

# A Case for Wildlands

Liz Thompson  
Jamie Sayen  
David Foster



## Wildlands in New England *Past, Present, and Future*



**Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
Communities**

An Integrated Conservation Initiative

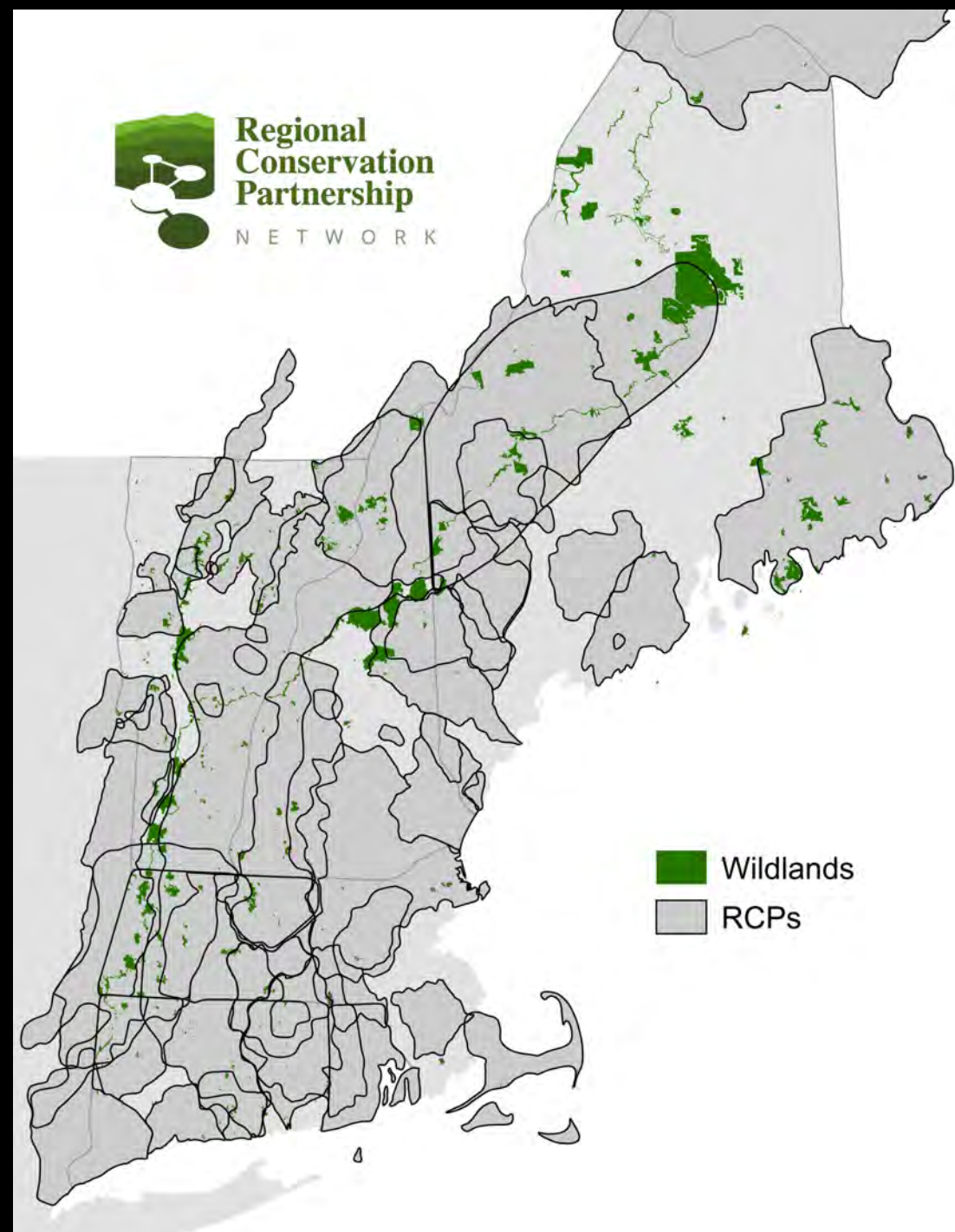
# Panel Outline

Introductions

Role and Rationale for Wildlands

Status of Wildlands in New England

The Future: Goals and Recommendations

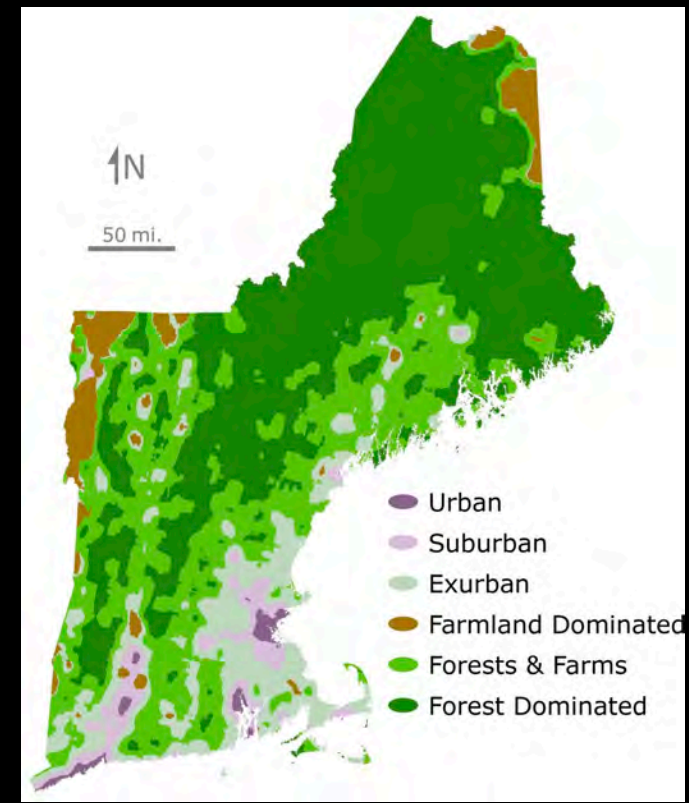


# Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities

At least 70% of New England conserved as forest (30M acres)

- 80-90% of these lands managed as **Woodlands**
- 10-20% of these lands managed as large **Wildlands**

7-15% of New England conserved as farmland



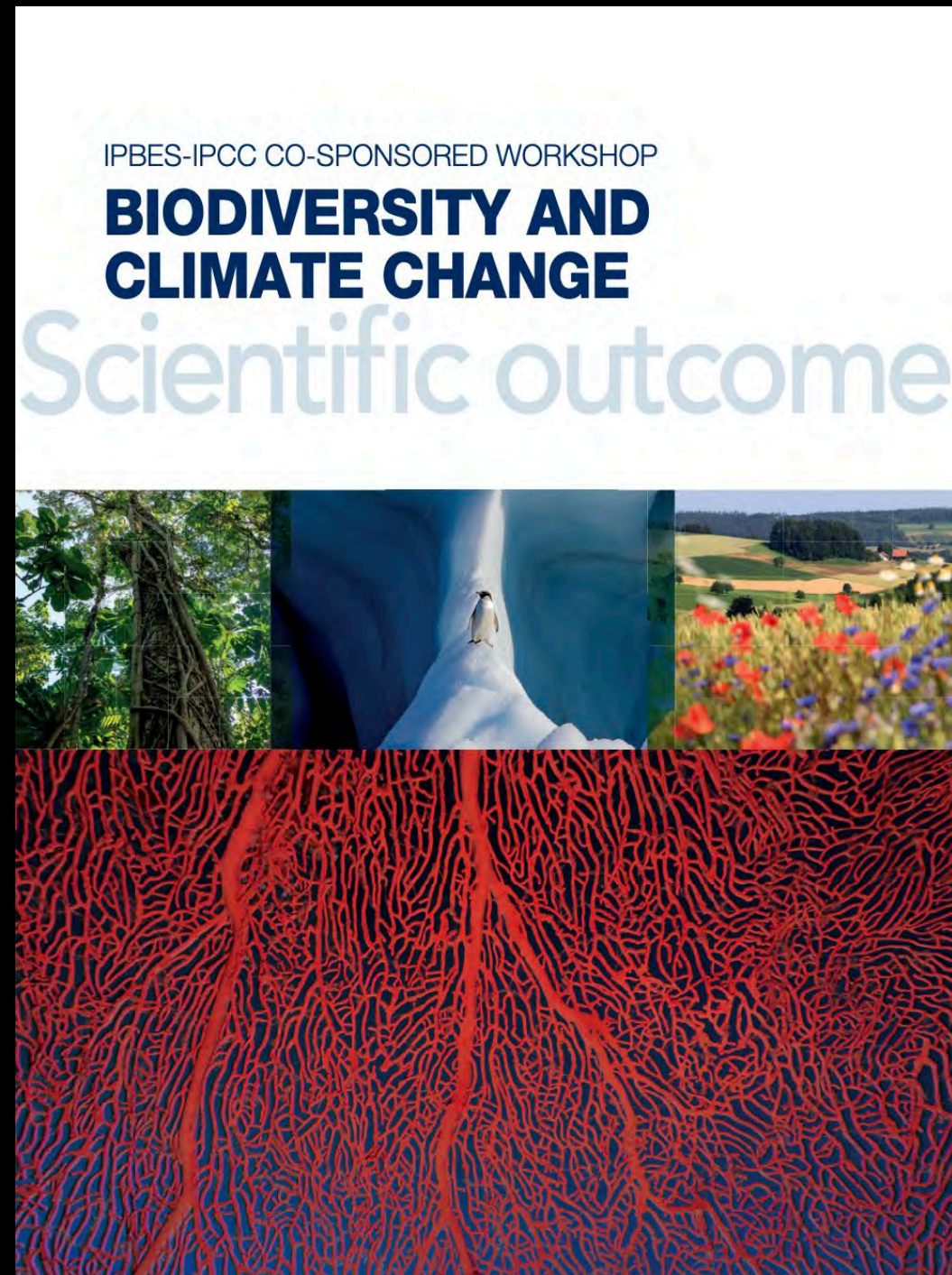
Planning and smart growth to complement forest and farm conversion

# Wildlands -- Why now?

Recognized need since 2005

## Three crises

- Climate change
- Biodiversity loss
- Decline in human equity & well-being



# A History of Rewilding

# A Second Chance for New England's Forests

1880's

Today



Swift River -- Petersham, Massachusetts

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**"People need wild places...to be surrounded by a singing, mating, howling commotion of other species, all of which love their lives as much as we do ours."**

— BARBARA KINGSOLVER



Photo credit: David Middleton



# Why Wildlands?

Grafton Forest Wilderness Preserve

Photo credit: Harry White





Older forests are found to have a higher diversity of moss, lichen, and herbaceous plants.



Tip-ups create shelter for denning and nesting animals. Over time, they decompose and help to form the undulating "pit-and-mound" topography of an old forest floor.

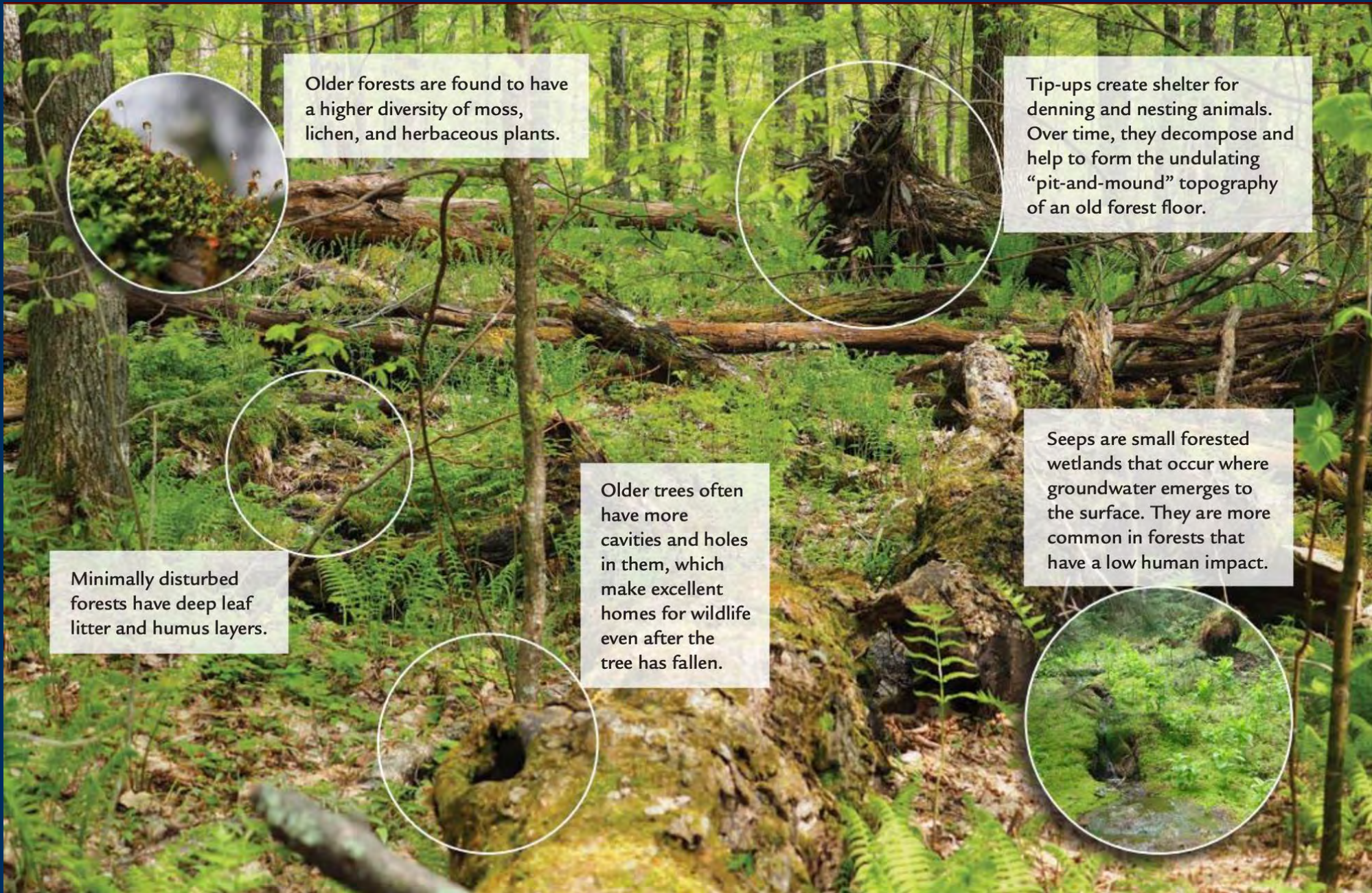


Minimally disturbed forests have deep leaf litter and humus layers.

Older trees often have more cavities and holes in them, which make excellent homes for wildlife even after the tree has fallen.



Seeps are small forested wetlands that occur where groundwater emerges to the surface. They are more common in forests that have a low human impact.



# Why we need Wildlands

Intrinsic value

Biodiversity

Carbon storage

Ecological resiliency

Quiet reflection

Baselines

Global, Regional,  
Statewide Conservation  
Goals



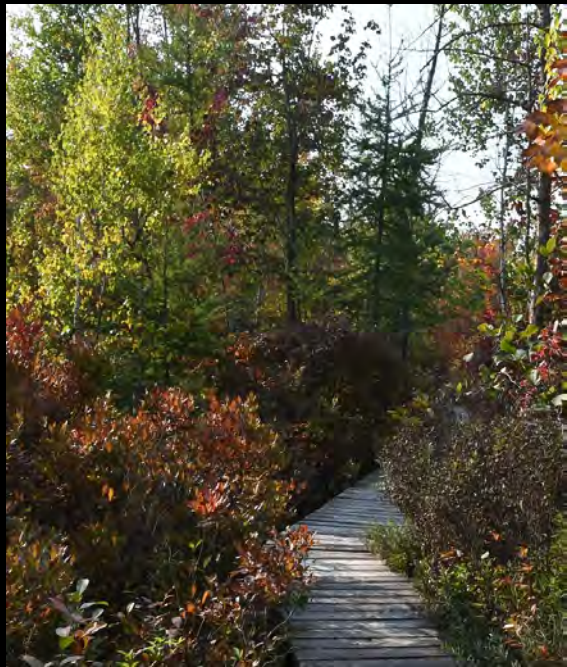
Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve in Vermont

Photo credit: Jerry Monkman

# What are Wildlands?

Wildlands are tracts 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.



Colchester Bog, Vermont



Monhegan Island, Maine



Muddy Pond, Massachusetts



Baxter State Park, Maine

# Wildlands Criteria

- Wildland Intent
- Management for an Untrammeled Condition
- Permanent Protection



THESE WILDLANDS ARE  
ALL PRIVATELY OWNED,  
PLEASE HELP KEEP  
THEM PRISTINE.

