

Regional Conservation Partnerships

How they benefit land trusts and other partners

Presented by Bill Labich, Senior Conservationist, Highstead Foundation

2017 Maryland Land Conservation Conference
June 8, 2017

The Pearlstone Retreat and Conference Center
5425 Mt Gilead Road, Reisterstown, MD

RCP Workshop Agenda

- RCPs at Scale – Single, Nested, Networked
 - What are they?
 - Why do land trusts use them?
 - What do they do?
- Two RCPs and how they use governance, information-sharing, and finance tools to advance the pace and practice of regional or large landscape conservation by building capacity, prioritizing, and acquiring funding
- Break-out discussion: Discuss an Existing Collaborative or a New RCP
- Open Q&A
- Wrap-up & Passing Out the Handbooks



Highstead

www.highstead.net

Wildlands and Woodlands



*A Vision
for
the Forests
of
Massachusetts*

*David Foster, David Kittredge, Brian Donahue,
Glenn Motzkin, David Orwig, Aaron Ellison,
Brian Hall, Betsy Colburn and Anthony D'Amato*



Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs)

An informal yet organized network of people, representing private and public organizations and agencies, who collaborate over time to develop and implement a shared conservation vision across town and sometimes state and international boundaries.









Our Vision for Connectivity

Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership

An Interconnected Landscape

Land is a finite resource. The more fragmented the landscape, the more difficult it is to manage. The more interconnected the landscape, the more resilient it is to change. The more interconnected the landscape, the more resilient it is to change. The more interconnected the landscape, the more resilient it is to change.



An Interconnected Approach

Priority Modeling is a Regional Conservation Strategy approach that uses a variety of data to identify high-priority areas for conservation. It is a data-driven approach that identifies areas of high conservation value and areas of high fragmentation. It is a data-driven approach that identifies areas of high conservation value and areas of high fragmentation.

Water Resources



Ecosystem Value

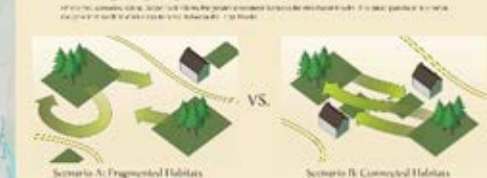


Community Value



LEGEND
 Represented Land of High Conservation Value
 Protected land
 Lakes/Streams
 Highways/Major Roads
 Land Use

Fighting Fragmentation with Small Parcels



Climate Resilience and Biodiversity

Climate resilience is the ability of a system to recover from a disturbance. Biodiversity is the variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat. Climate resilience and biodiversity are closely linked. A more resilient system is also a more biodiverse system.



Examples of Connectivity

Wildlife Corridors: Diagram showing green arrows representing wildlife movement between green patches.

Migration Flyways: Diagram showing brown arrows representing bird migration paths.

Workshed Areas: Diagram showing blue arrows representing water flow or agricultural workshed areas.

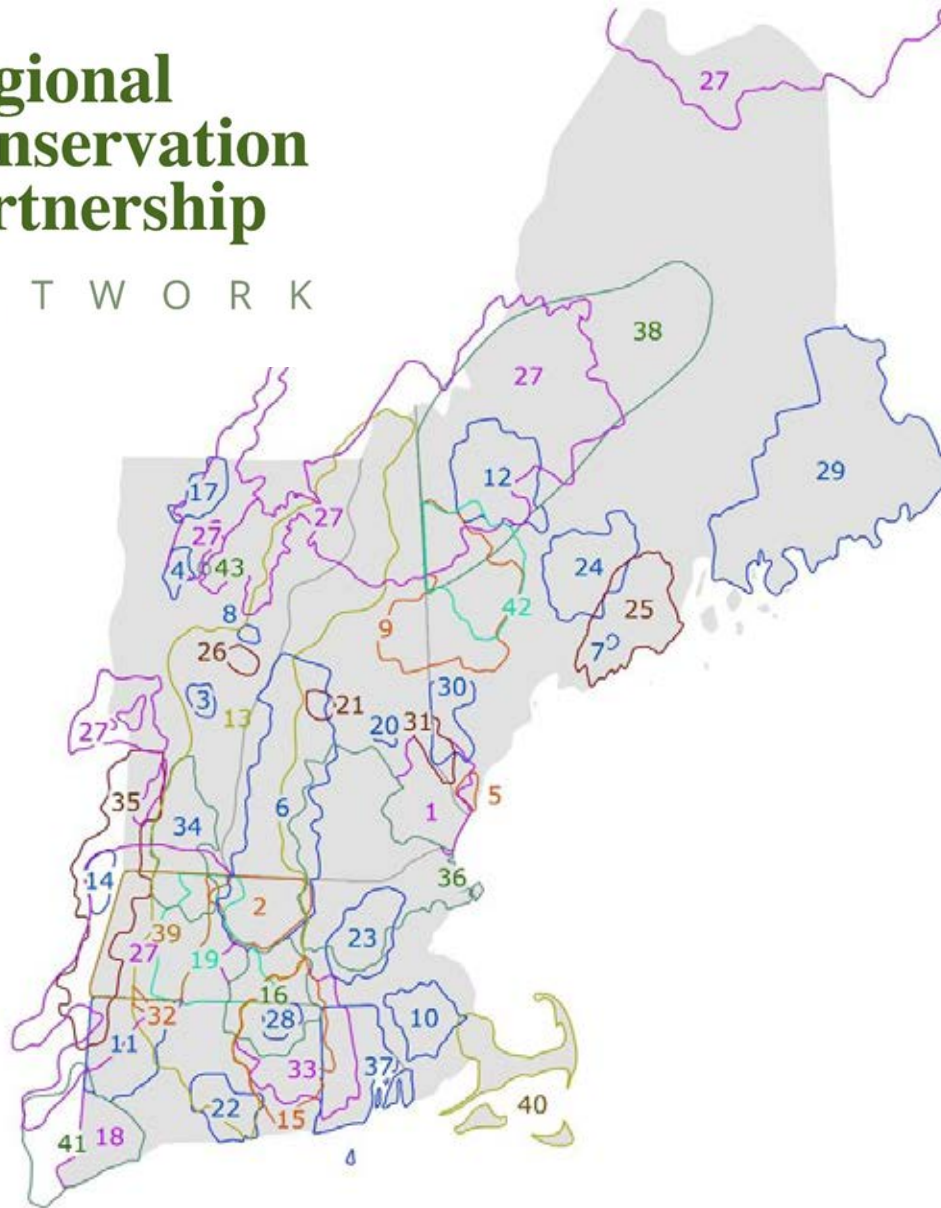
Northern A.T. Landscape -- Regional Conservation Partnership Program





Regional Conservation Partnership

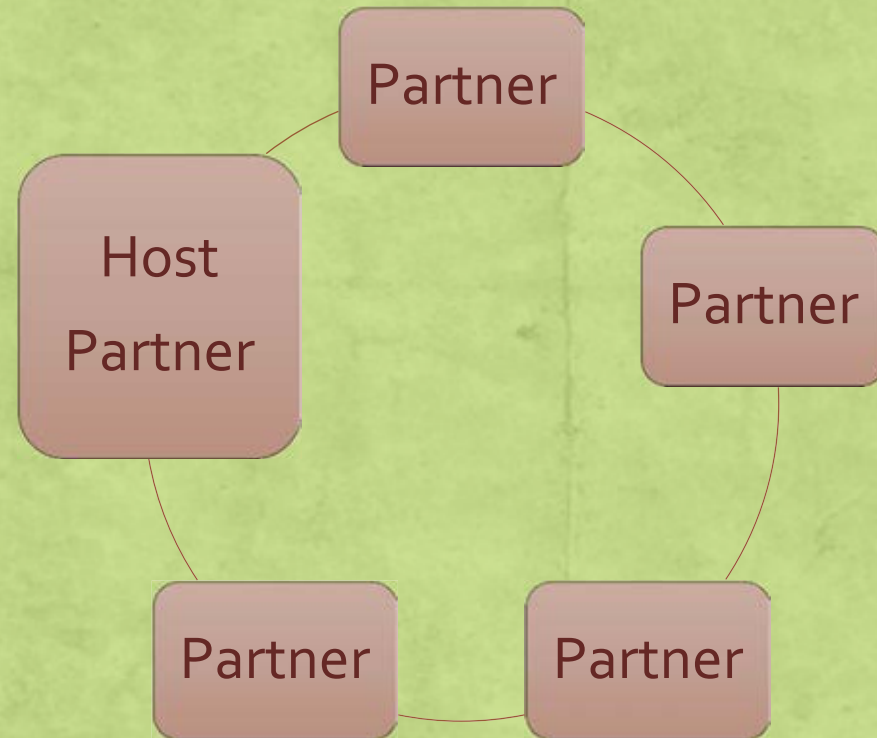
N E T W O R K



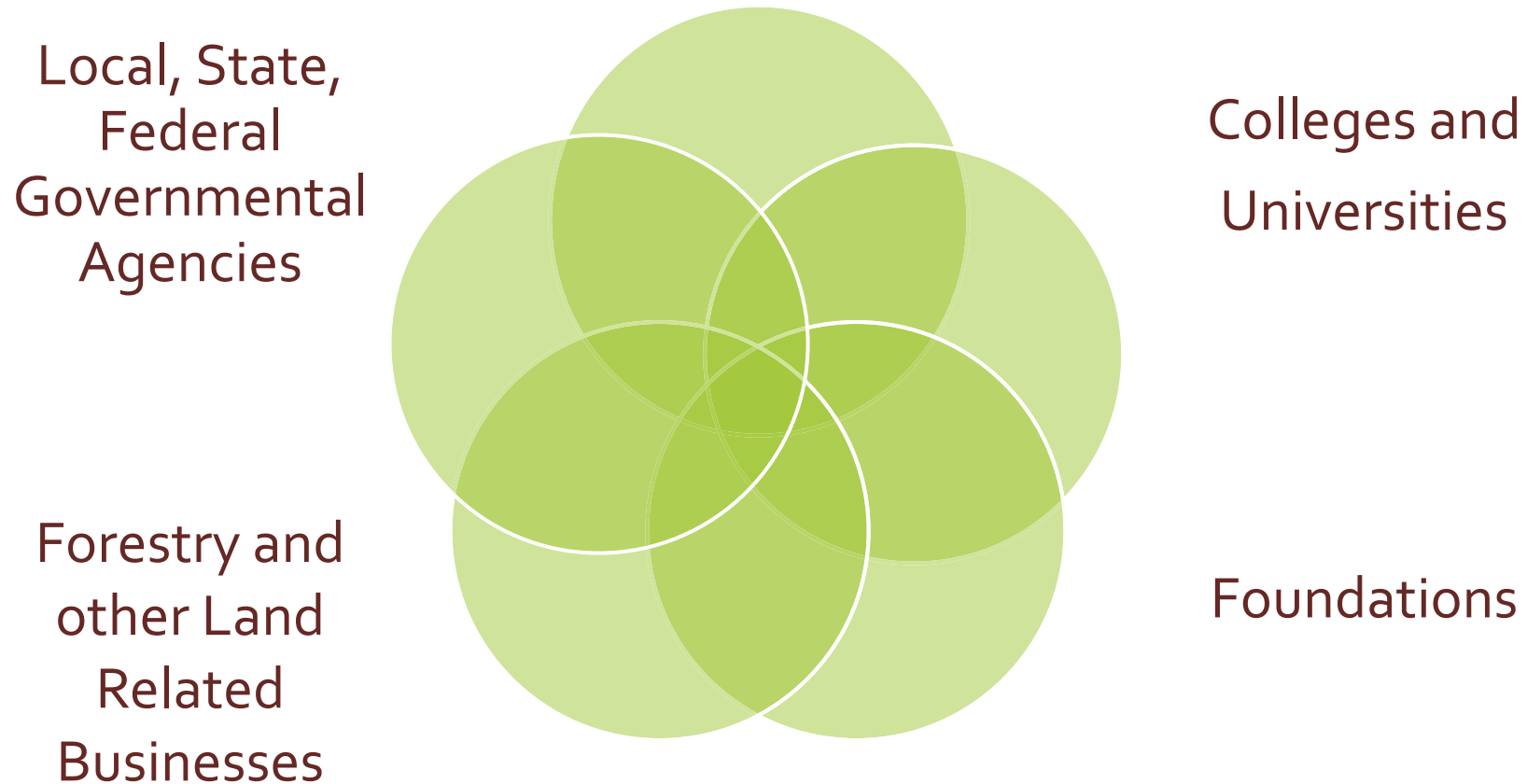
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Data From Bill Labich, Highstead 2/5/2017

Anatomy of a Regional Conservation Partnership



**Non-Governmental Conservation
Organizations (e.g. local, regional,
state-wide, and national) (or RCPs of
all of these and others)**



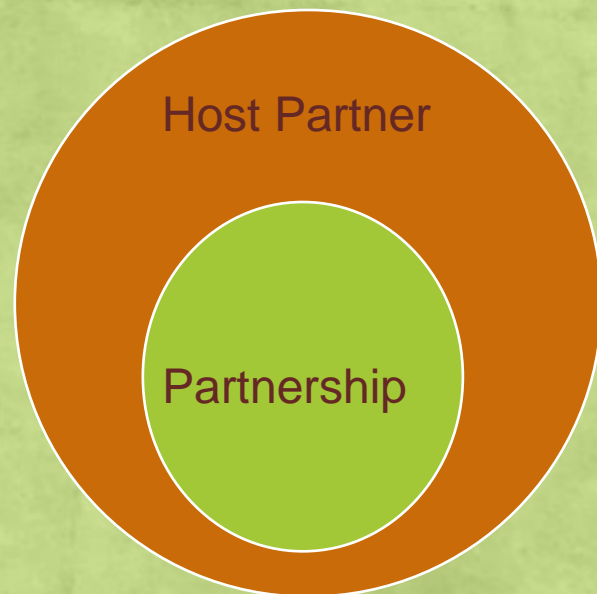
Attributes of Conserving RCPs

- Partners meet regularly and in-person
- Size of the region
- # towns in region
- Host partner full-time positions
- Ratio of Host Partner Territory to Partnership Region
- 2+ governance bodies
- Towns represented
- Have a mapped vision
- Towns involved in conservation planning
- Partners can get staffing & funding
- Partners coordinate activities
- Age of the RCP

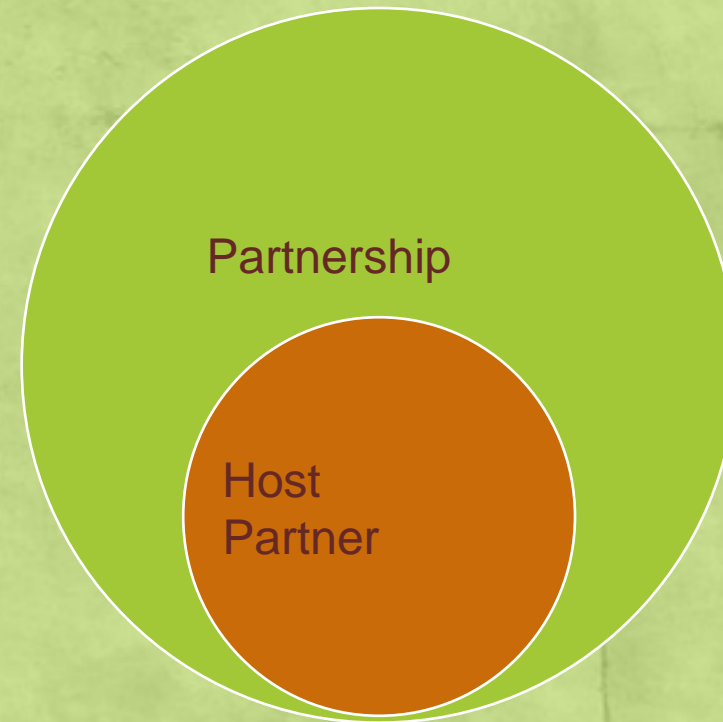
Source: Labich, W.G., E.M. Hamin, and S. Record. 2013. Regional Conservation Partnerships in New England. *Journal of Forestry* 111(5):326-334.

Host Partner Territory : Partnership Territory

Become Conserving
Sooner



Take More Time



RCPs: Why do Land Trusts and others use them?

- Build the capacity of their organizations to succeed
 - Information-sharing & training
 - Coordination
 - Staffing
 - New partners
- Identify the best lands to protect
 - Using best available science
 - Landscape scale approach
- Funding
 - Attract more and different funding
 - Cooperate vs compete

And these three reasons are all connected.



The screenshot shows the top portion of the My MassConn Woods website. At the top left is the logo, which features a green tree with roots and a white outline of the state of Massachusetts, all enclosed in a circular frame with the text "My MassConn Woods" around it. To the right of the logo are two navigation links: "OUR REGION" and "WHAT'S NEW". Below the navigation is a large, high-quality photograph of a calm lake surrounded by a dense forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. Below the photograph, the heading "Our Region" is displayed in a large, bold, brown font. Underneath this heading is the sub-heading "Why is the MassConn region so important?" in a smaller, bold, dark grey font. The main body of text below the sub-heading discusses the need for land conservation in the region due to population growth and development pressure.

Our Region

Why is the MassConn region so important?

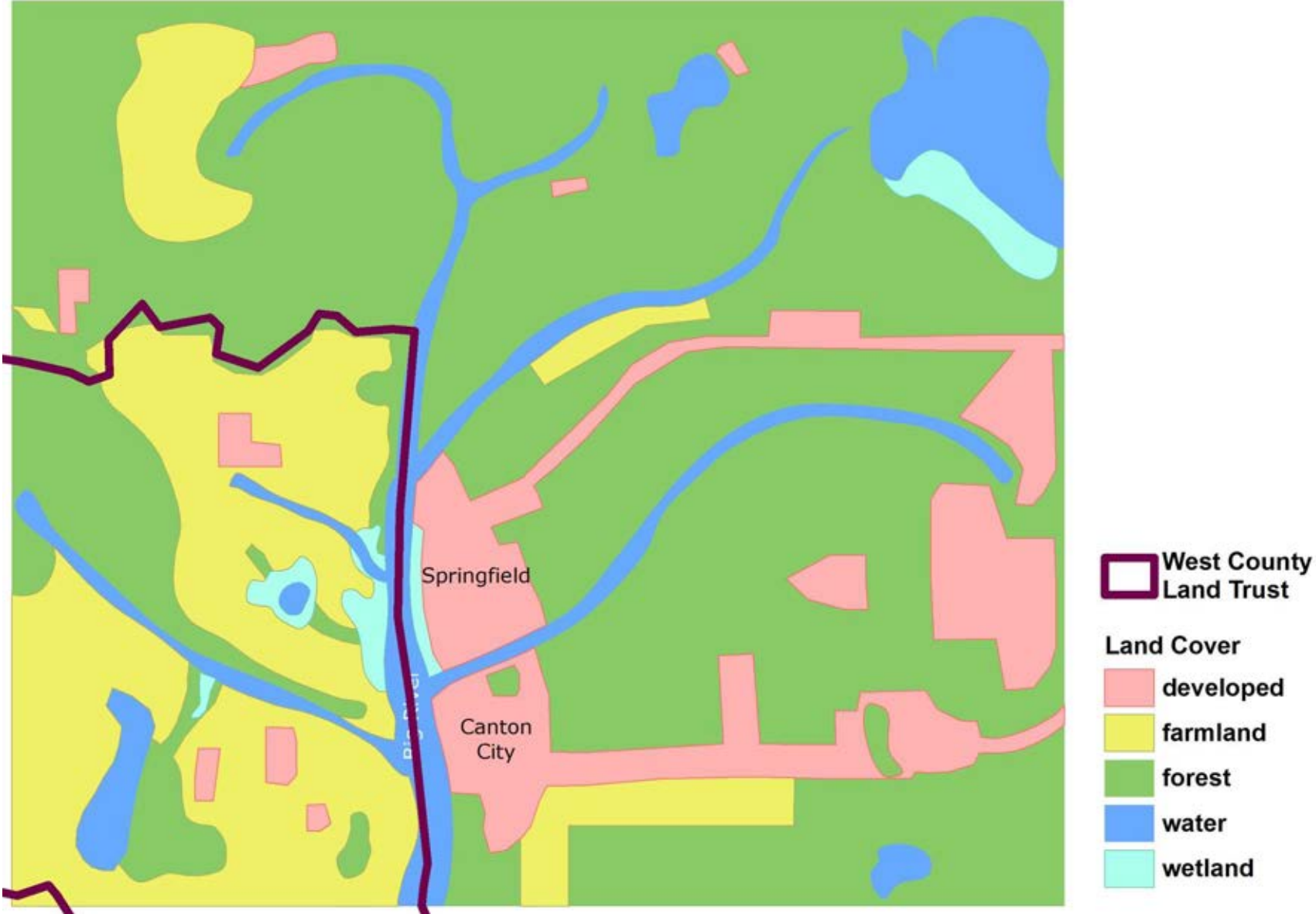
The maps below clearly illustrate a compelling need for land conservation in our region. While the region is currently largely rural and well-covered in forestlands, many towns have seen a dramatic rise in population and development is encroaching quickly. Our proximity to urban and suburban development makes the region desirable for housing, and the pressure on landowners to develop continues to increase.

