Connect the Connecticut

A shared vision for conserving the Connecticut River watershed for future generations

Common resources, shared vision
Encompassing New England's largest river system, the Connecticut River watershed provides important habitat for a diversity of fish, wildlife and plants — from iconic species like bald eagle and black bear to threatened and endangered species like the shortnose sturgeon, piping plover, and dwarf wedgemussel. The watershed is also a source of clean water, recreation, food, jobs, and more, for the millions of people living in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. As the defining geography for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, it is also part of a national network of areas considered to have special significance for conservation.

The best places to start
The most effective long-term strategy for sustaining natural resources across a large landscape like the Connecticut River watershed is to keep important parts of it intact and connected. *Connect the Connecticut*

is a collaborative effort to identify the best places to start: the areas within the watershed that partners agree are priorities for conservation to ensure that important species, habitats, and natural processes will be sustained into the future — even in the face of climate and land use change.

Tools for diverse partners
Using the best available science and information from the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, including an innovative modeling approach developed by the Designing Sustainable Landscapes Project at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a team of more than 30 partners from state and federal agencies and private organizations spent more than a year creating a conservation "design" for the watershed. Outlining a network of core areas, or intact, connected, and resilient places within the watershed, the design serves as a roadmap for conservation. It includes a variety of datasets and tools people from all sectors can use voluntarily to make more informed

decisions about managing lands and waters. These natural areas provide habitat for wildlife and support local economies and the overall health and well-being of communities.

Protecting fish, wildlife, and natural systems
Connect the Connecticut is a unified vision that considers the value of fish and wildlife species and the natural systems they inhabit. In order to address shared goals and objectives for protecting species and ecosystems, the partners made high quality habitat for a set of 15 fish and wildlife species — including American woodcock, black bear, and Eastern brook trout — a key component of the network of core areas. The partnership identified these species to represent others that rely on similar habitats within the major types of natural systems in the watershed — from spruce-fir forests to small streams to freshwater marshes. Setting specific objectives for each of these species ensures that enough high quality habitat is included in the design, and

Connecticut River

Wood thrush

that it reflects the needs of a range of fish and wildlife. Other key components of the core areas include high quality, resilient locations of both rare and common ecosystem types throughout the watershed, from Long Island Sound to the peaks of the White Mountains.

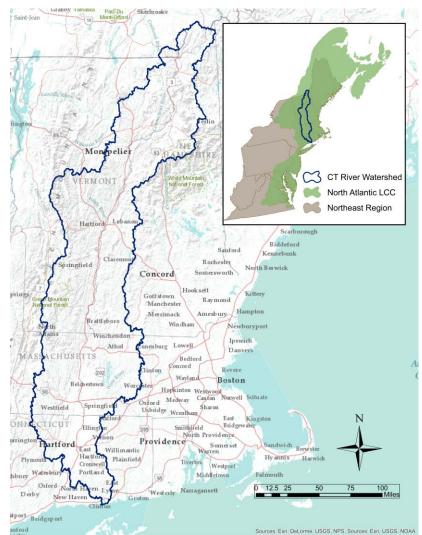**Meaningful, measurable results**

Connect the Connecticut is intended to help resource managers, planners, and others prioritize effective conservation actions and adjust course as needed to achieve meaningful and measurable conservation results. The tools and information complement local knowledge by offering broader state, regional, and national context to help sustain important natural resources across large regions in an era of accelerated change.

Here are a few examples of how it can be applied at different scales:

Local – Land trusts can use the design to help local landowners understand what makes a particular parcel valuable ecologically, and then choose what type of stewardship or protection best fits their vision for their lands.

State – State wildlife agencies can use the design to efficiently and effectively identify areas in the watershed that should be further studied to confirm their conservation potential for species and habitat types of interest.

Federal – The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife refuge can use the design to prioritize within or among the Conservation Focus Areas identified as part of the ongoing planning process for that refuge.

Black bear

Information and lessons learned from the landscape conservation design process will be used to refine the products over time, and can be applied in other geographies throughout the Northeast. **Learn how you connect:** www.connecttheconnecticut.org

About the North Atlantic LCC

The North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is an applied science and management partnership that builds upon a long history of conservation in the region to unite stakeholders around common goals for sustaining natural and cultural resources, and to develop tools and strategies to achieve those goals in the face of threats and uncertainty. For more information, visit www.northatlanticlcc.org

For more information

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North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative