy Areas (FLA); the Approved FLAs; specific goals and objectives to be accomplished by the Connecticut FLP; and the process by which the State Lead Agency will evaluate and prioritize projects to be considered for inclusion in the FLP. A copy of the State Lead Agency designation letter, the AON, and the AON approval letter can be obtained by contacting the Forest Legacy Program Manager at the Connecticut DEP, Division of Forestry, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

Figure 50. State Forest Legacy Areas (Western and Eastern)



SECTION 4. Connecticut and Multi-state Priority Area Maps

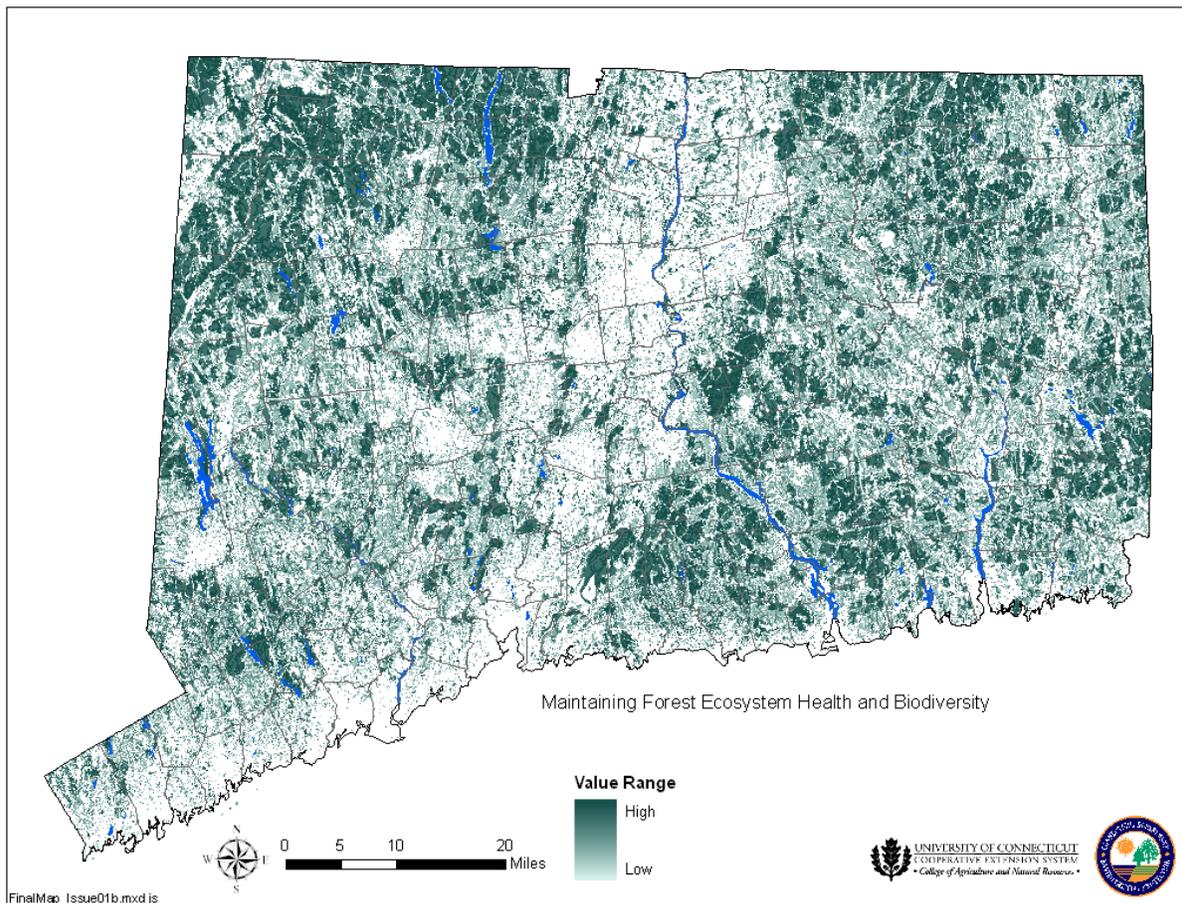
Connecticut Priority Area Maps

The following maps were developed after extensive discussion and deliberation by an advisory group of forestry professional gathered to assist in identifying priority areas across Connecticut. The original intent was to try and map priority areas related to each of the nine “Issue” areas identified in this document, as well as the seven core issues suggested by the NAASF Guide for Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies. After three meetings over a year, and utilizing input gathered in a survey sent out to over 30 forest resource professionals, it was determined for several of the areas, that either the information was not available to map what was desired, or the Issue could not be depicted geospatially. The resulting maps are listed below. Other maps are also presented throughout the Assessment or are listed in Appendix 8.

Priority Map 1. Forest Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity

This map is meant to identify and represent areas with high potential or for current value as quality forest habitat, from an ecosystem standpoint. Quality timber production potential may coincide with these areas, but the primary focus for this map set related to high potential biodiversity and overall health of the forest ecosystem.

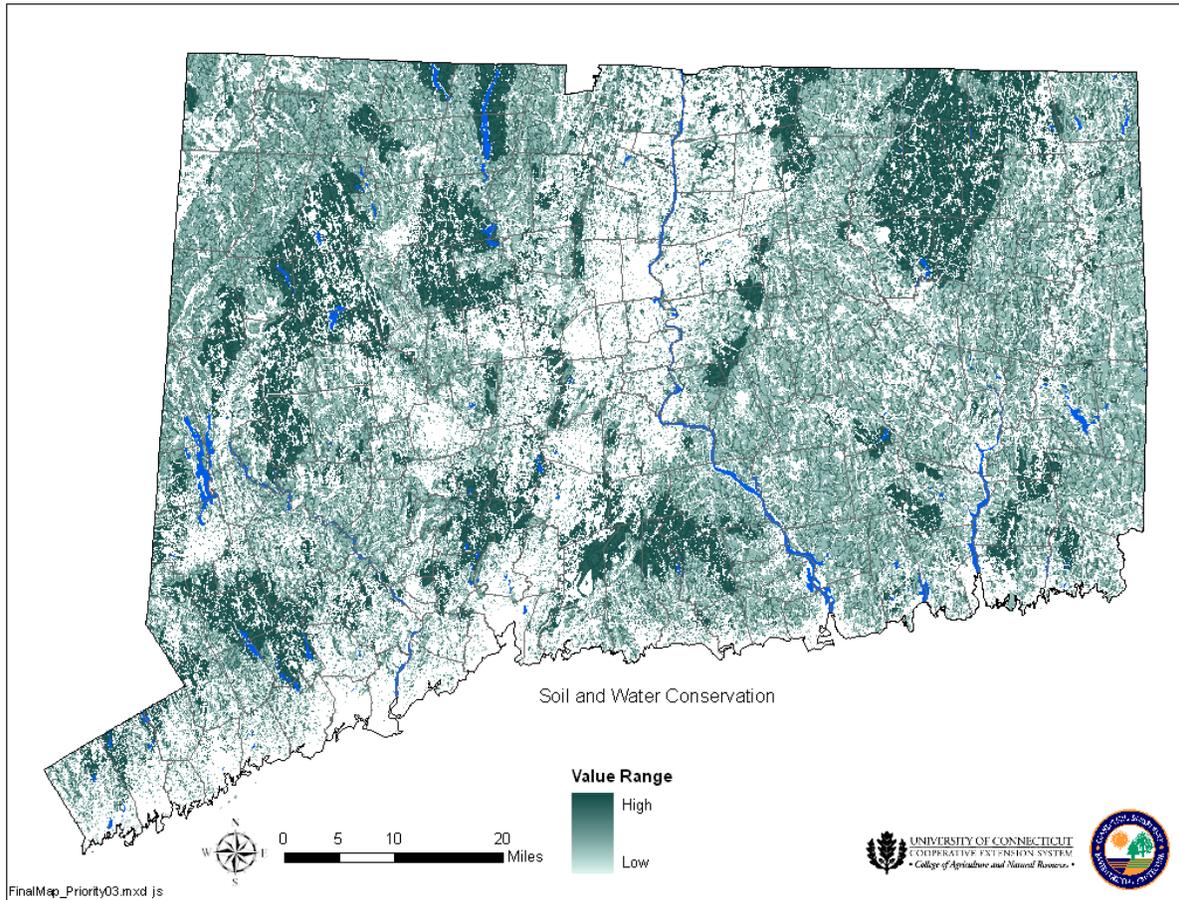
Figure 51. Priority Areas for Maintaining Forest Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity



Priority Map 2. Soil and Water Conservation

This map overlay analysis is to identify areas with higher need for protection based on their value for water conservation and quality, the protection of hydric soils, and areas with the potential for higher erosion if vegetation cover is removed.