- NO SMOKING OR FIRES
- NO WHEELED VEHICLES
- DO NOT DISTURB PLANTS
- PACK IN / PACK OUT

NO DRONES

# Wildlands in New England

*Past, Present, and Future*



Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
Communities

An Integrated Conservation Initiative



Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
Communities



NORTHEAST  
  
WILDERNESS  
TRUST



Highstead

## Author

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## Primary Affiliation

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Harvard Forest, Harvard University

Northeast Wilderness Trust

Ecologist

Brandeis University

Highstead Foundation

Author -- Children of the Northern Forest

Appalachian Mountain Club

The Nature Conservancy in Maine

The Irland Group

Harvard Forest, Harvard University

New England Forestry Foundation

Harvard Forest, Harvard University

University of Vermont

University of Maine

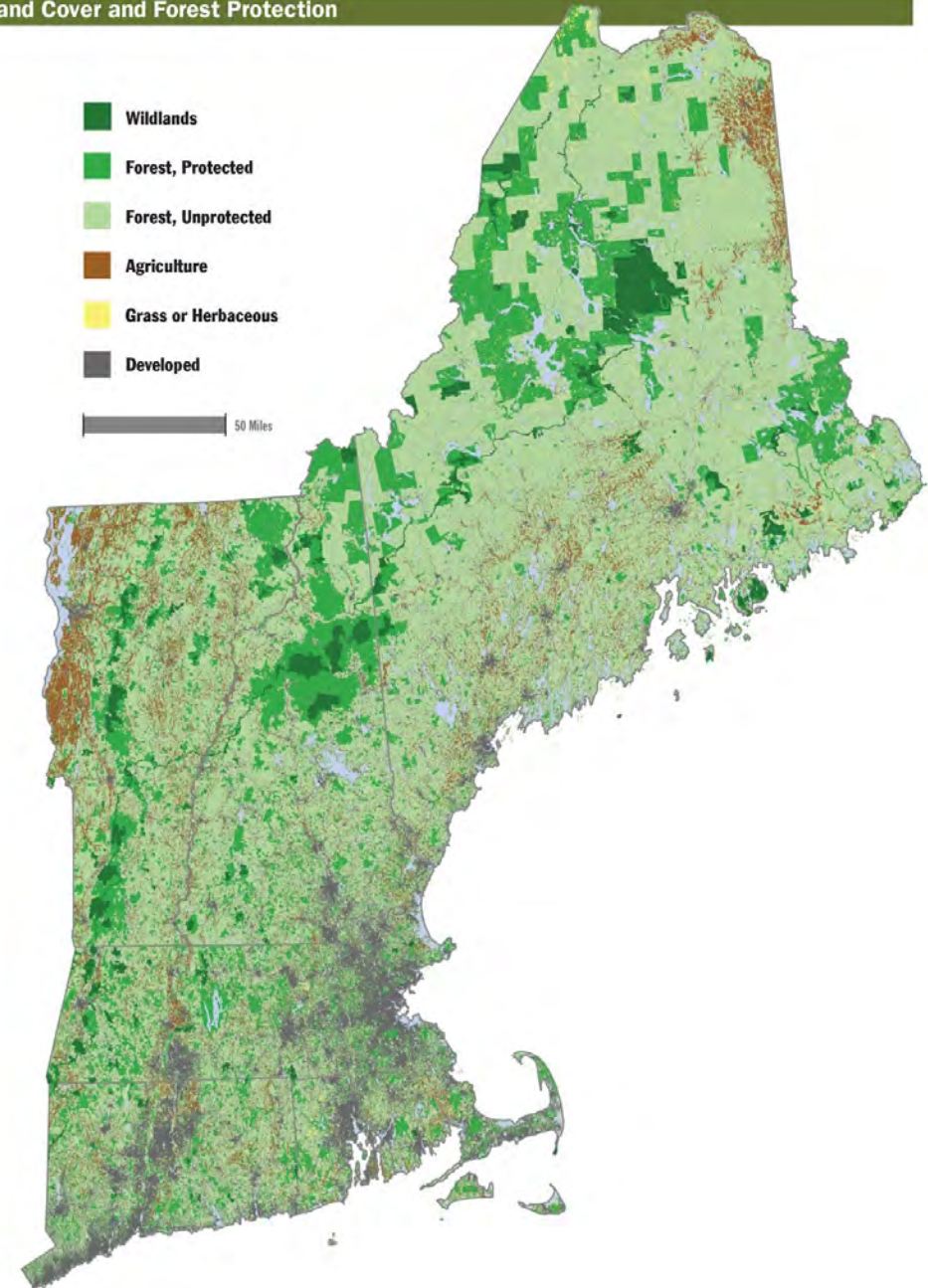
Trinity College

Northeast Wilderness Trust

# Questions answered by this study

1. Where are Wildlands located in New England?
2. What are the characteristics of the Wildlands?
3. What is their current protection status?

