

Wildlands are lands that are permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.

New Hampshire’s diverse landscape is 85 percent forest-covered, stretching from the seacoast through the White Mountains to the spruce-fir/northern hardwood Acadian Forest that is the headwaters for the Androscoggin and Connecticut Rivers. A century ago, New Hampshire pioneered the idea of public reacquisition of land in the eastern United States and can play a leading role in the twenty-first century’s rewilding movement.

Wildlands covered most of New Hampshire and New England for thousands of years. Wildlands are vital for nature and society as they:

- **Acknowledge and support** the intrinsic value of wild nature to exist
- **Preserve** wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- **Mitigate climate change** by sequestering and storing carbon
- **Enhance landscape resilience** through ecological complexity
- **Offer quiet space** for spiritual and physical renewal
- **Serve as references** for science, management, and conservation
- **Support 30x30**, the global effort to protect biodiversity


Wildlands in New England is the first regional study in the United States to characterize all “forever wild lands” that are protected so that natural processes can prevail, with minimal to no active management. These lands—designated wilderness areas and diverse public and private natural areas and reserves—provide critical support to nature and society. In New Hampshire, Wildland conservation is strongly advanced on many federal and private conservation lands but it plays a minor role in state land conservation strategies, which emphasize active management and resource economics.

To reach the goals for Wildlands and improve the landscape resilience of the region, *Wildlands in New England 2023* makes the following recommendations:

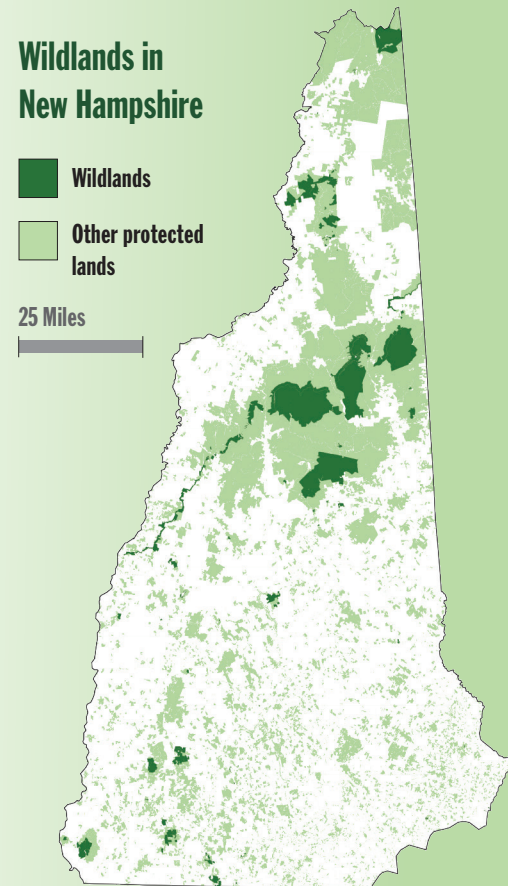
- **Center Wildlands** in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms.
- **Strengthen existing Wildlands** through permanent protection and landscape buffering.
- **Create more Wildlands**, thoughtfully and strategically, with a diversity of partners, through private and public action.

Wildlands in New Hampshire

 Wildlands

 Other protected lands

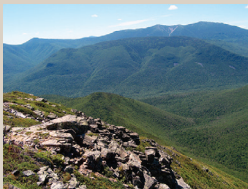
25 Miles

Only **4.1%** of New Hampshire is considered **Wildlands** today.

Three New Hampshire Wildlands

Pemigewasset Wilderness—White Mountain National Forest. Totalling approximately 45,000 acres that make it the largest of six federal wilderness areas on the WMNF, the “Pemi” was designated by the U.S. Congress in the 1984 New Hampshire Wilderness Act. Although intensely logged and burned from the 1880s into the 1940s, the area’s forests are recovering and rewilding remarkably across the topographically and ecologically diverse terrain that is accessible by a series of Wilderness trails.



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Pisgah State Park. Situated in part of southwestern New Hampshire known to Henry Thoreau as a region of immense pines and scattered old forests, this rugged region attracted Wildland preservation in the 1920s. Since the 1970s, as the park grew to nearly 14,000 acres managed by the Department of Resources and Economic Development, pressure mounted for timber harvesting and ATV and snowmobile use. An ongoing dispute has ensued over the expansion of the core Wildland, which currently stands at approximately 4,594 acres.



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Vickie Bunnell Preserve comprises nearly 11,000 acres in northern New Hampshire, owned by The Nature Conservancy, and secured by a Forest Legacy easement held by the State of New Hampshire and a “forever wild” easement held by Northeast Wilderness Trust. With adjoining Nash Stream State Forest, the area comprises a 40,000-acre block of unfragmented forest, including thirteen mountain peaks above 3,000 feet and habitat for less-common species like pine marten and Bicknell’s thrush.