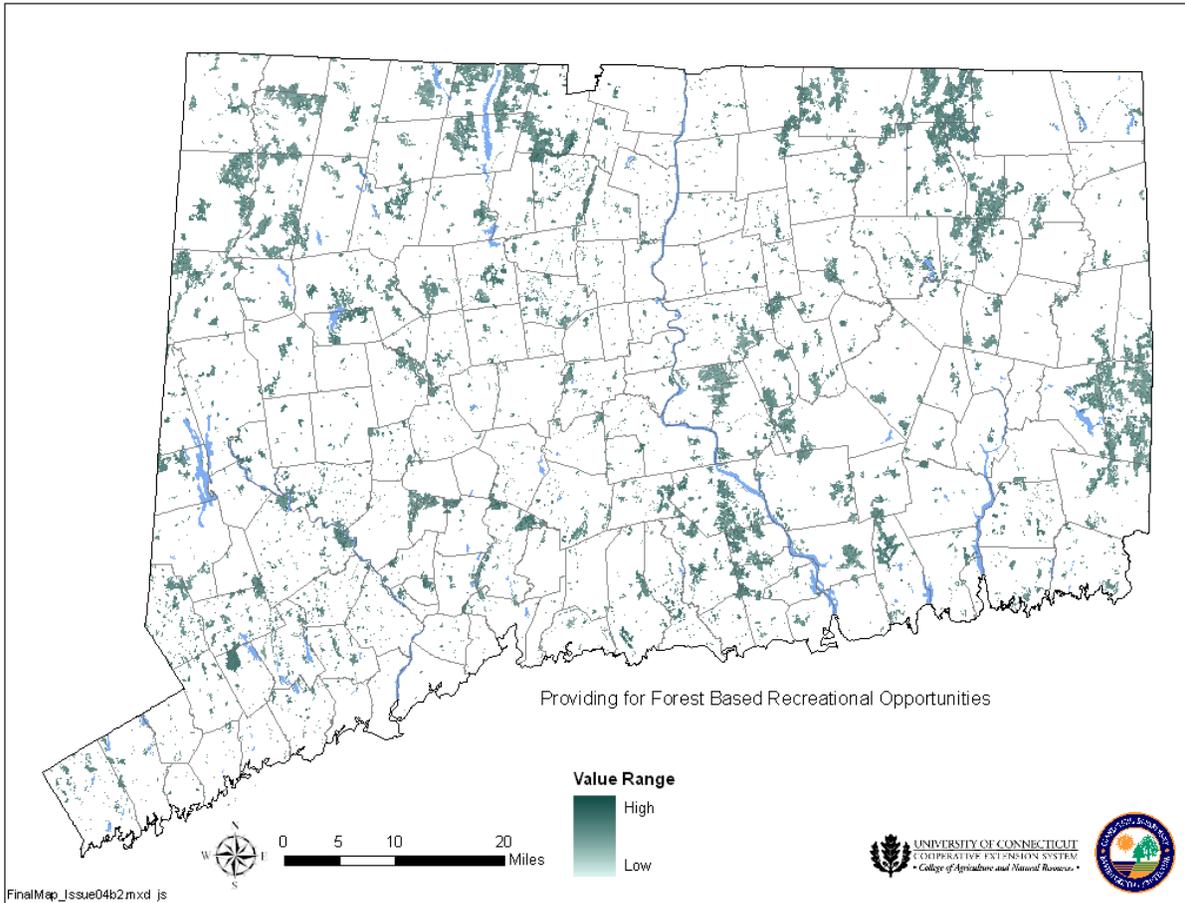
Figure 52. Priority Areas for Soil and Water Conservation



Priority Map 3. Providing For Forest Based Recreational Opportunities

This map is meant to identify areas of highest potential for forest based recreation within the State, revolving around existing publically owned properties open to the public.