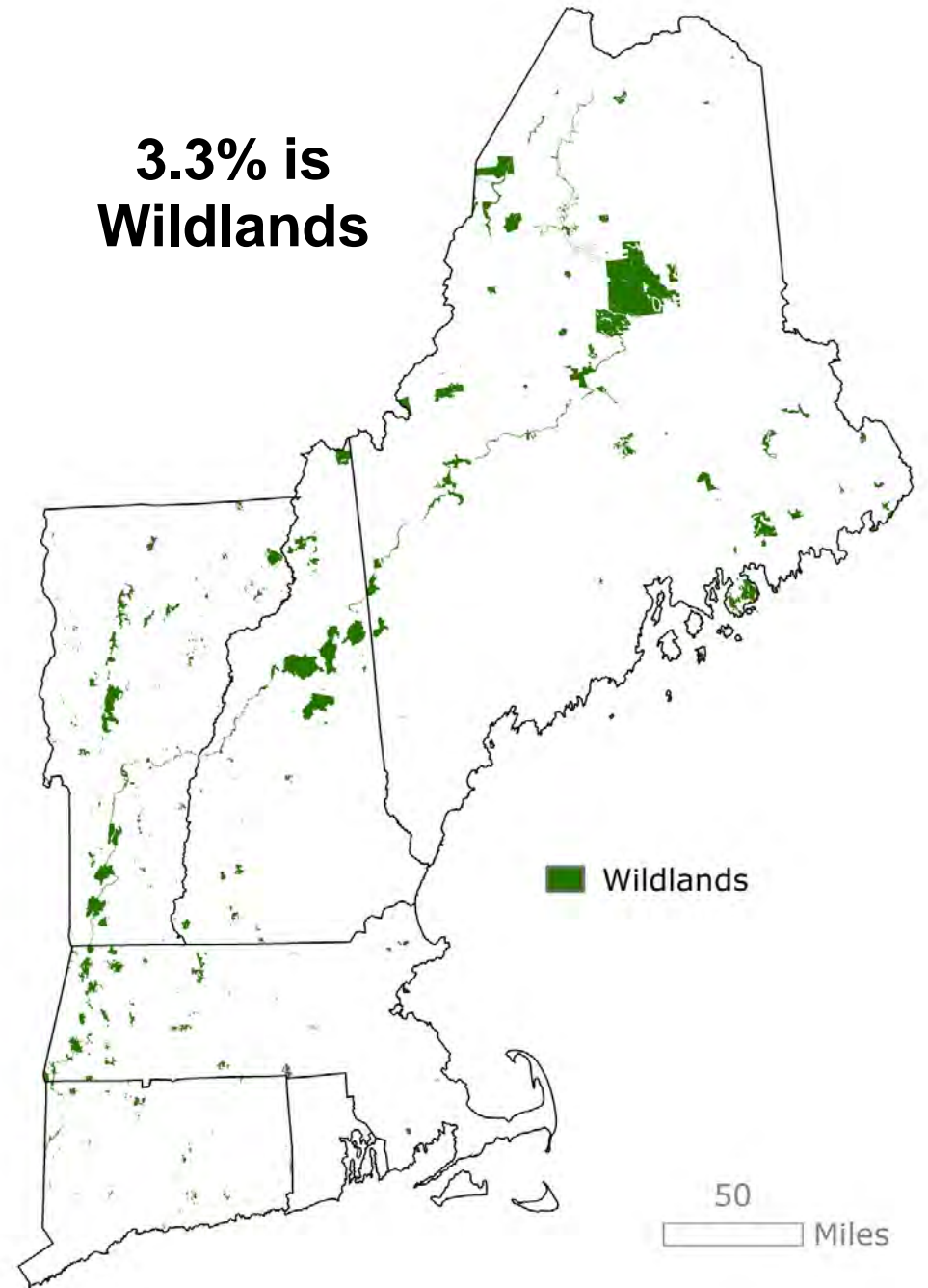
Land Cover and Forest Protection



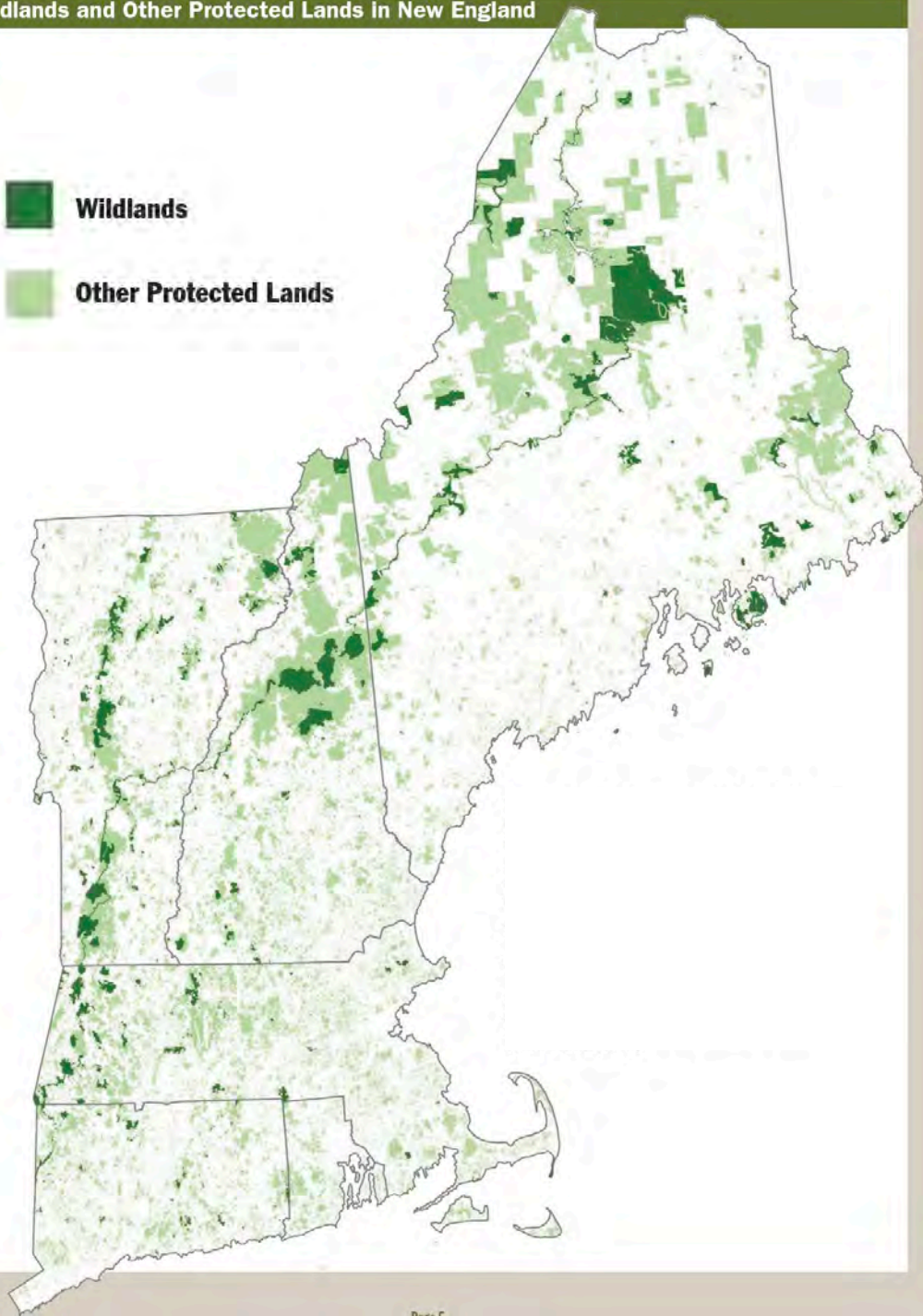
**81% of New  
England is  
forest**



**3.3% is  
Wildlands**



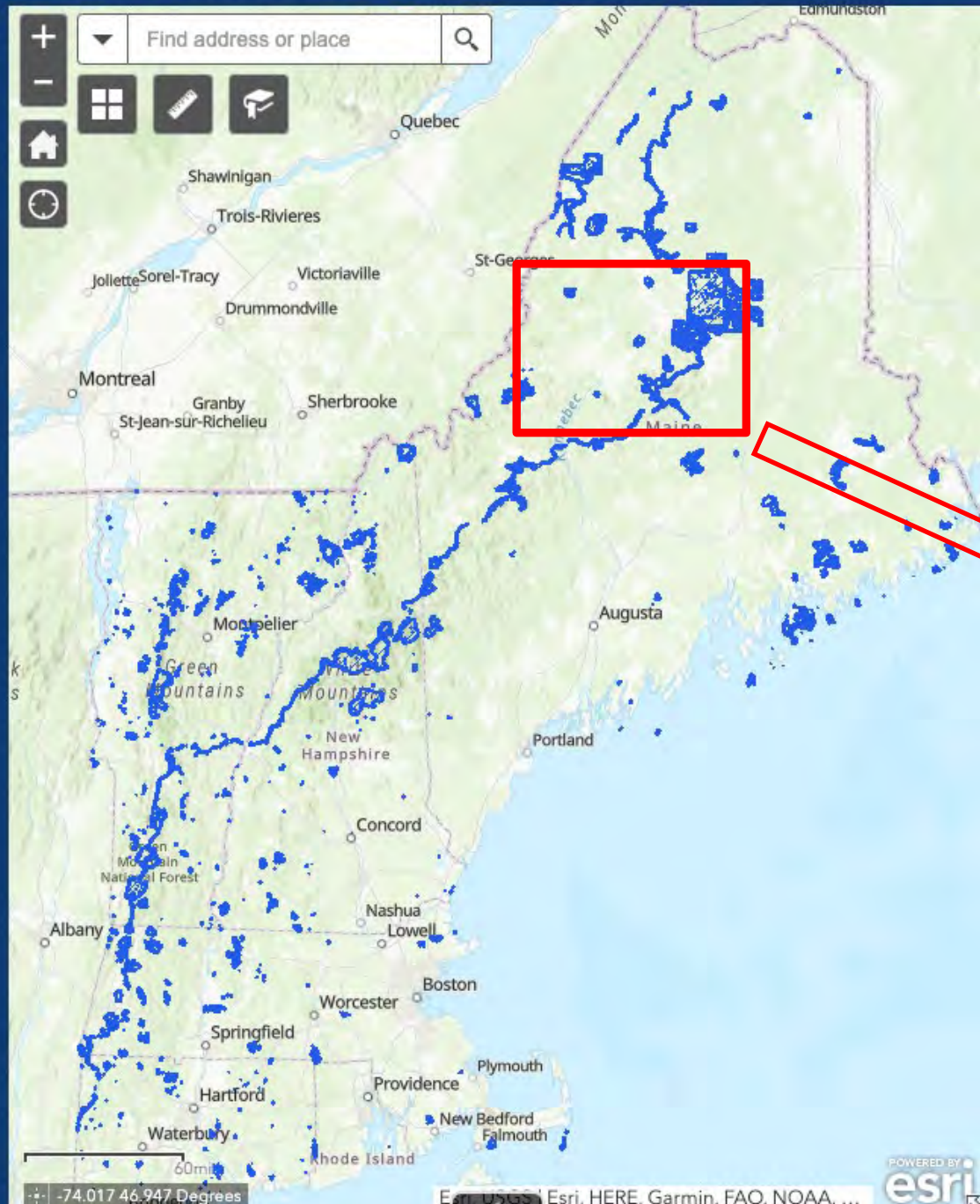
- Wildlands