Why Work in RCPs?: Increase Capacity, Help prioritizing resources, More funding

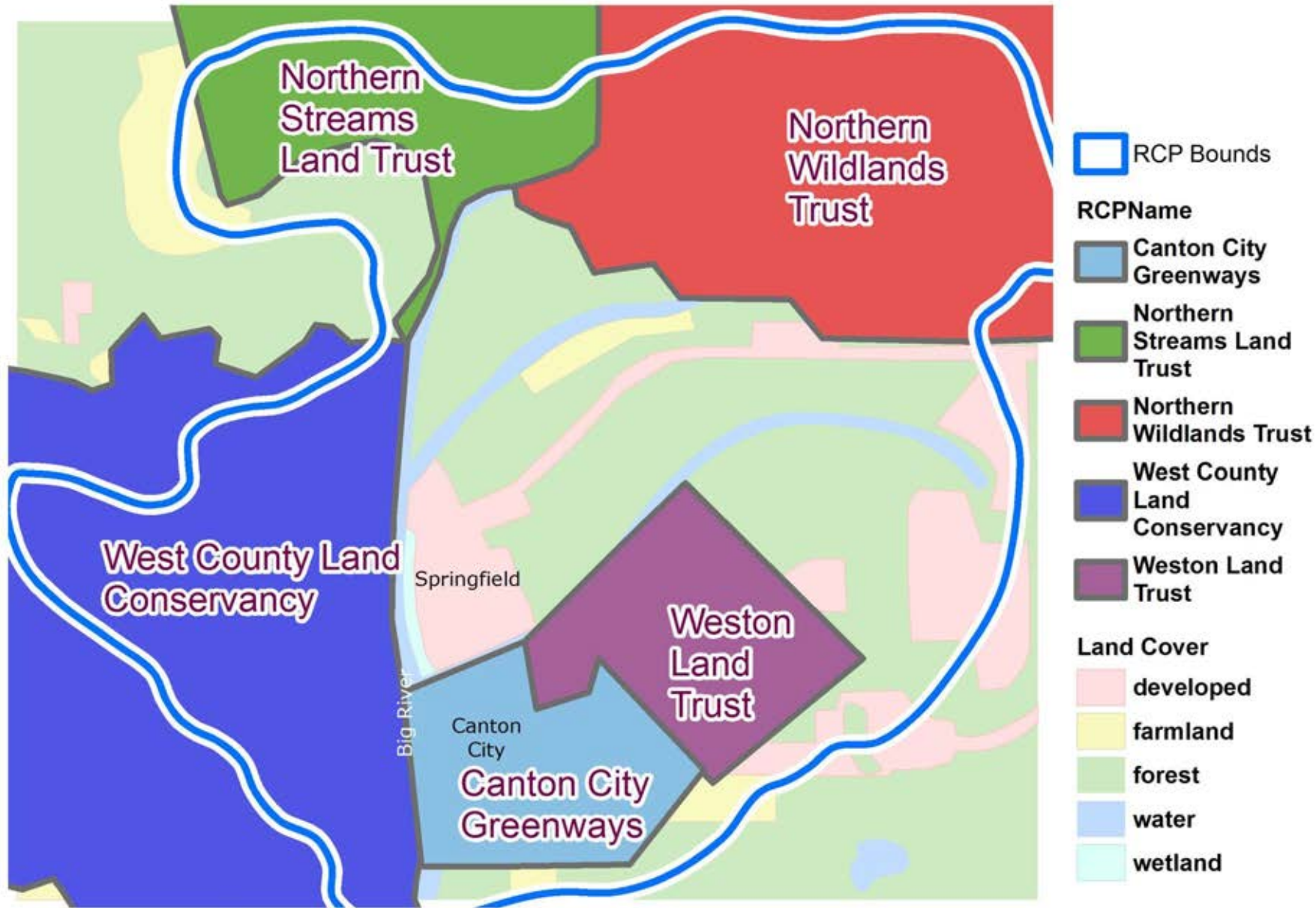
Land Trust Scale vs RCP Scale



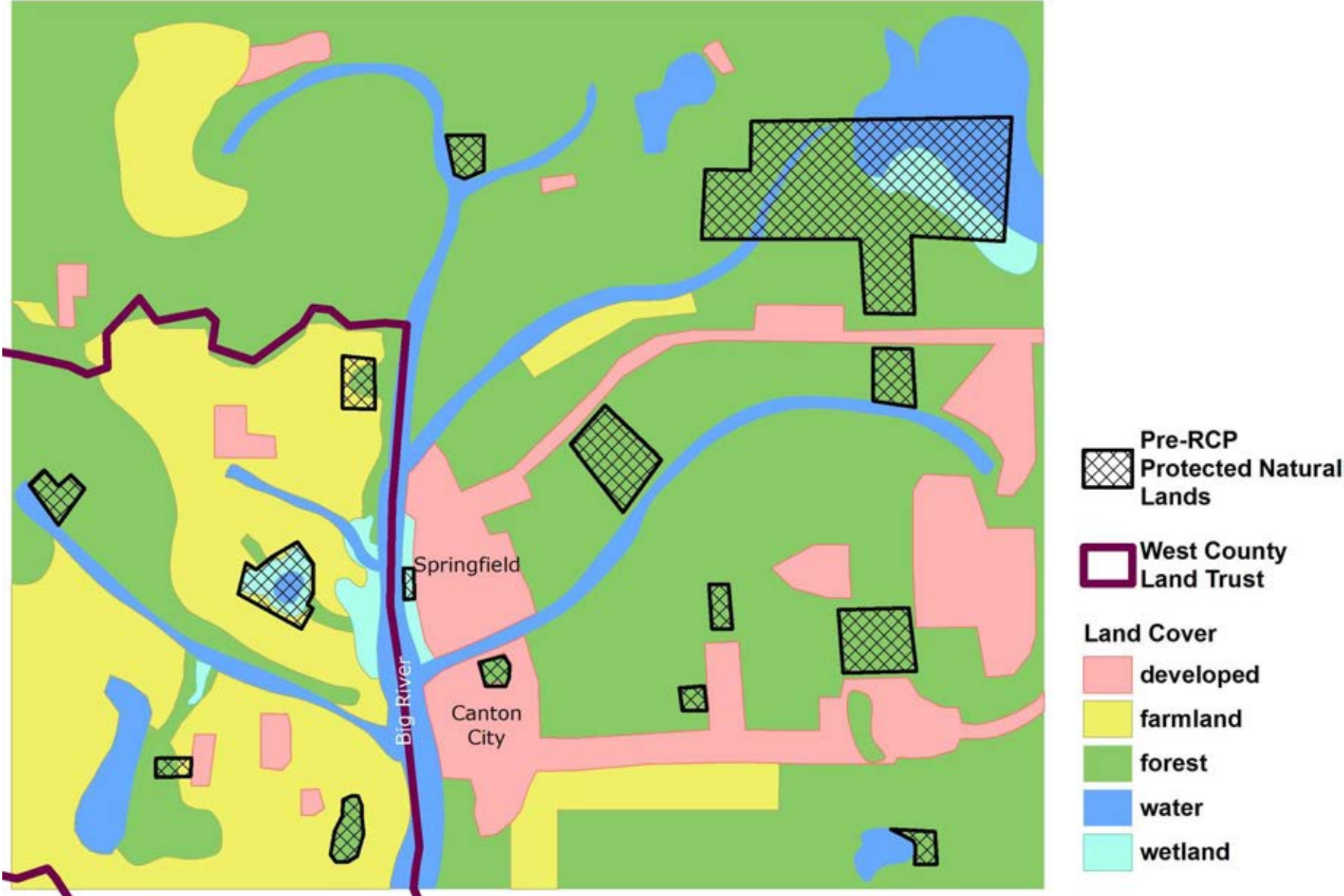
Regional Scale



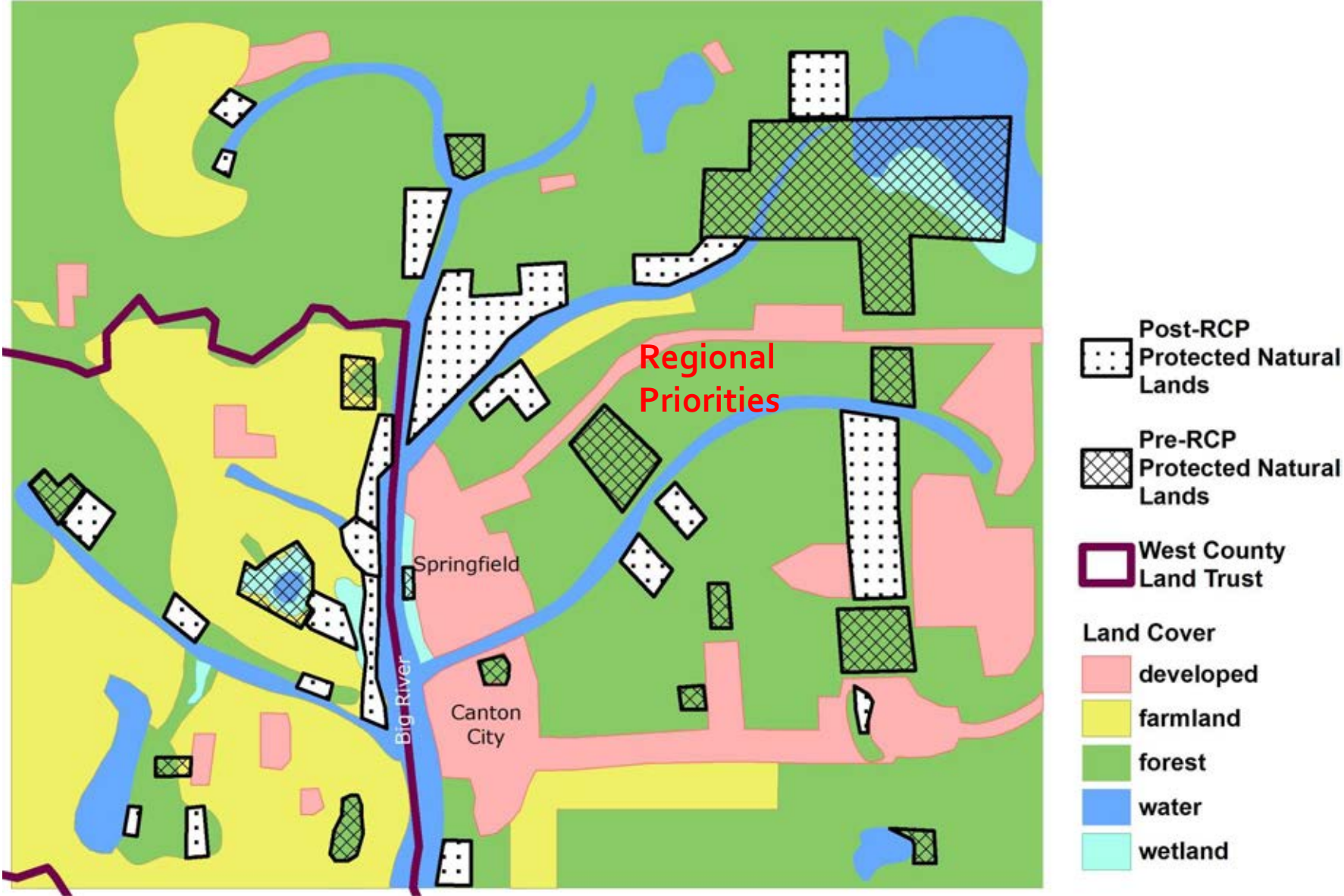
Five Land Trusts form an RCP in a Shared Regional Landscape