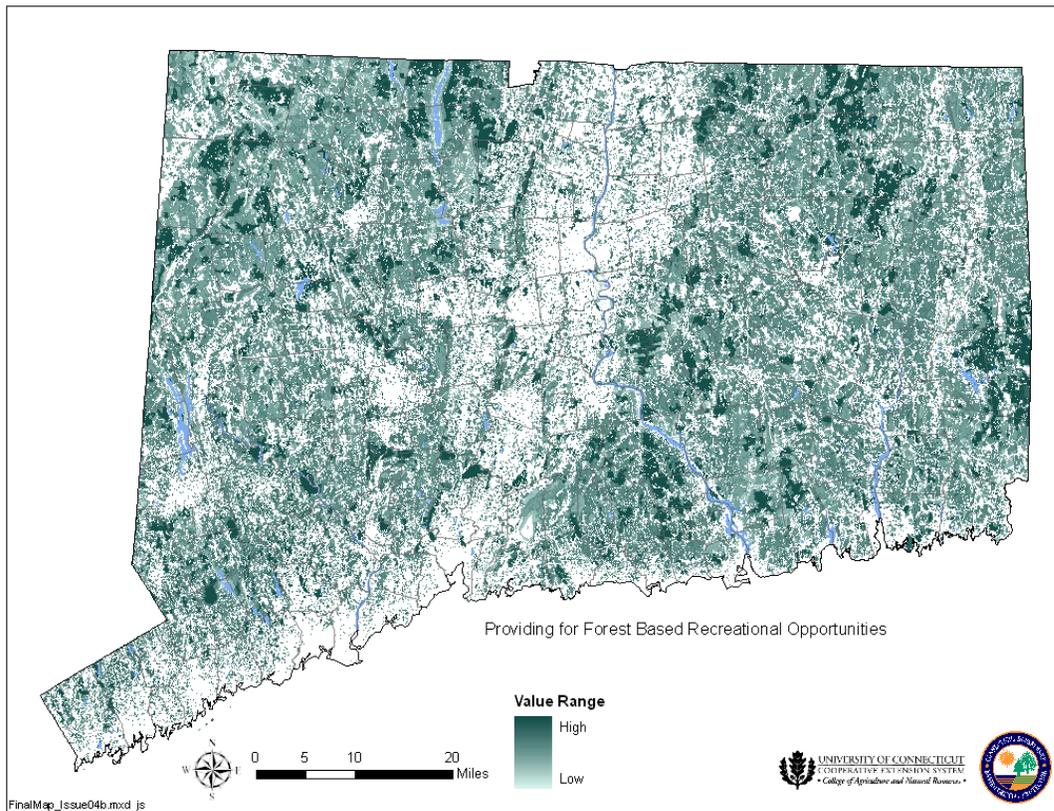
Figure 53. Practical Potential for Forest Based Opportunities



The map listed below depicts the estimated **MAXIMUM*** potential for forest based recreation within the State.

**This map is strictly for comparative means. It is unrealistic to assume that this maximum potential can be reached and there is no avocation to do so.*