- Other Protected Lands



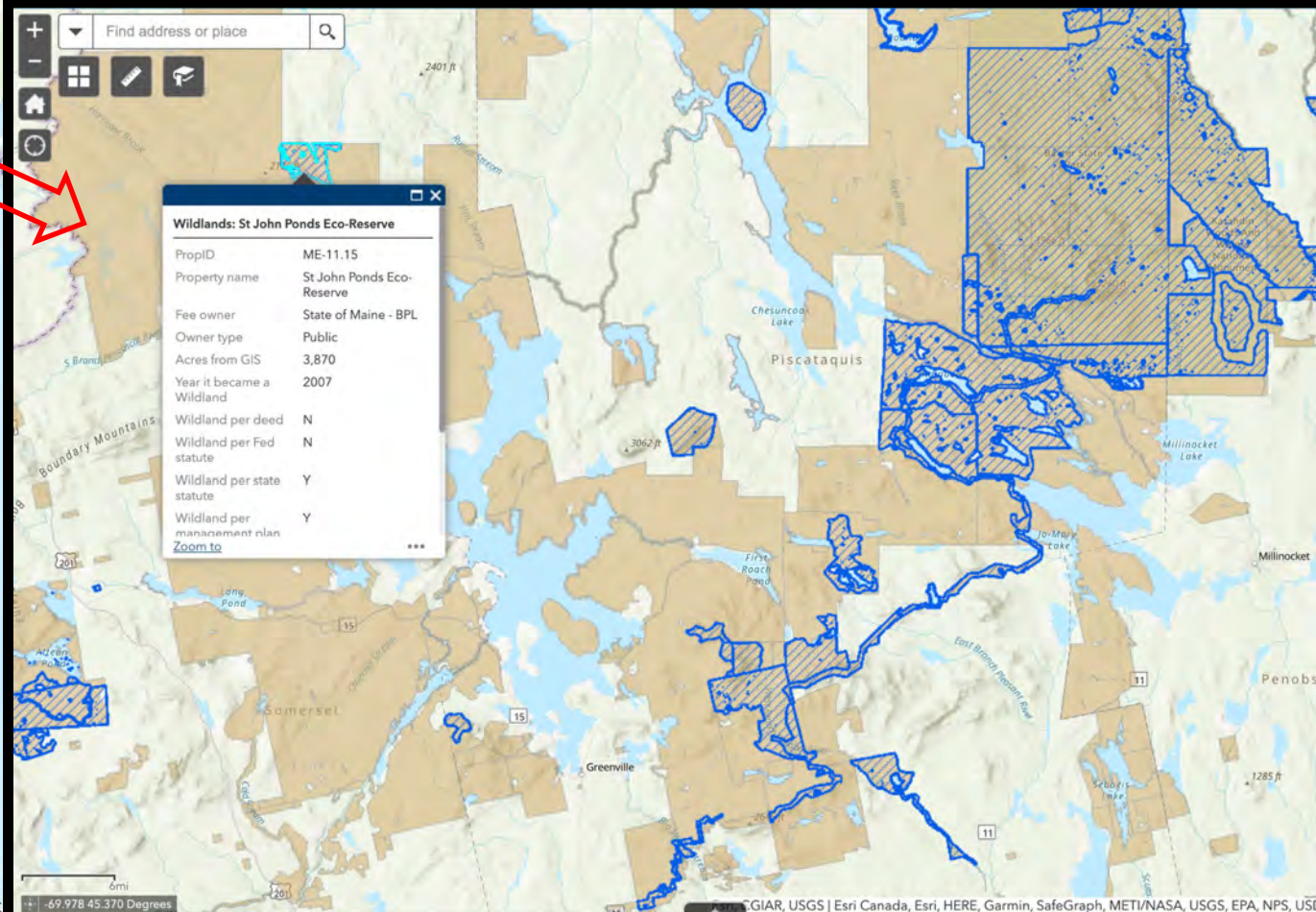
# The “Protected” Lands of New England

- Wildlands
- Forest, Protected
- Forest, Unprotected

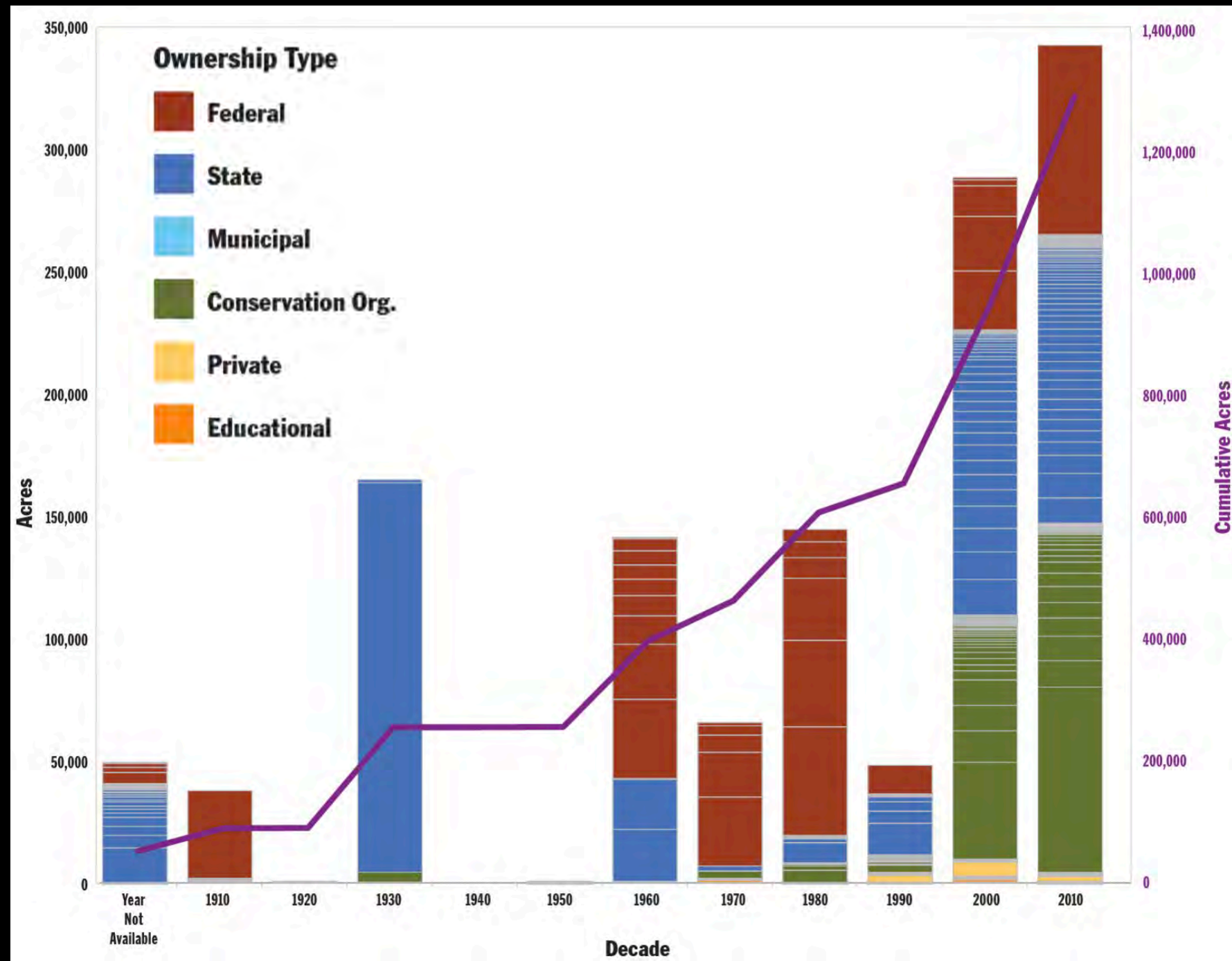




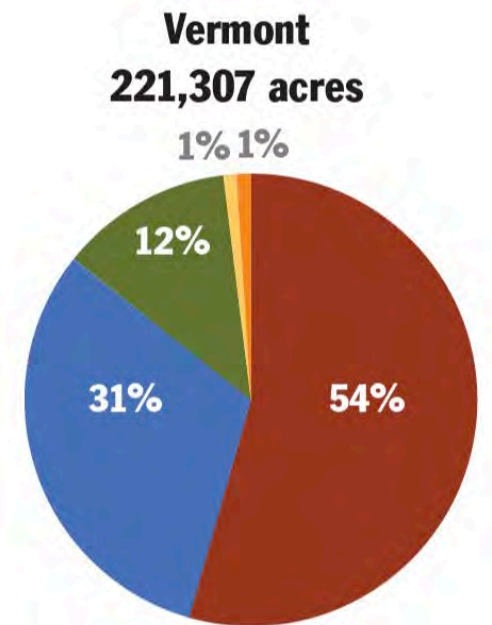