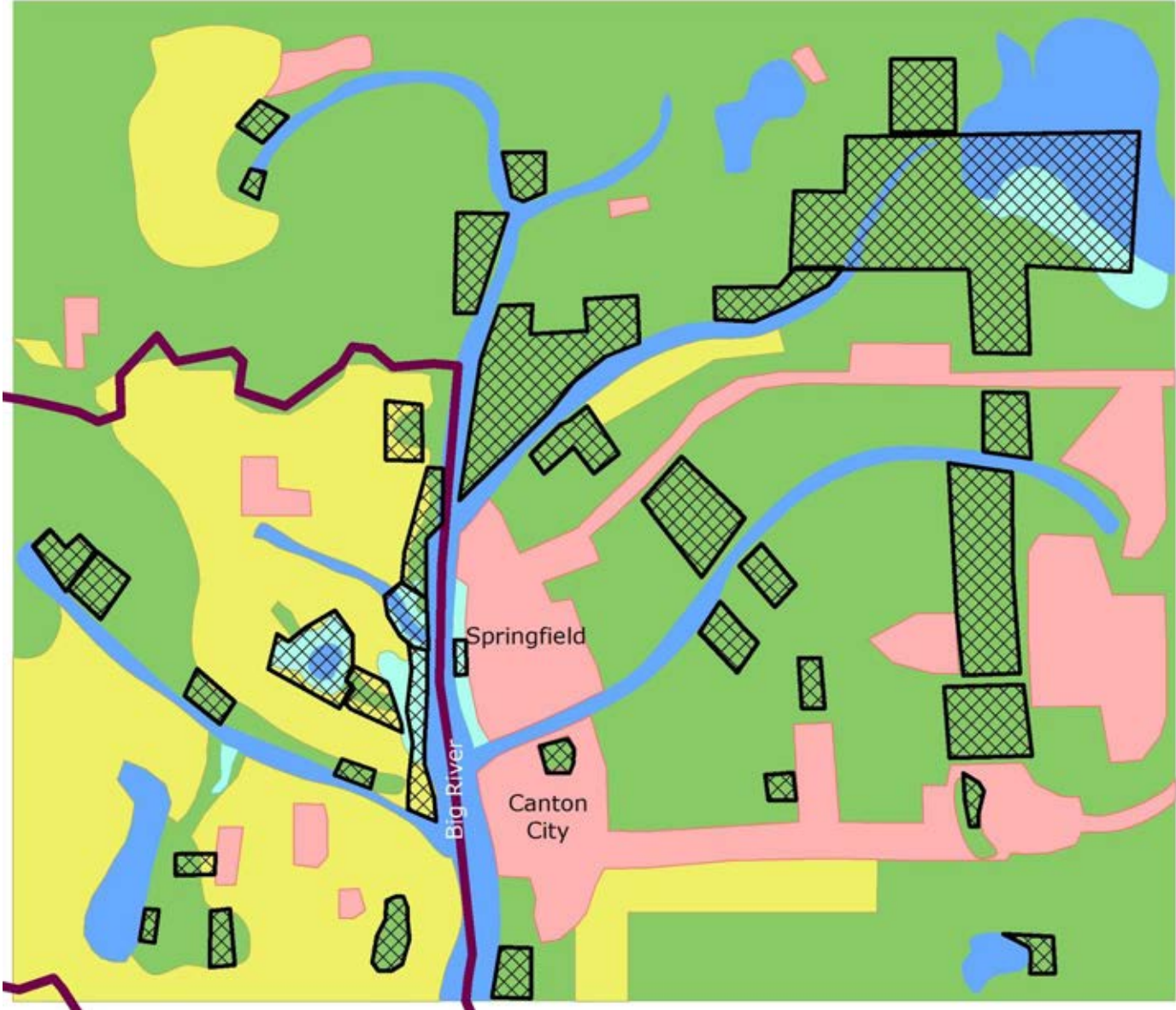
Pre-RCP Protection



Post-RCP Protection



RCP > Synergy Between Land Trust and Regional Scales



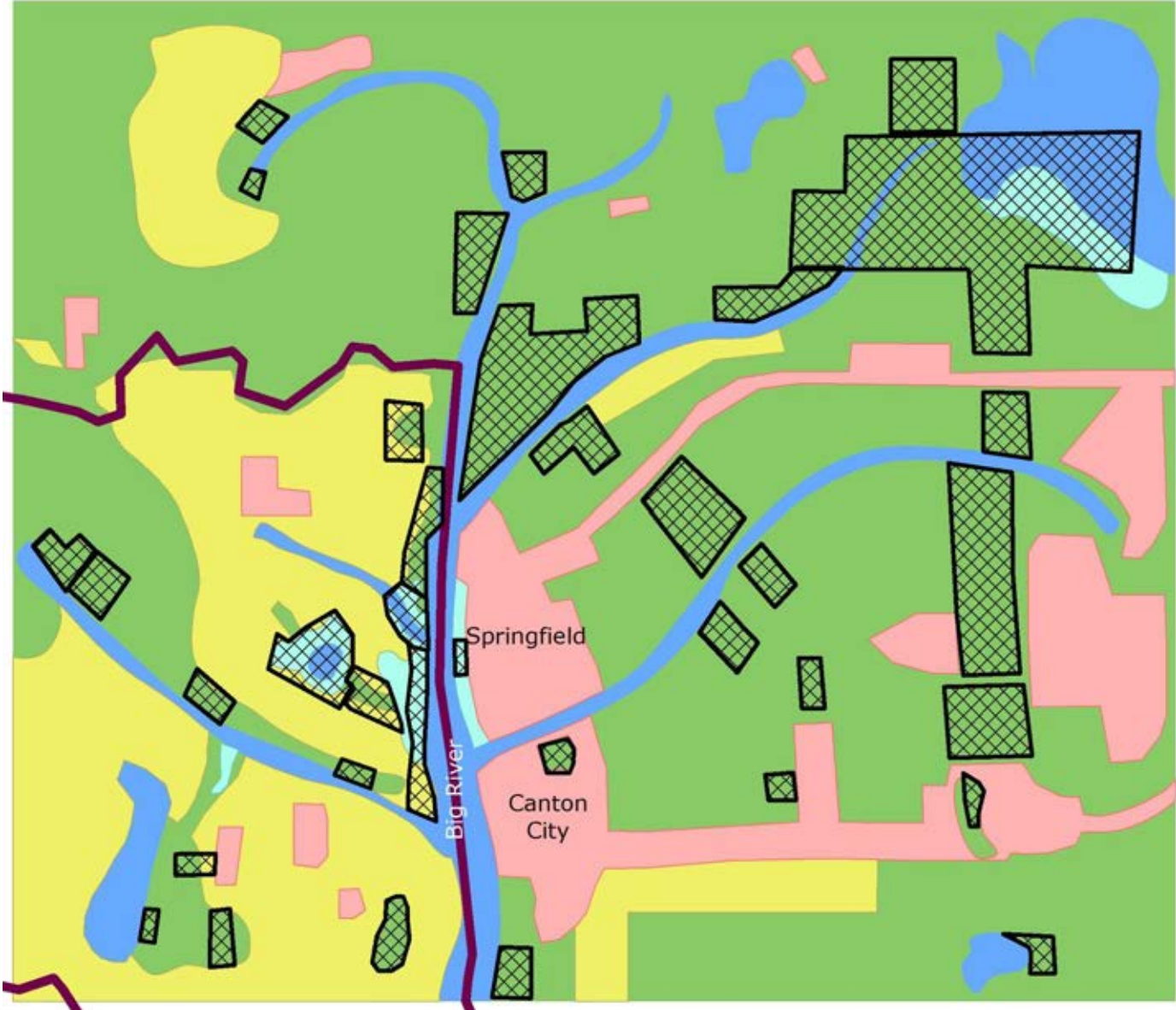
Best!

- Protected Natural Land
- West County Land Trust
- Land Cover
 - developed
 - farmland
 - forest
 - water
 - wetland

Synergy

Best!

- Real Big Blocks
- Buffers on Big River
- North-South Pathways
- Stepping Stones
- Good Redundancy
- Better Grant Proposals



What do RCPs do?





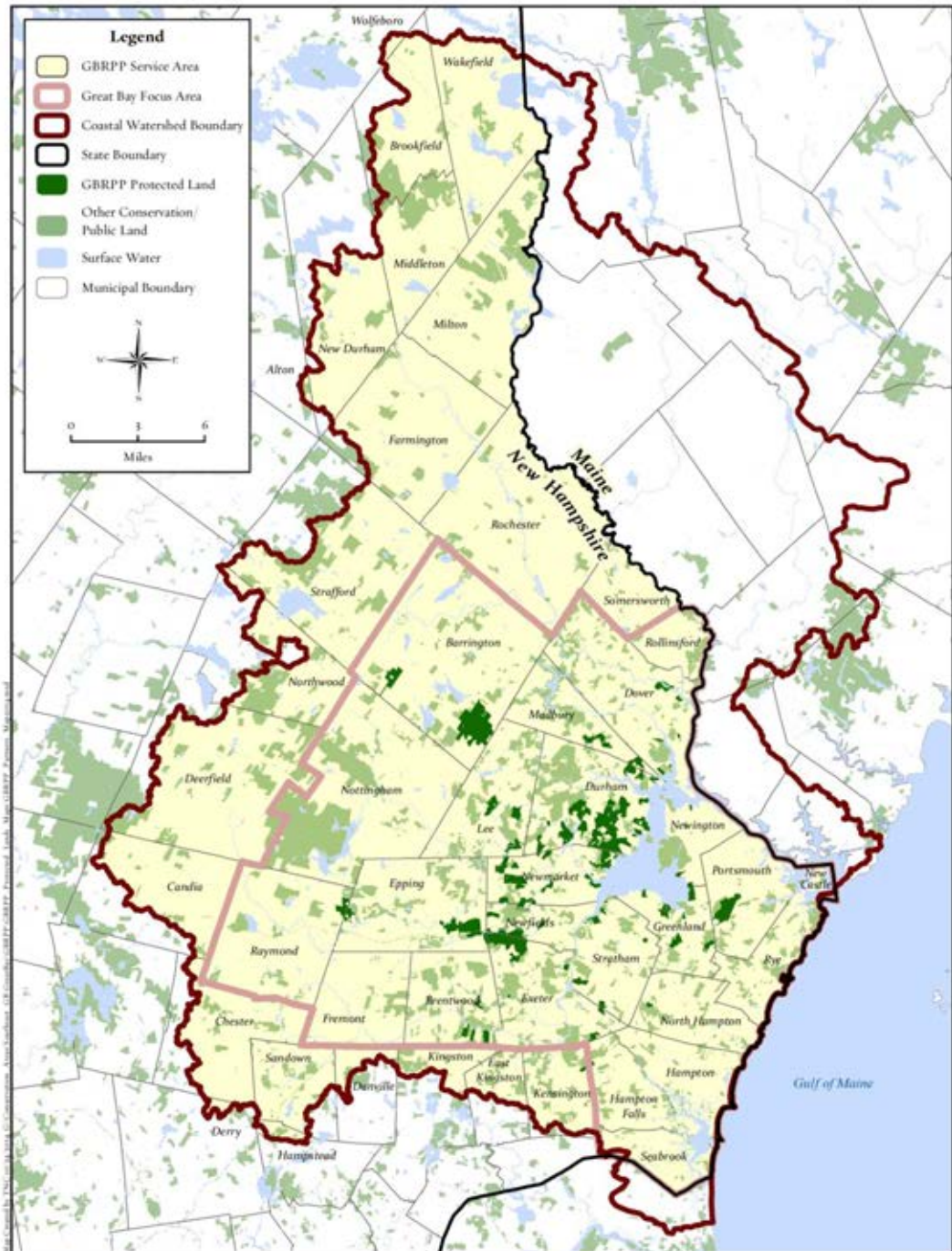
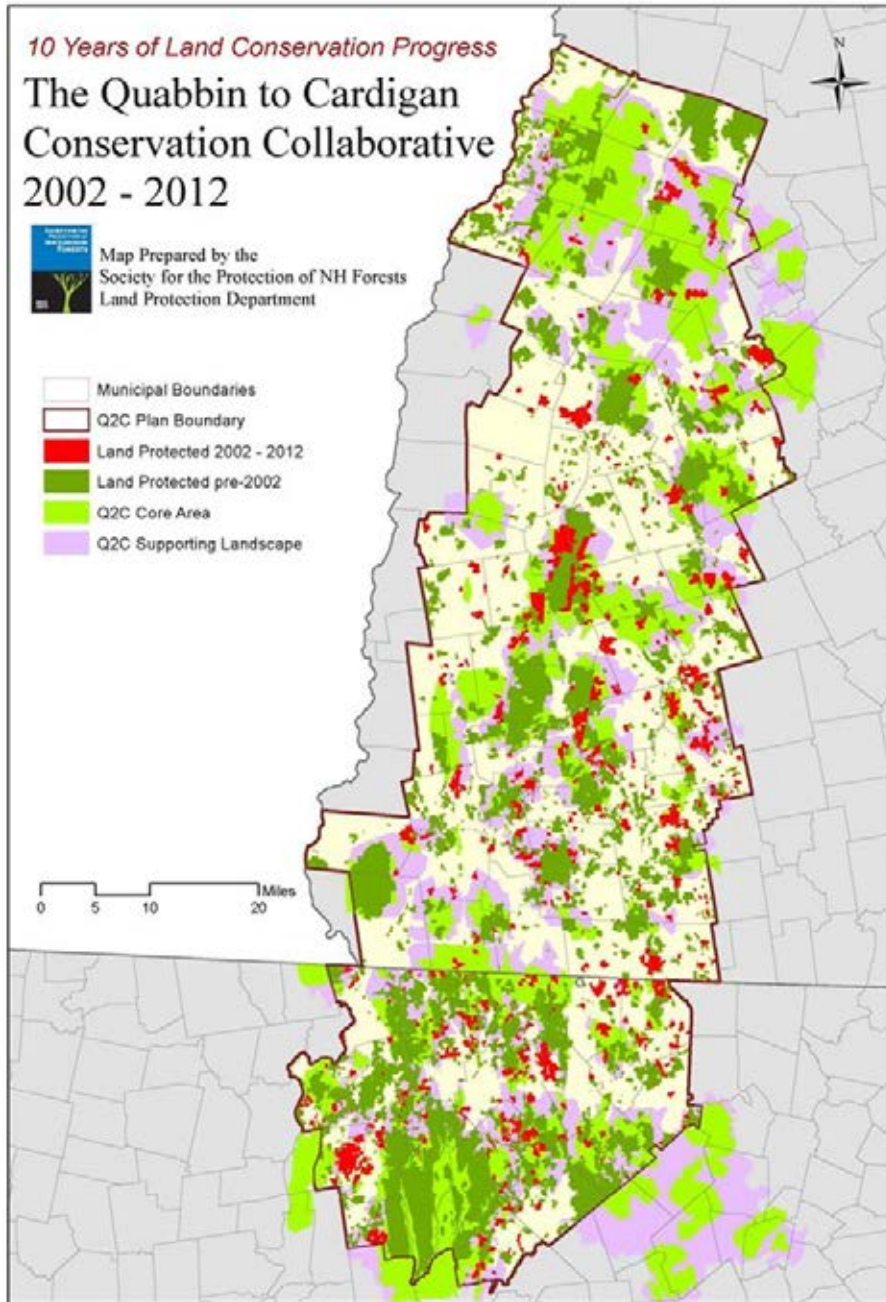
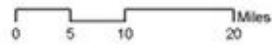
10 Years of Land Conservation Progress

The Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative 2002 - 2012



Map Prepared by the
Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Land Protection Department

- Municipal Boundaries
- Q2C Plan Boundary
- Land Protected 2002 - 2012
- Land Protected pre-2002
- Q2C Core Area
- Q2C Supporting Landscape





**What's happening
in your backyard?**



Your Land Your Legacy
Estate Planning Event



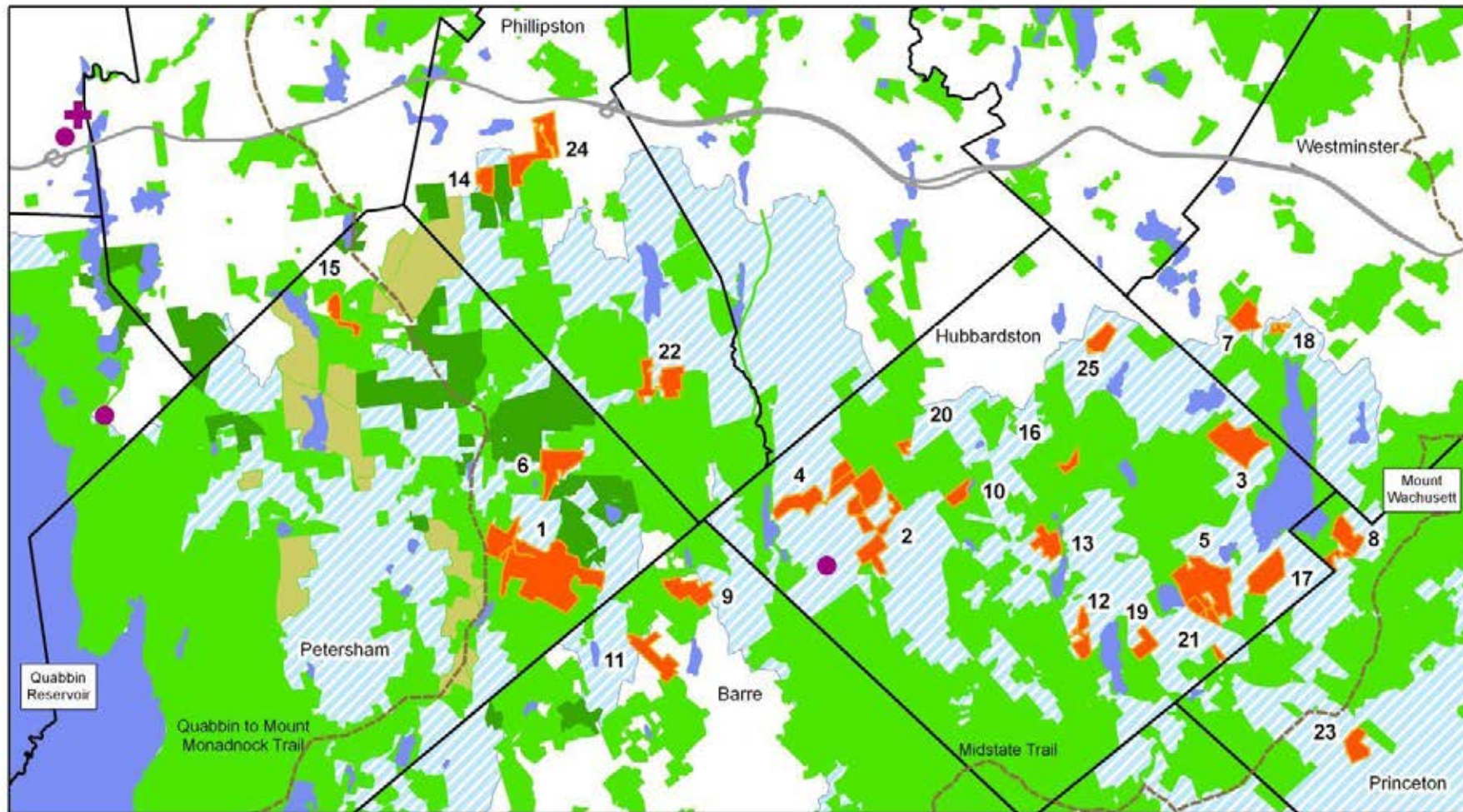
A COMMUNITY FOREST FOR THE
RENSSELAER PLATEAU

A Capital Campaign of the
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

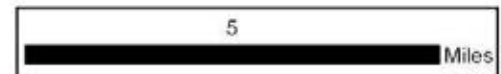
[*Conservation Through*
Community]

Photo by Nate Simms

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance



Quabbin Reservoir to Wachusett Mountain (Q2W) FY13 Forest Legacy Grant Application

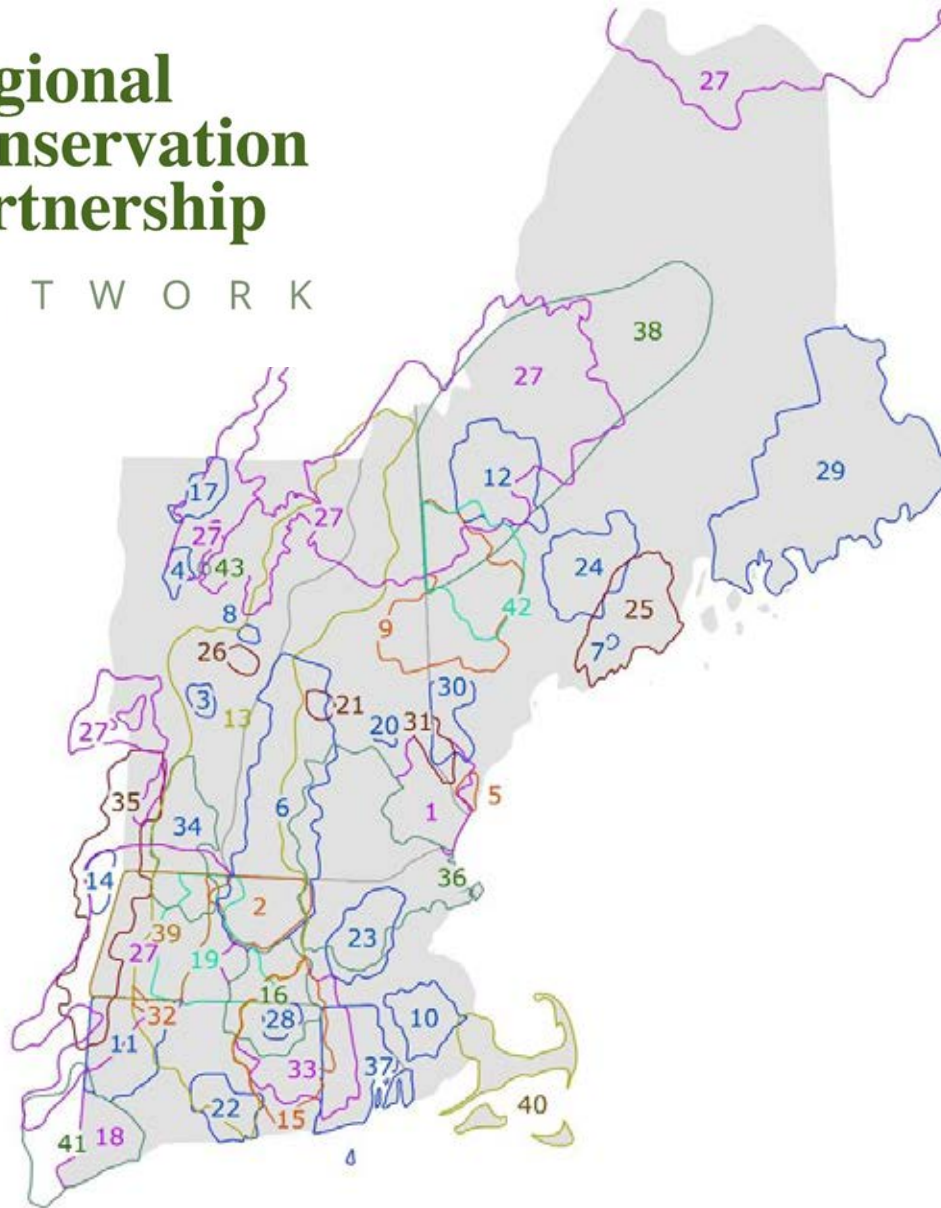


Source Credit: MassGIS Map by NQRLP



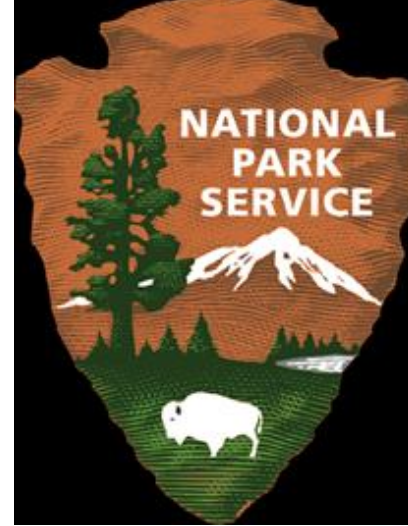
Regional Conservation Partnership

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Data From Bill Labich, Highstead 2/5/2017