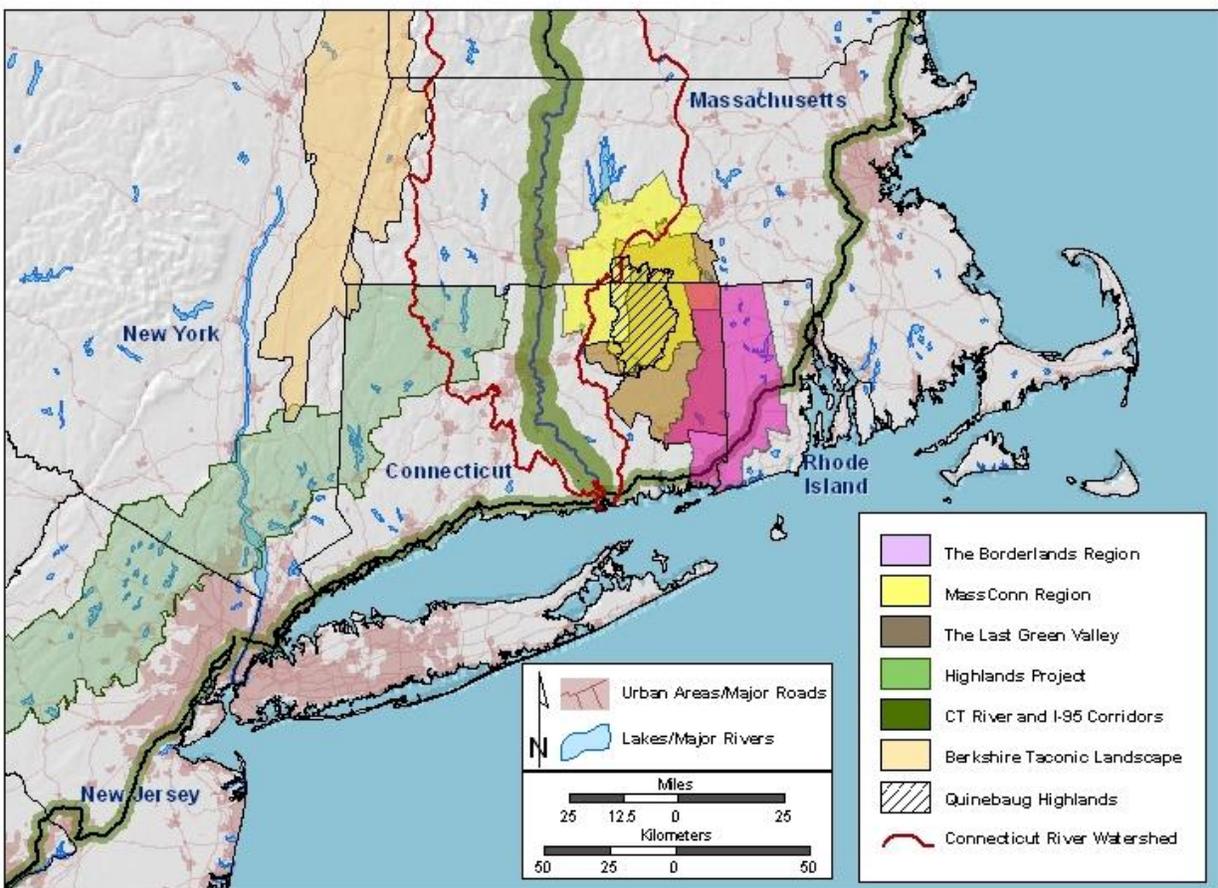
Figure 54. Maximum Potential for Forest Based Recreational Opportunities



Multi-State Priority Area Maps

There are several conservation efforts in Connecticut that cross state boundaries. Each effort may have one or many partners, and may have one or several on the ground conservation or habitat/ecosystem management projects ongoing, or recently completed. It is anticipated that work will continue in these pre-designated priority areas, but also that new attention will be focused on them as time and resources allow. A few of the larger and better known efforts are described below, and depicted in the Multi-state Priority Area Map. As evidenced in the map below (Figure 51) two distinct regions emerge as Priority Areas in terms of ongoing conservation efforts with our neighbors in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York. Please note that this is not an attempt at creating an all-encompassing map of multi-state efforts, but it is meant to serve as a basis for determining existing priority landscape areas.

Figure 51. Multi-State Priority Area Map



The project descriptions listed below are all quoted or summarized by individual websites. The source is listed as a hyperlink at the end of each description.

Borderlands Project

“Launched in 2003, The Borderlands Project aims to build greater awareness for the unique assets of the rural area that spans the Connecticut-Rhode Island border. In the twenty town Borderlands region, the Project works to:

- To build a shared understanding for the unique assets of the region and the opportunities and threats facing it.
- Foster a culture of learning and collaboration across this bi-state, multi-town, multi-scale region
- Explore innovative ways to balance growth and conservation.”