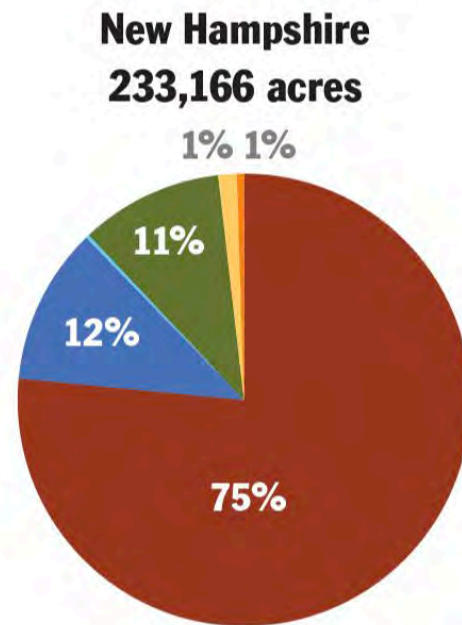
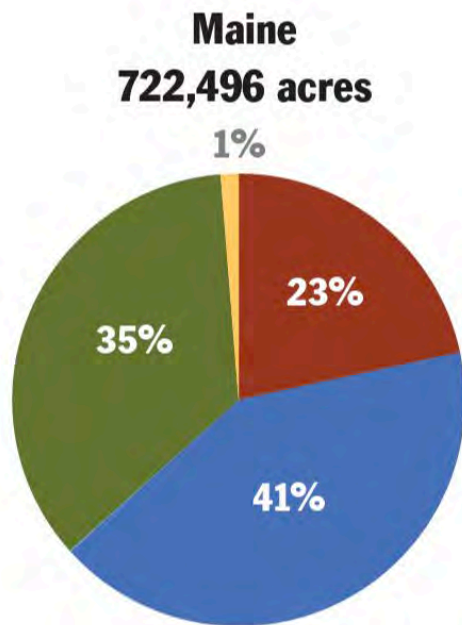
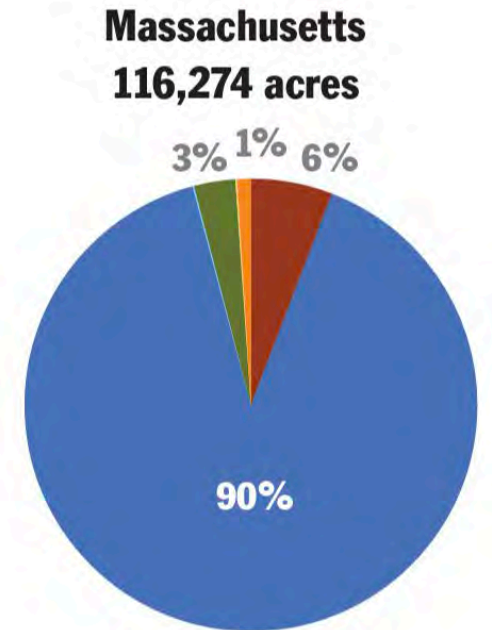
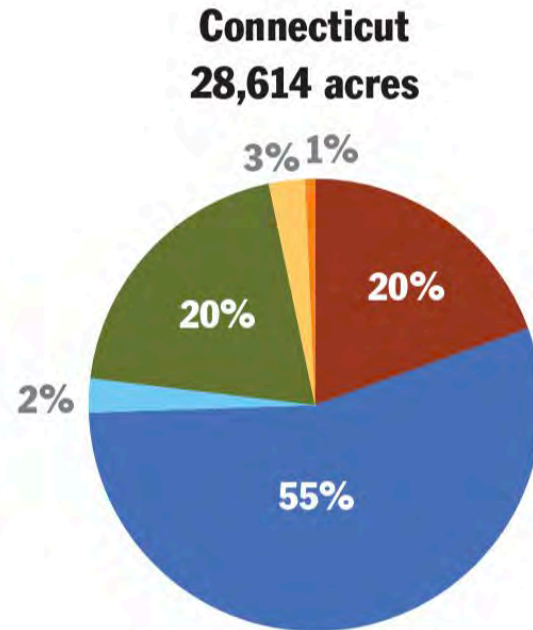
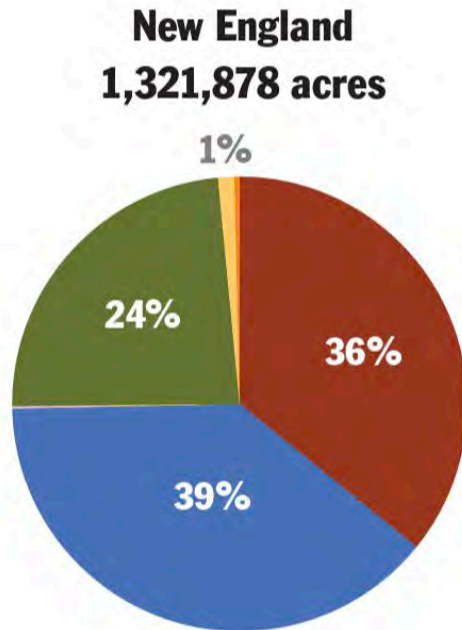
# Where are the Wildlands?