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State, Regional, and Global Support for Wildlands

Three-quarters of New Hampshire's Wildlands are found on federal lands, principally in wilderness areas in the White Mountain National Forest. A great diversity of local, state, regional, and global conservation organizations and families have also worked to protect Wildlands through fee ownership or conservation easements. The uniquely small percentage of state ownership of Wildlands (12 percent of the total area) is emblematic of the modest effort in state leadership and agencies to prioritize Wildland policies, legislation, and management.

Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C) provides a regional vision and state-specific land protection goals that call for at least 70 percent of New England to be protected as forest—at least 10 percent protected as Wildland and 60 percent protected as Woodland (managed forest)—and all existing farmland to be permanently conserved. This vision intentionally values wild and managed forests, farmlands, and communities and relies on the collaboration of conservation efforts across the region.

30x30

Wildlands form a central component of “30x30,” the national and international goal to protect 30 percent of Earth's land and waters by 2030, addressing the looming challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and threats to human health and welfare.



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What You Can Do:

- Visit [Wildlands in New England](#) to read the report and access related resources.
- Contact [Northeast Wilderness Trust](#) to learn about their Wildlands Partnership Program.
- Contact other Wildlands conservation partners, listed below, to learn about their efforts and available programs.
- Support local, statewide, and regional conservation efforts in implementing WWF&C goals.

New Hampshire's Wildland Conservation Partners:

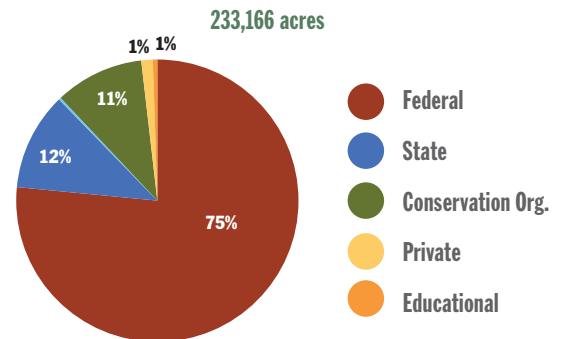
Public

- **Federal:** U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- **State:** State of New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, NH Department of Fish and Game
- **Local municipalities**

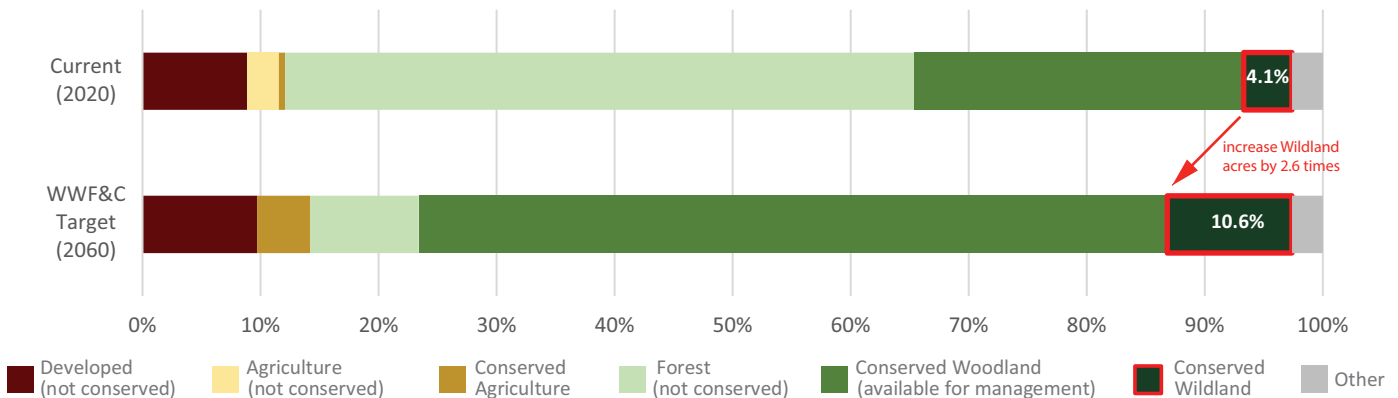
Private

- Conservation organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Northeast Wilderness Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, Squam Lake Conservation Society, Audubon Society, Percy Summer Club, Upper Valley Land Trust
- Private families

Wildland Ownership in New Hampshire



Land Cover in New Hampshire: Current and WWF&C Target



Copies of the full report, the Wildlands web map, and additional information are available on the website of Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities: wildlandsandwoodlands.org/resources/wildlands-in-new-england/

To learn more about ways to directly support Wildlands conservation throughout New England, visit newwildernesstrust.org/