This project evolved from a Nature Conservancy Initiative and is a regional collaboration with the Eastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce and the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council. This collaborative recognized the need to address the economic concerns of their communities while still maintaining the rural character of the region. Source: [Borderlands Project](#)

Connecticut-New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania Highlands Region

The Highlands Region, denoted as an area of national significance, is a critical watershed for an expanding nearby metropolitan area. Designated by The Highlands Conservation Act, the purpose of this act is to recognize the importance of the water, forest, agricultural, wildlife, recreational, and cultural resources of the Highlands Region, and the national significance of the Highlands region to the U.S. This act is designed to assist Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania in conserving land and natural resources in this region through federal assistance for land conservation projects. Source: [CT-NY-NJ-PA Highlands Region](#)

The Last Green Valley

“A culmination of years of grassroots initiative, The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV, previously known as the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.) is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation. It is designated by Congress as the management entity for the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor. It is the role of TLGV:

- 1) Promote partnerships at the local, regional, state, and federal levels to accomplish the mission and maximize limited resources, and
- 2) Act as an educator/facilitator to motivate independent actions that will accomplish the mission and maximize limited resources, and
- 3) Take action through specific projects or programs when TLGV is the only or most appropriate entity to bring about initiation or successful completion of critical work.”

Past accomplishments include a successful grant program which distributed more than \$3.1 million to over 200 projects throughout the region; creation of the Green Valley Institute, a partnership with the University of Connecticut and the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Services that provides continuing education for policy makers in the region; and publications on the significance of resources found within the region. Source: [The Last Green Valley](#)

Quinebaug Highlands Project

Within the Last Green Valley lies the Quinebaug Highlands Project. The Quinebaug Highlands region consists of a 34,000-acre forest block within the four towns of Ashford, Eastford, Union

and Woodstock in Connecticut and the towns of Southbridge and Sturbridge in Massachusetts, which face increased pressure from development. The project area includes the 114,000 acre Natchaug River Watershed which encompasses high quality streams and supports the largest drinking water supply watershed in Connecticut. The Quinebaug Highlands Project is “the result of partnership between The Nature Conservancy, and the University of Connecticut Extension System’s Green Valley Institute. With the help of multiple partners in the region a landmark \$1,000,000 grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), 1,100 acres of forest and freshwater resources in the Quinebaug Highlands’s Natchaug River Watershed have been protected.”

Source: [The Highlands Project](#)

Berkshire Taconic Landscape

Three chapters of the Nature Conservancy have join efforts to protect the forested landscape that “stretches stretches across the mountains of Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York, and reaches down into the lowlands of the Housatonic and Hudson Valleys.” Conservation targets include Northern Hardwood Forest Matrix; Calcareous Seepage Wetland Mosaic; size one and two stream and river systems; hardwater lakes; floodplain forests; Timber Rattlesnake; and Bog Turtle critical habitat areas. Identified threats by the project include; Habitat destruction and fragmentation, invasive species, Stormwater run-off, Global climate change, Acid deposition from fossil fuels, and Poaching or collection of rare and endangered species. The aim of the Nature Conservancy is to use “science-based conservation and collaborate with many different stakeholders” to accomplish these goals. Their conservation strategy includes land protection, ecological restoration, applied conservation science, collaborative land management, and collaboration with local communities.

Source: [Berkshire Taconic Landscape](#)

The Connecticut River Watershed

“The Connecticut River Watershed is the largest river ecosystem in New England, encompassing approximately 11,000 square miles and spanning over four New England states, including Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut”(MA EEA).

“The watershed was designated the Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge by an Act of Congress in 1991 and later became designated as a National Heritage River by President Clinton in 1998. It is the first of its kind that encompasses an entire watershed ecosystem.”(MA EEA) “The Nature Conservancy named it one of their “Last Great Places” in 1993 “(MA EEA) “The Connecticut River Watershed Council advocates for the entire, four-state Connecticut River watershed”.

The watershed priorities are;

- “Continue to promote the protection and/or creation of riparian buffer zones along the waterways within the watershed.
- Work to eliminate the combined sewage overflow problems in the Springfield and Holyoke areas along the river.
- Restore the river community by removing barriers to fish and eel passages within the tributaries to the Connecticut River.
- Reduce the negative effects of non-point source pollution, primarily stormwater runoff.
- Improve upon the limited amount of water quality data available within the watershed”(MA EEA). [Connecticut River Watershed Council](#)

The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership

“The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership is a voluntary association of land trusts, conservation organizations, state agencies, and foresters serving a region of 35 towns spanning the border of South-Central Massachusetts and Northeastern Connecticut. Member groups identify key areas of the region for conservation, collaborate on land protection efforts, promote sustainable forestry practices, and organize public outreach and education efforts in order to increase the pace and efficacy of conservation in the MassConn area.”