# Timeline Of Wildlands establishment in New England



# Wildland extent and ownership



# Wildland Gradients in Management and Security

Management – Constraints

High

Pisgah Forest

Andorra Forest

Connecticut College  
Natural Areas

Whetstone Woods

Corner Pond CE

Doren Mountain Wilderness  
Lone Mountain Wilderness

Monomoy NWR

Debsconeag Lakes  
Wilderness Area

Katahdin  
Iron Works

Binney Hill  
Preserve

Mount Abraham

DCR Reserves  
Pisgah State Park  
VT HWAs

Katahdin  
Woods & Waters

Pemigewasett  
Wilderness  
Roach Ponds

DCR - AT

Baxter  
Game Sanctuary

CT OFMAs

Low

High

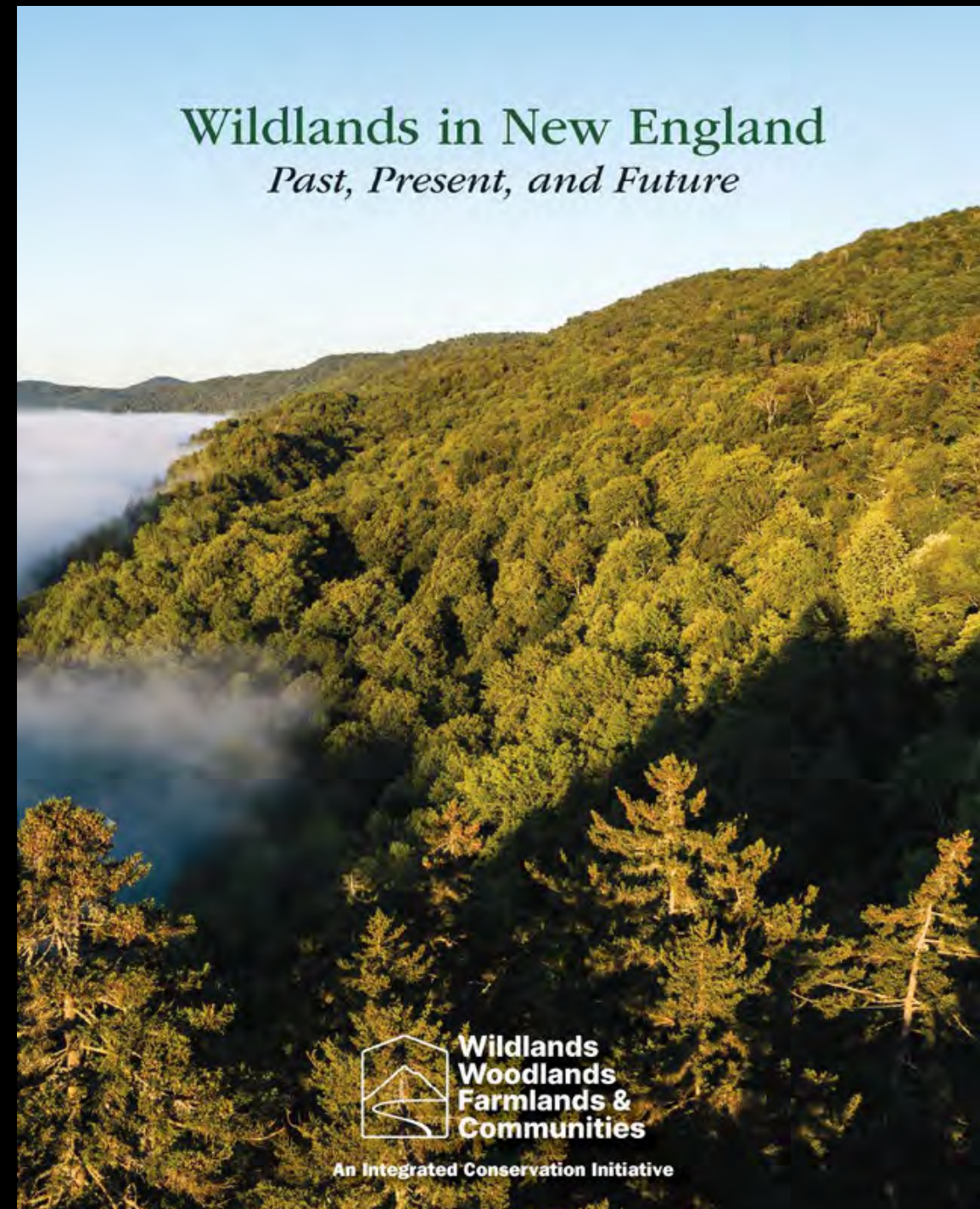
Security – Permanence of Protection

# Recommendations

Liz Thompson

Jamie Sayen

David Foster



Wildlands in New England  
*Past, Present, and Future*



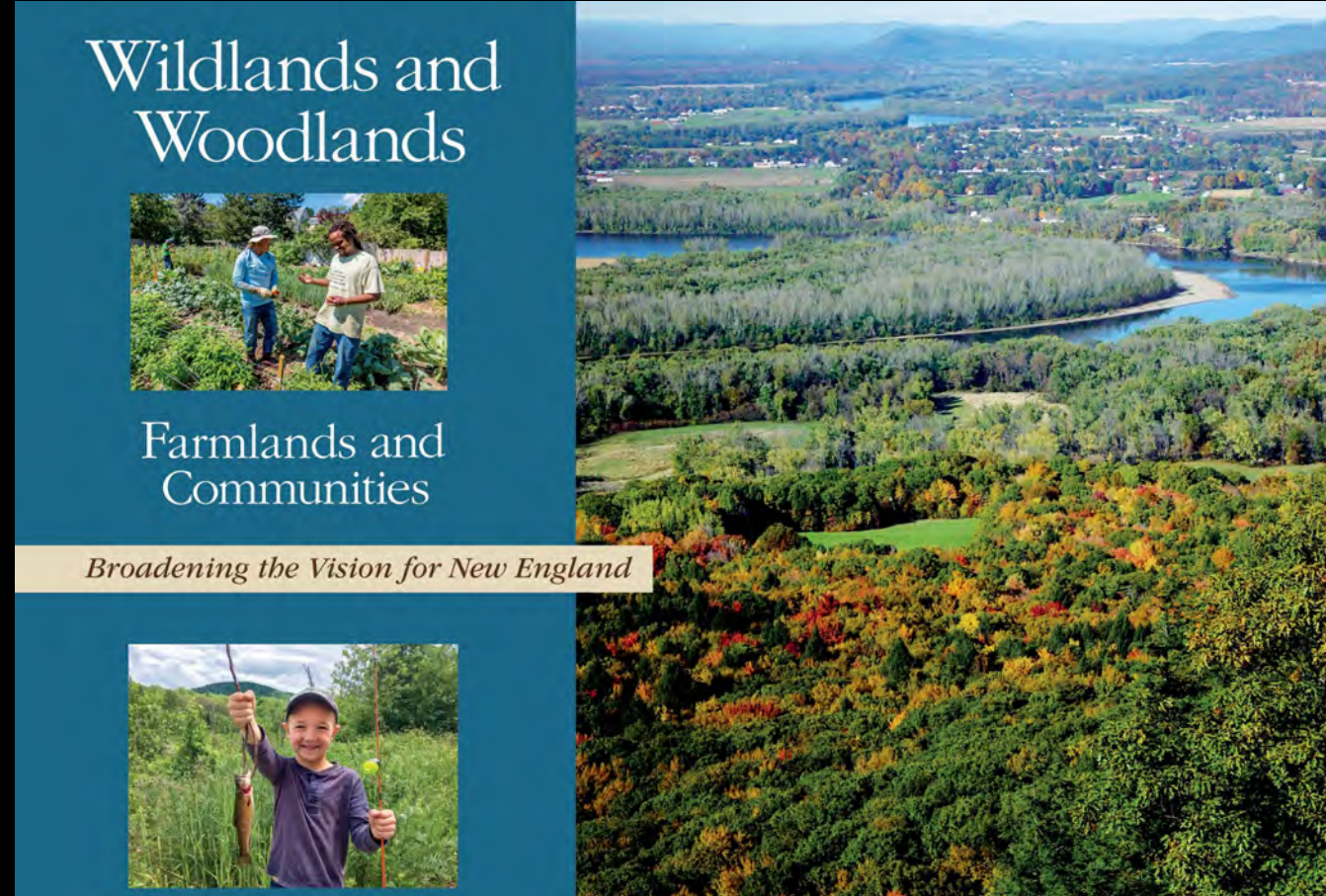
Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
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# Recommendation #1

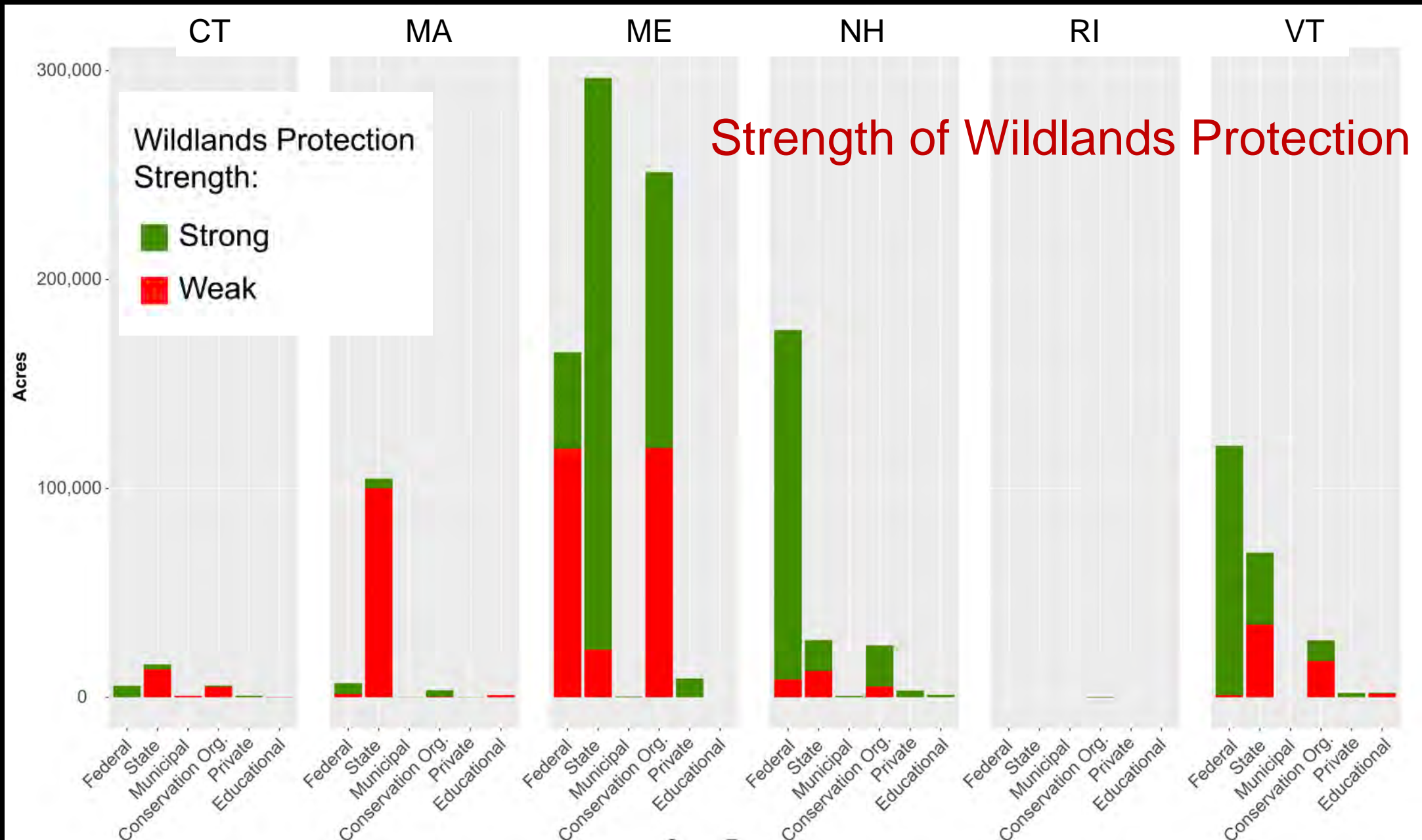
Center Wildlands in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms and sustainably designed communities.