North Atlantic  LCC



North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative



LONG ISLAND SOUND WATERSHED
REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
LISW-RCPP

USDA  NRCS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Jessie B. Cox Trust

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND




 ALPINE
ACADEMICS FOR LAND PROTECTION IN NEW ENGLAND

 Highstead

 OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

State North East Foresters Association

MAINE · NEW HAMPSHIRE · VERMONT · NEW YORK
NEFA
The State Foresters cooperating with the US Forest Service State and Private Forestry



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Governance: Two High-Structure RCPs with a Mix of High and Low Capacity Partners

- Hudson to Housatonic RCP – Emerging RCP (est. 2015)
 - Co-Coordinated by staff of an operating foundation and a regional land trust
 - Two state-based program coordinators
 - Steering Committee
 - Working Groups by goal (each has co-chairs and 6-12 members):
 - Land Protection,
 - Municipal Engagement,
 - Landowner Engagement, and
 - Partner Training and Capacity Building
 - 35 other members include another RCP, many land trusts most of them are all volunteer; local municipal commissions, other conservation, environmental groups, and state and county gov.
- Three in-person All-Partner Meetings/yr.
- Four Steering Committee meetings; Weekly Co-Coordinator calls/meetings

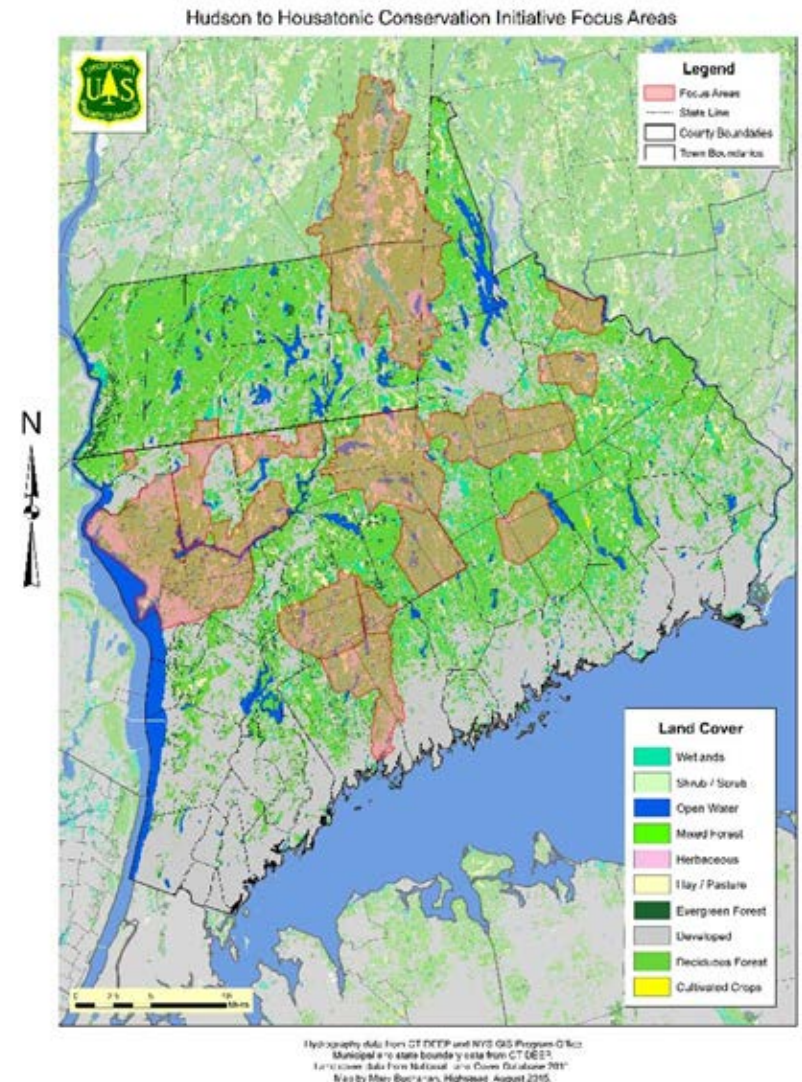
Governance: Two High-Structure RCPs with a Mix of High and Low Capacity Partners

- Mass-Conn Sustainable Forest Partnership – Conserving RCP (est. 2007)
 - Coordinator is Executive Director of a regional land trust; Also an Americorps support staff person
 - 7-member Steering Committee
 - 20 other members include
 - Regional and local land trusts,
 - State, regional, and national forest conservation organizations



Information-Sharing

- **Coordination, Planning and Programs**
 - Coordination: Highstead and Westchester Land Trust by MOU – each contributes
 - Strategic Conservation Planning: Highstead Foundation – Conservation Interns, Harvard Forest, WLT staff, and COGs
 - Programs: Grant\$ to Build on Landowner and Municipal connections
 - US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration (\$220,000)
 - Foundation funding from Jessie B. Cox Trust/RCP Network (CT) (\$20,000)
 - Foundations new to H2H RCP (\$60,000+)
 - State Funding (NY) (\$40,000)

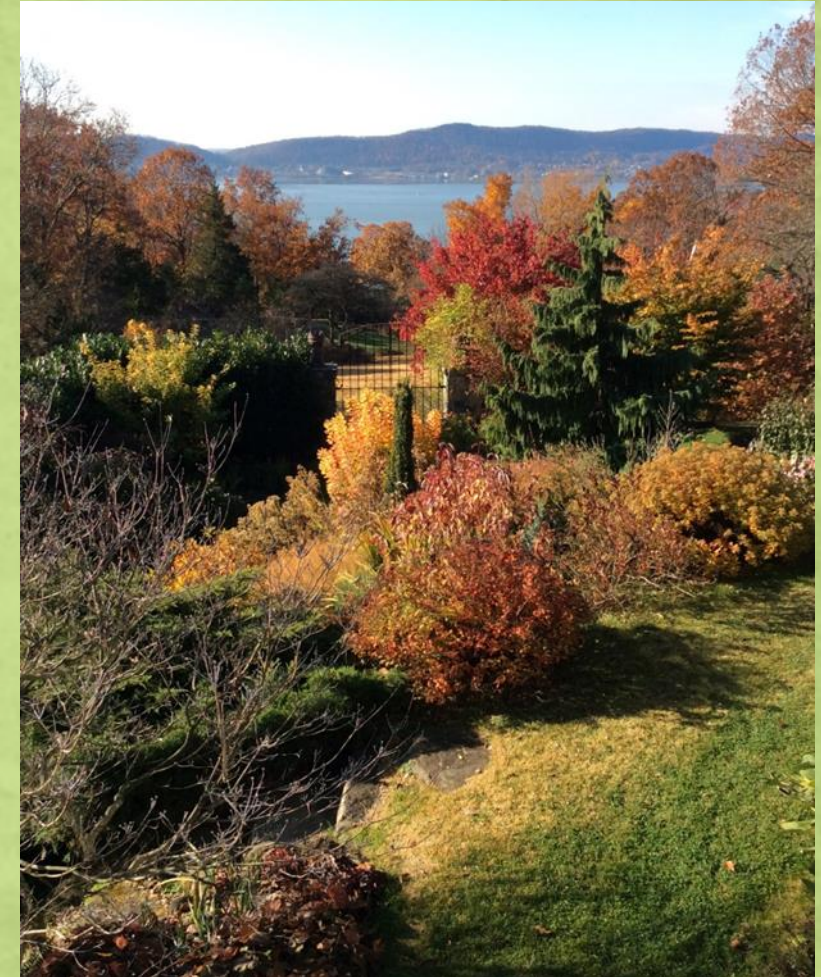




Hudson to
Housatonic
*Regional Conservation
Partnership*

Conservation Funding and Finance

- Stewardship
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service: H2H RCP Program – 2019 Proposal
 - Pollinator Pathway and Buffers for Beauty
- Land Protection
 - H2H RCP Priority Project Endorsement Process
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - Northern Appalachian Trail Landscape RCP Program – 2017 Proposal
 - Transaction Cost Fund – Shared Donor Campaign
 - Small grants to help advance land protection projects
 - Leveraged Municipal Bonding
 - Pooled Match Inventory





Mass-Conn Sustainable Forest Partnership

Information-Sharing

Coordination

- Coordinator – supported by Norcross Wildlife Foundation plus grants and Opacum Land Trust