Source: [MassConn Sustainable Forestry Partnership](#)

Interstate 95 Corridor

The remaining watersheds and forests along the I-95 corridor through Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut face threats from expanding development, heavy use and poor planning. Degradation of watersheds, forest fragmentation, and a reduction of forested land along the corridor poses serve risk to water quality, forest diversity and watershed health. Heavy use of the corridor increases the potential to spread non-native/invasive species and/or forest pests. Increasing land values enhance the pressure for private land owners to sell or subdivided forested land. (FTP)

It is important to note that several of these ongoing multi-state conservation efforts and areas are captured in, or correspond to, areas outlined in the DRAFT Concept Paper dated 2.25.10 entitled New England/New York Forest Initiative developed by the seven state foresters (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, and NY). At the 2009 New England Governors’ Conference, the region’s State Foresters were tasked 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” (NEFA 1).

Stated goals include: Strengthen Markets for Forest Products, Improve Forest Stewardship, and Minimize Forest Fragmentation, Parcelization, and Conversion (NEFA 4).

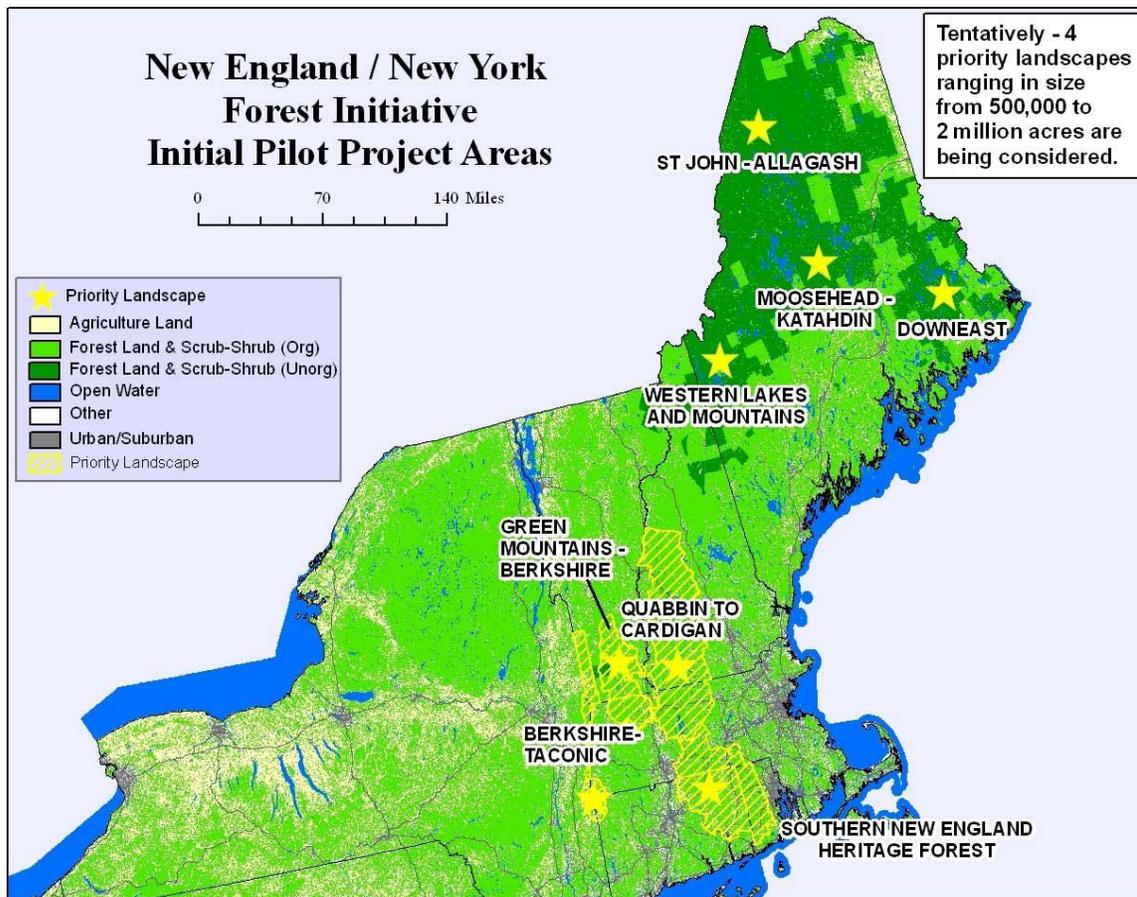
Expanding on the last goal includes ideas to “permanently conserve an additional 15 million acres of forest land in the region (reaching the goal of conserving half the forest land in the region); and have devised a variety of strategies and an initial set of pilot or demonstration projects to address them (NEFA 4).

