

# The Regional Conservation Partnership Handbook

## *10 Steps to Effective and Enduring Collaborative Conservation at Scale*

The Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network was launched in 2012 and works to help RCPs advance the pace of conservation in New England, New York, and beyond. Visit [www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/RCPNetwork](http://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/RCPNetwork) to learn more about the Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative, RCPs, and the RCP Network.



Across New England and eastern New York, conservation organizations and communities are banding together to meet the interests of countless landowners who wish to protect their land from development. Together, these groups work to achieve conservation on a larger scale. These collaboratives, called Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs), vary in size and scope but share a desire to increase the pace and connectivity of their conservation activities. RCPs are informal networks of people representing private and public organizations and agencies that develop and implement a shared conservation vision across town and sometimes state and international boundaries. RCPs in New England and eastern New York play an increasingly important role in achieving large landscape scale conservation that is also firmly woven into the needs and interests of the local communities.

For digital or print copies of the full RCP Handbook, please email RCP Network Coordinator Bill Labich at [blabich@highstead.net](mailto:blabich@highstead.net).



*Highstead works to inspire curiosity and build knowledge about plants and wooded landscapes in order to enhance life, preserve nature, and advance sound stewardship practices.*

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## What is the RCP Handbook?

The RCP Handbook is organized around the three fundamental stages of RCP growth (Emerging, Maturing, and Conserving) and 10 overall steps. It is intended to help people organize, plan, coordinate, and implement land conservation and stewardship activities as an RCP.

By capturing the experience of RCPs to date, and the successful methods they have developed through trial and error, we hope that other RCPs may proceed more efficiently along the path to effective, collaborative conservation and stewardship. However, even as you consider these steps, we urge you also to build upon the unique qualities of your regional landscape and the ingenuity and leadership that will naturally arise from the close collaboration of your partners.

### STEPS AT A GLANCE

#### Step 1: Convene and Define Your RCP

- ✓ Convene the members of your RCP.
- ✓ Define your region's preliminary boundaries.
- ✓ Choose or hire your RCP's coordinator.

#### Step 2: Further Organize Your RCP

- ✓ Continue to convene and build trust among partners.
- ✓ Draft your vision, mission statement, goals, and objectives.
- ✓ Develop a steering committee and working groups as needed.
- ✓ Facilitate periodic communication between partners outside of meetings.
- ✓ Develop a website.
- ✓ Learn from peer and mentor RCPs.

#### Step 3: Increase Capacity as You Prepare to Conserve

- ✓ Build partner capacity.
- ✓ Help partner organizations obtain grants and work on open space plans.
- ✓ Connect with your state's conservation land trust councils (or service bureaus).

#### Step 4: Plan and Map a Strategic Conservation Vision

- ✓ Draft a description of your shared conservation vision.
- ✓ Collaboratively map, analyze, and prioritize your region's natural and cultural resources.
- ✓ Identify focus areas to champion.

#### Step 5: Plan to Implement Conservation Activities

- ✓ Develop a strategic action plan for achieving your mapped regional conservation vision.
- ✓ Partners choose to work together on specific tasks.
- ✓ Plan your work, and work your plan, but don't wait too long before doing something, anything.

#### Step 6: Engage Potential Partners Within Your Region

- ✓ Identify the people, organizations, and agencies that would help the RCP achieve its regional conservation vision and plan.
- ✓ Reach out to and engage other people and organizations in peer-to-peer conservation education leading to the stewardship and protection of land.

#### Step 7: Engage Potential Partners Beyond Your Region

- ✓ Compare your RCP's region to the priorities of state and federal government agencies, and conservation and philanthropic organizations.
- ✓ Engage in new activities that could add relevance, funding, and capacity to your RCP and its members.
- ✓ Seek and work with allies in the RCP Network to further your partnership's mission and activities.

#### Step 8: Promote Your Shared Conservation Vision

- ✓ Draft a compelling case statement.

#### Step 9: Raise Funds and Conserve Land

- ✓ Choose the funding sources for land conservation to pursue.
- ✓ Decide how to raise funds and conserve land as an RCP.
- ✓ Document and evaluate your campaign and ongoing funding strategies.
- ✓ Celebrate your successes.
- ✓ Repeat and reinvigorate Step 9 as opportunities arise that align with your mission, vision, and plan.

#### Step 10: Manage Transitions

- ✓ Discuss changes in leadership, funding, priorities, and organization and make decisions about how to navigate them.
- ✓ Move forward with subsequent conservation campaigns or transition to a new set of stewardship, smart growth, and supplemental activities.