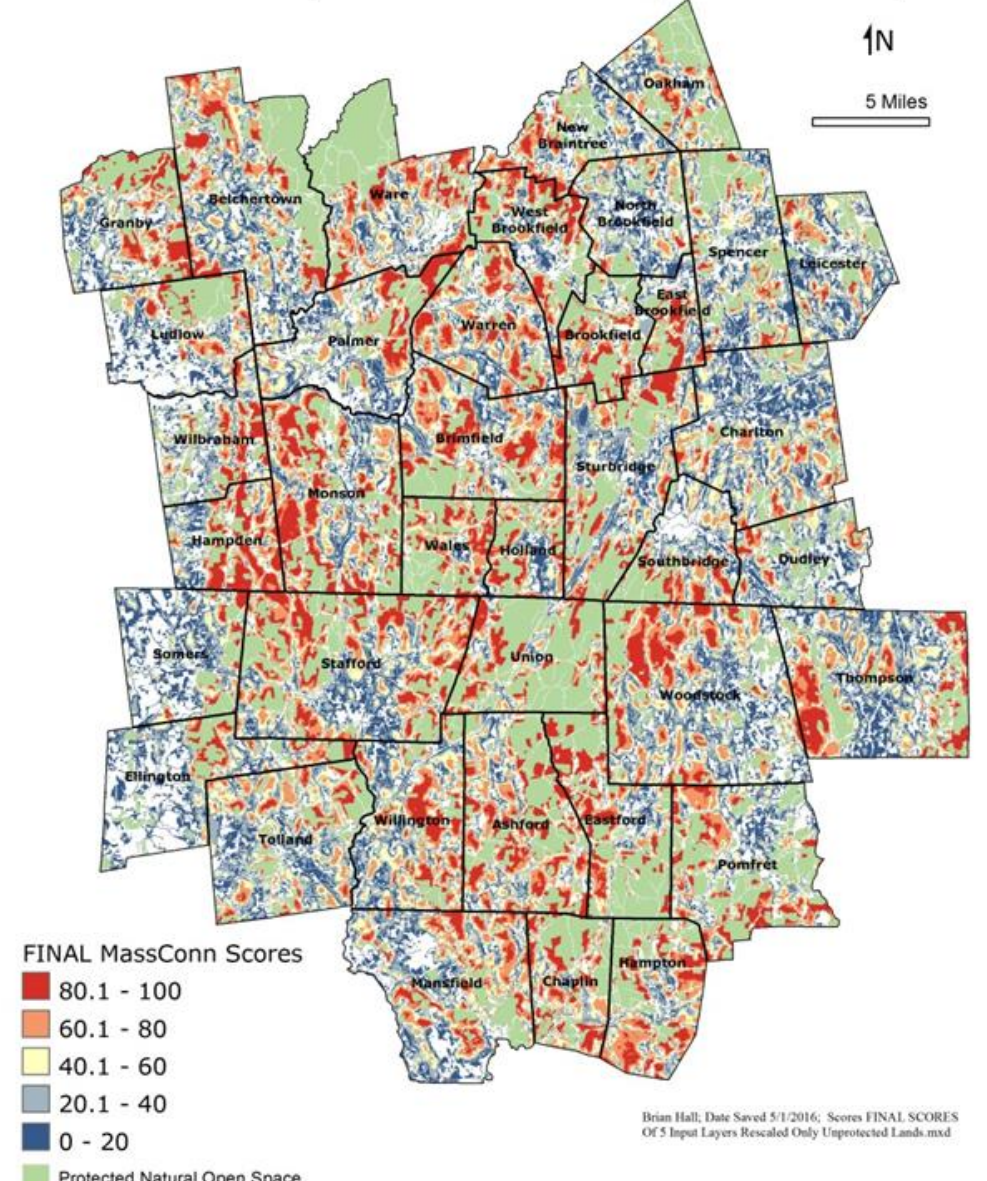
Strategic Conservation Planning

- Regional Strategic Conservation Plan: 'MassConn Mapper'
- Regional and National NGOs– Marketing analysis & Landowner Database

Landowner Outreach Events

- Woods Walks
- Woodland Ambassadors
- Forestry Consultations
- USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Program
- My MassConn Woods

Final Scores (Scores Rescaled to Unprotected Areas)





Mass-Conn Sustainable Forest Partnership

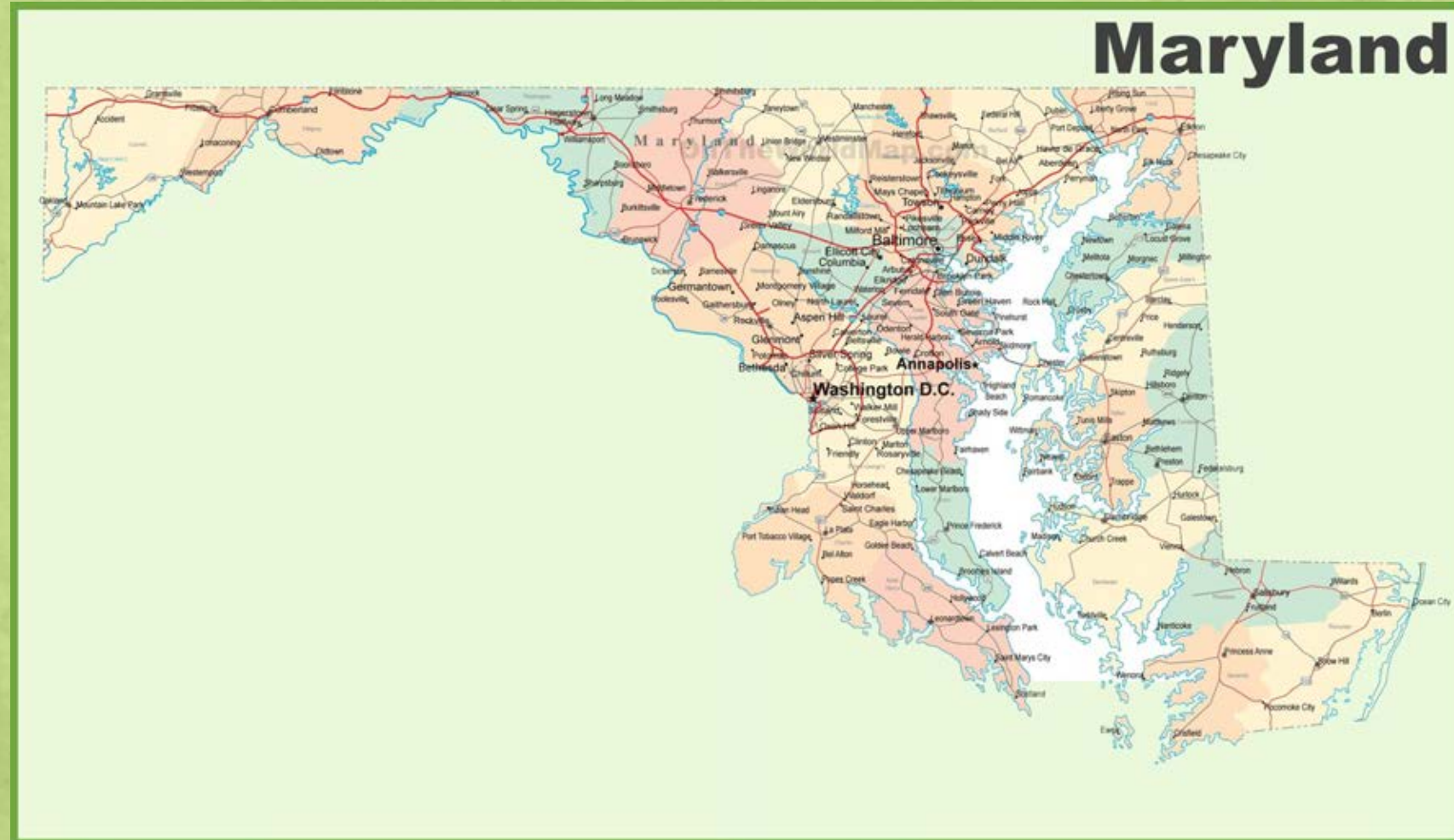
Conservation Funding and Finance

▪ Grants Received (2009-2017):

- Regional Plan Association, Peer Exchange Program (\$34,000)
- American Forest Foundation (>\$100,000)
- US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant to engage landowners in stewardship and conservation (\$50,000)
- USFS Forest Legacy project will protect 1500 acres (>\$2,500,000 +)
- AmeriCorps/MassLIFT conservation coordinator
- Jessie B Cox Trust, Regional Conservation Partnership Innovation grant (\$20,000 + Norcross Wildlife Foundation \$10,000) for conservation planning
- Jessie B. Cox Trust RCP Donated Easement Transaction Cost Fund (\$100,000)

Break-out Discussion: Group-up with neighbors by Existing Collaborative or New RCP in a MD sub-region

- Boundaries?
- Shared goal?
- Priority resources?
- **Big Opportunity?**
- Partners?
- Governance?
- Info-Sharing Activities?
- Funding & Finance?
- Challenges?





Home

Activity



What are you up to?

140

Share



Wildlands and Woodlands via Facebook



Here's a comprehensive summary of conservation funding challenges and opportunities at the federal level with some recommendations for moving forward in an Op-Ed by Rand Wentworth, the Louis Bacon senior fellow in

Blog



Landscape Scale Program with Small Community Scale Outreach

Posted by Chelsea Farinacci on May 25, 2017 at 4:45pm

In my previous blog post [here](#), I talked about how people can become more interested and involved in conservation if they hear from peers whom they...

Read more...

Comments: 0

Tags:



2017 Cox Trust RCP Grant Awards

Posted by Prentice Zinn on May 12, 2017 at 3:30pm

The Jesse B. Cox Trust Regional Conservation...



Members



View All

Working Groups



12 Members



6 Wildlife Aven



6 Members

RCPNETWORK.ORG

Contact Information

- Bill Labich, Highstead, blabich@Highstead.net
- RCPNetwork.org
- Wildlandsandwoodlands.org/RCPNetwork
- Twitter: @RCP_Network
- LinkedIn Group: Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network