As can be seen in Figure 52, two of the areas listed in the DRAFT New England/New York Forest Initiative as Initial Pilot Project Areas that include Connecticut:

The Berkshire/Taconic’s – “A 230,000 acre area containing an inordinate number of rare species threatened by development and climate change. Efforts will focus on restoring ecosystem functions. This will be accomplished through on-the-ground stewardship and preservation of large unfragmented forest blocks.”

Southern New England Heritage Forest – “A 1.4 million acre area that will receive focused land-use planning assistance with a variety of land conservation tools preserving the working heritage of the last remaining rural landscape in Southern New England”(NEFA 4).

Figure 52. New England/New York Forest Initiative Initial Pilot Project Areas



Source: DRAFT New England/New York Forest initiative Concept Paper

As of the submission date of this Assessment and Strategy, this DRAFT New England/New York Forest Initiative is still a work in progress, and will be finalized after June 18, 2010 and will be presented to the New England Governors Council by July, 2010.

Multi-state Priority Issues

In addition to multi-state Priority Areas, there are also several priority issues that cross state boundaries and can be considered multi-state Priority Issues. These topics are mentioned in some capacity at various locations within in this Assessment and Strategy, a quick summary is listed below. Whenever opportunities arise, efforts will be coordinated with neighboring states to address these issues.^{12*}

¹² *all issues write ups are summarized from information taken from the USFS FTP website based on consultations with regional forest planners in 2009. [USFS FTP](#) Actual quotes are cited.

Biomass Energy

This includes renewable energy and the accompanying markets for biomass. Issues involve availability/sustainability; impact on carbon balances on a regional and national level; air quality/emissions; incentives/efficient use; and state and federal regulations.

Habitat Diversity

Forests of New England and New York provide essential habitat for rare and endangered species. Concerns include change in forest diversity and structure as a result of climate change; forest fragmentation and loss of corridors; invasive species; loss of early successional habitat; and loss of forested riparian zones by increasing urban development leading to increase runoff.

Keeping Forest as Forest

Concerns include a reduction in forest acreage and increased forest fragmentation, due to increased development; uncertain forest product markets; and change in forest ownerships.

Watersheds

Protecting and managing forested watersheds is essential to provide clean water in the future. Watersheds that cross the I-95 corridor have been identified as having the greatest pressure from development. “The single most important issue facing watersheds in New England and New York is source protection” (USFS FTP).

Urban and Community Forestry – Green Infrastructure

“Green Infrastructure in an urban setting is the interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, such as greenways, wetlands, parks, urban forests and native plant vegetation that naturally manages stormwater, reduces flooding risk and improves air and water quality (USFS FTP).” Benefits include energy efficiency, reduced costs, and community cohesiveness. Concerns involve the ambiguity in defined green and developed infrastructure areas.

Invasive Species

Invasive and non-native plant species are a threat to forest diversity, forest products, and niche habitats. Objectives are concerned with developing prevention and eradication strategies that are both time and cost effective. Since invasive populations are influenced by a plant/animal interaction, a systems based approach is essential. Invasive species also includes invasive forest pests.

Next Generation of Landowners

Concerns involve increased forest fragmentation and losing woodlands as a result of transfers of family owned land. “More than half of private woodland owners are 65 years-old or older” (USFS FTP).” Increasing land values enhance the pressure for families to sell or subdivided forested land.