

What are RCPs?

The Importance of the RCP Movement to the Future of the New England Landscape

Regional conservation partnerships (RCPs) are the new face of conservation in New England: collaborative, community-grounded, and focused on long-term conservation success to sustain both nature and people through the generations. RCPs are about local and regional land trusts and community leaders joining forces with larger conservation organizations, public agencies, and other stakeholders to conserve the broader landscapes they love and that sustain us all.

RCPs are New England's response to a growing awareness that we cannot conserve one parcel, one species, or one fishing hole. We must conserve whole ecosystems—large landscapes that sustain New England's heritage and its future. Our forested landscapes protect our water supplies, shelter our wildlife, mitigate climate change, and reduce flooding in a time of increasing extreme weather events. Conserved lands sustain our communities through jobs; fuel and wood products; fresh, local food; and healthy outdoor recreation.

But it is a race against time. *Wildlands and Woodlands: A Vision for the New England Landscape* (2010) documented how each New England state is now losing forests on a net annual basis, and that we must double the current pace of conservation if we are to keep ahead of the development curve. A look at the “sprawl frontier” in each state provides a compelling image: development pressures in our region are extraordinary, and the conservation response must be extraordinary also.

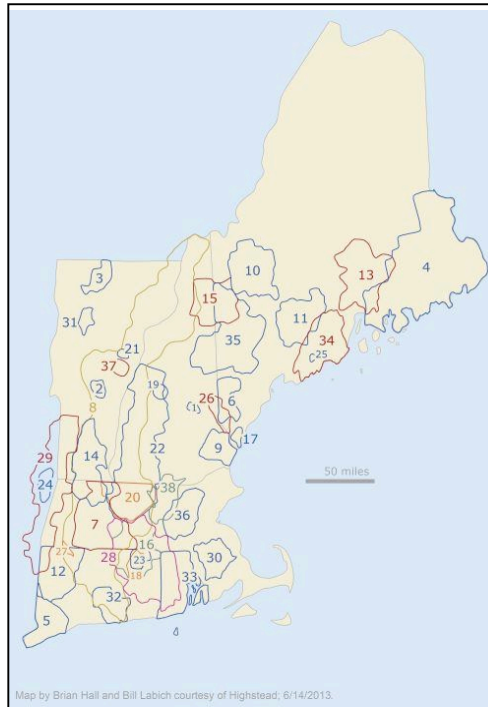
And RCPs *are* extraordinary. They are bottom-up instead of top-down; they are deeply collaborative; and in their long-term commitment and community focus they address the central issue of conservation in our

region: the landscape is an enormous patchwork of many, many privately owned lands. With 80% of the landscape in private hands, much of it small parcels, we must focus on reaching and engaging landowners regarding conservation and sound stewardship of their lands if we are to succeed. It will take time and commitment, and it will take the collective impact of many partners working toward a set of shared conservation goals.

In the late 1990s, there were four RCPs in New England. Today there are nearly 40, with sizes ranging from 12,000 acres in two towns to seven million acres stretching across four states. A few years ago, many RCPs did not know others were doing similar collaborative conservation work even in their own state. Today, RCPs have formed an active network and are sharing best tools and practices, and moving more quickly to tangible conservation. Funders, fortunately, are starting to take notice, with some increase in public and private monies targeted to RCP initiatives.

RCPs are working on more than 60% of New England's landscape,

and that percentage continues to grow. The RCP map shows the breathtaking opportunity we have today to create regional habitat corridors and to achieve conservation at a meaningful scale. RCPs are seizing that opportunity and creating the enduring social infrastructure for conservation success. Fueled by enough funding to move expeditiously forward and to achieve conservation on the ground, RCPs will play a vital role in securing New England's natural and cultural heritage for the generations that follow.



An **interactive map** of New England RCPs is available at wildlandsandwoodlands.org/rcpnetwork.

