USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Beyond Boundaries

New England/New York Forestry Initiative Fact Sheet

The New England/New York region contains the largest area of intact temperate broadleaf forest in the United States.

Background

The New England/New York region contains over 52 million acres of forest land, including the largest intact block of temperate broadleaf forest in the Nation. Eighty percent are privately owned. The forests are diverse, ranging from the extensive broadleaf deciduous and mixed forests to montane and lowland spruce-fir and low elevation forests of oak, pine, and hickory. They stretch from the Atlantic coast to the highest mountain peaks in the region. The forests also provide habitat for a variety of wildlife such as moose, black bear, lynx, other game species, and bird species of special consideration that breed here, but winter in Central and South America. Forests help define the character of the region and are an integral part of its economy.

In 2008/2009, the New England Governors' Conference commissioned a Blue Ribbon Task Force to identify the most urgent land conservation issues facing New England. The committee identified five principles to build a lasting conservation legacy for future generations of New Englanders, including "Keeping Forests as Forests." (For the full report, go to http://www.negc.org/main/admin/uploads/20_negc_clc_report_909.pdf.) NRCS is supporting the Governor's effort by establishing the New England/New York Forestry Initiative.

The USDA All Lands Policy recognizes the important role that forests play in providing clean drinking water, supporting rural economies, and protecting wildlife habitat. NRCS is working with forest landowners and land managers to *Keep Forests as Forests* and maintain and enhance the public benefits they provide. Through the New England/New York Forestry Initiative, NRCS is committed to improving forest stewardship and wildlife habitat, and conserving the value of the region's forest landscape for future generations. The Initiative provides a combination of technical and financial assistance to landowners and land managers in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Goals

The Governors' Conference Blue Ribbon Task Force Report found that the region's forests are at risk. In the last 20 years, two-thirds of the area's forests have changed ownership, and tens of thousands of acres have been developed. A 2006 Forest Service study reports that the 43,000 identified owners of over 1.75 million forested acres plan to sell some or all of their acreage in the next five years. As the average parcel size decreases and development accelerates on the landscape, the timber value of the land is far outpaced by the development value.

NRCS is working through the NE/NY Forestry Initiative to support and promote a strong interest and stewardship ethic with forest landowners. Their work is helping landowners plan and install conservation practices that will improve forest health and productivity, reduce erosion and improve water quality, and improve fish and wildlife habitat. Those efforts will assist NRCS in meeting the USDA strategic goal of "ensuring that private working lands are conserved, restored,

and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water and wildlife resources." It will also assist in meeting the Governors' Conference goal to conserve at least one-half of the region's forests.

Conservation Funding/ Practices

NRCS is working with landowners and land managers to improve the health and value of forest lands through the development of management plans and the implementation of conservation practices. Typical practices include: forest stand improvement, the restoration of rare and declining habitats, early successional habitat management, riparian forest buffers, erosion control on forest trails and landings, stream habitat improvement, and fish passages. These conservation practices will promote healthy, sustainable forests throughout the New England/New York region. Financial assistance to install these practices is provided through the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and other programs. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. Specific practices, payment schedules, and project selection criteria can differ by state.

Partnerships

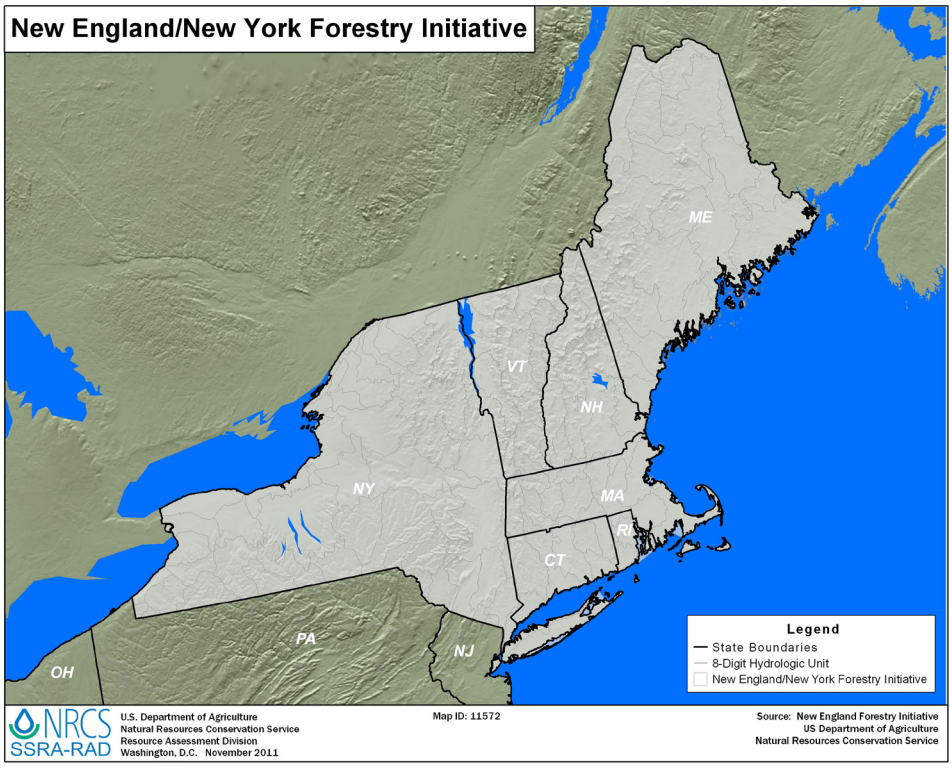
NRCS and its partners are poised to assist private forest landowners understand the multi-resource value of their forests and to involve them in the management of the forests within the region. Beginning with the New England Governors' Conference initiative to *Keep Forests as Forests* and continuing with USDA's All Lands Policy, work continues with outreach to landowners through various agricultural and non-agricultural private organizations, as well as local, State, and Federal agencies all coming together to protect the future of the forests in the New England/New York region.

Benefits

In New England and New York, sustainably managed forests serve as the backbone for rural economies by providing renewable energy, forest products, outdoor recreation, and tourism. The forest's also provide clean water for the public, improved habitat for fish and wildlife, and contribute to the region's scenic beauty. Forest landowners can look forward to an improvement in their land as well as a productive future for themselves and future generations.

For More Information:

For more information on the New England/New York Forestry Initiative and how you can participate in protecting the region's forests, contact your local NRCS office or refer to the NRCS Web site (www.nrcs.usda.gov) under Landscape Initiatives.



The New England/New York Forestry Initiative will provide technical and financial assistance to forest landowners in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.