## Employ an integrated Approach

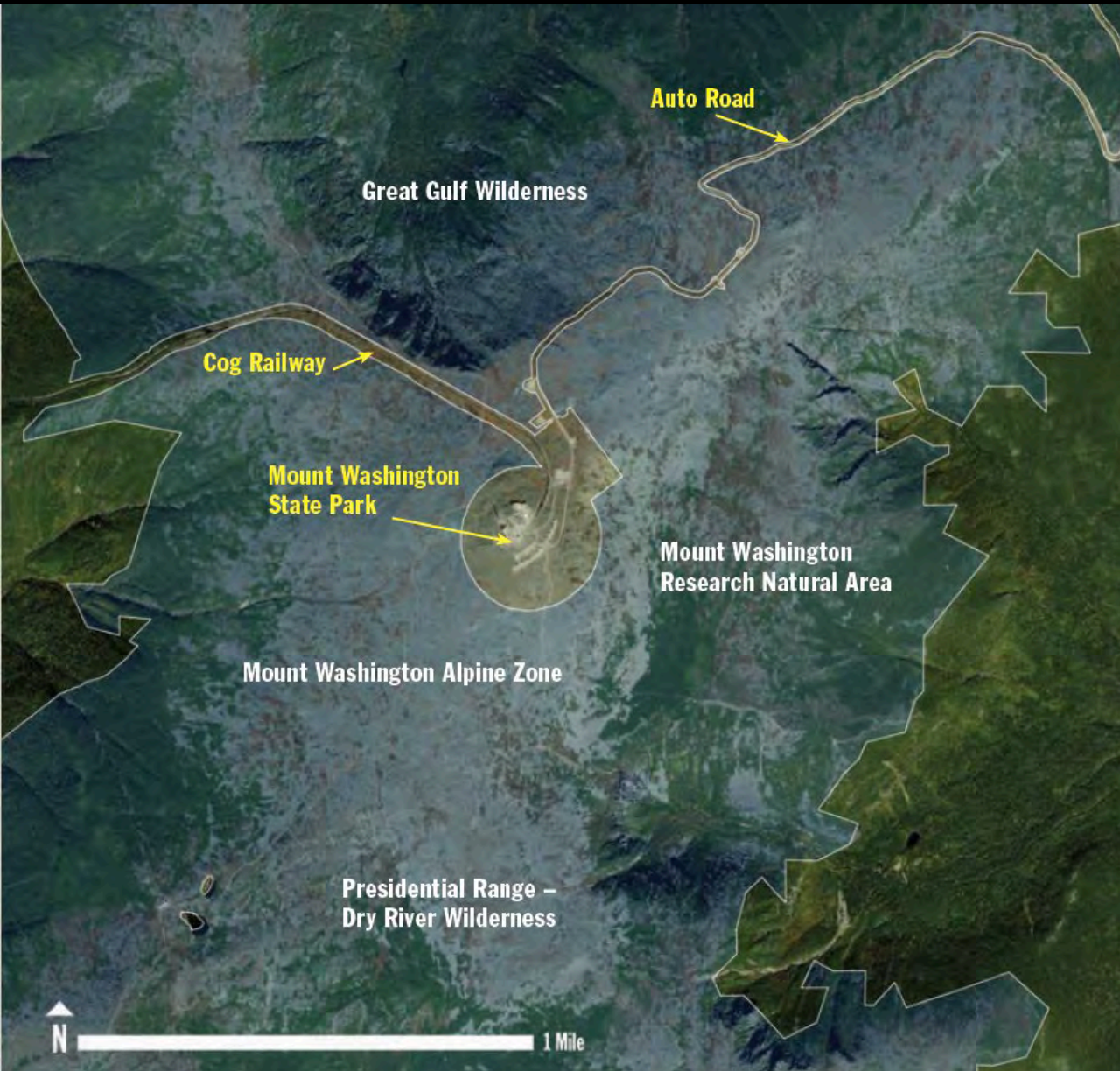


# Recommendation #2

# Strengthen existing Wildlands



# The Precarious Landscape Context of Wildlands



Mount Washington Wilderness Areas



Allagash Wilderness Waterway





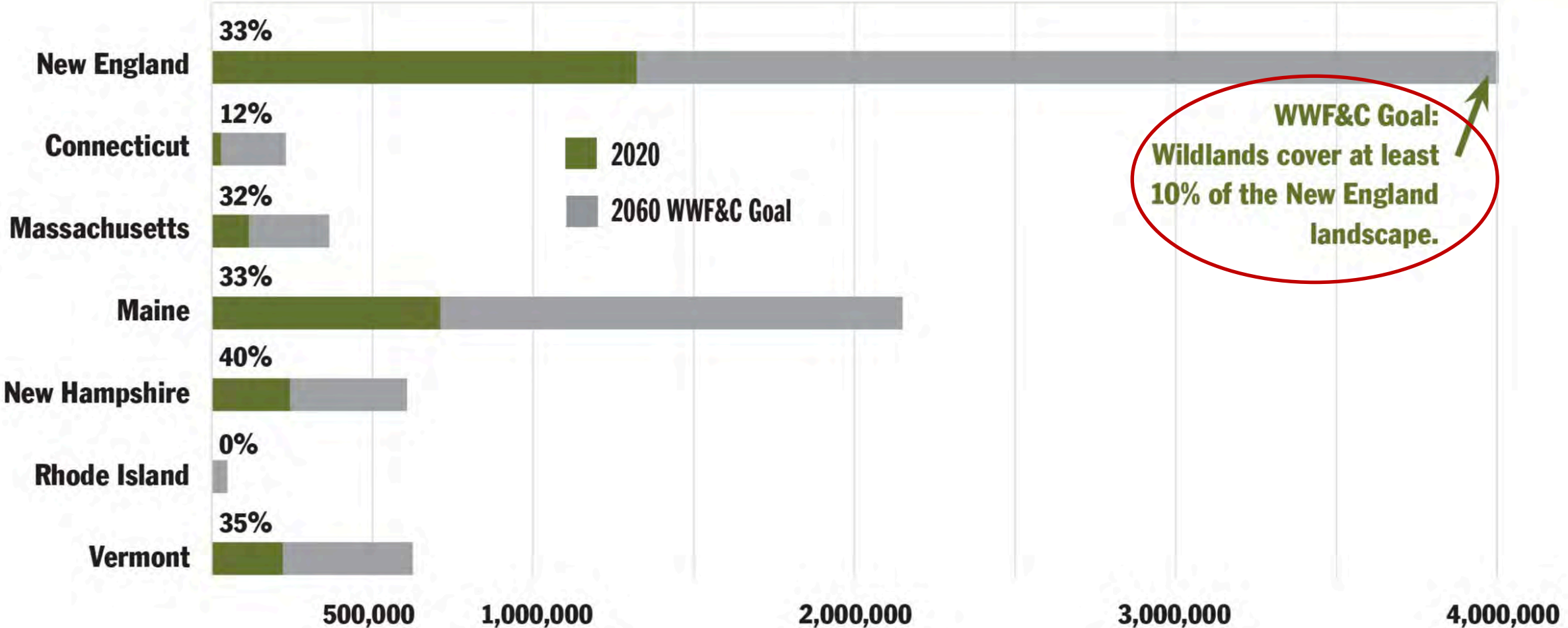
# Recommendation #3 Increase Wildland Conservation

Advance Wildland conservation significantly, thoughtfully, and strategically

*Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation...*

*Henry Thoreau 1859*

# Current Wildland Extent and WWF&C Goals for 2060

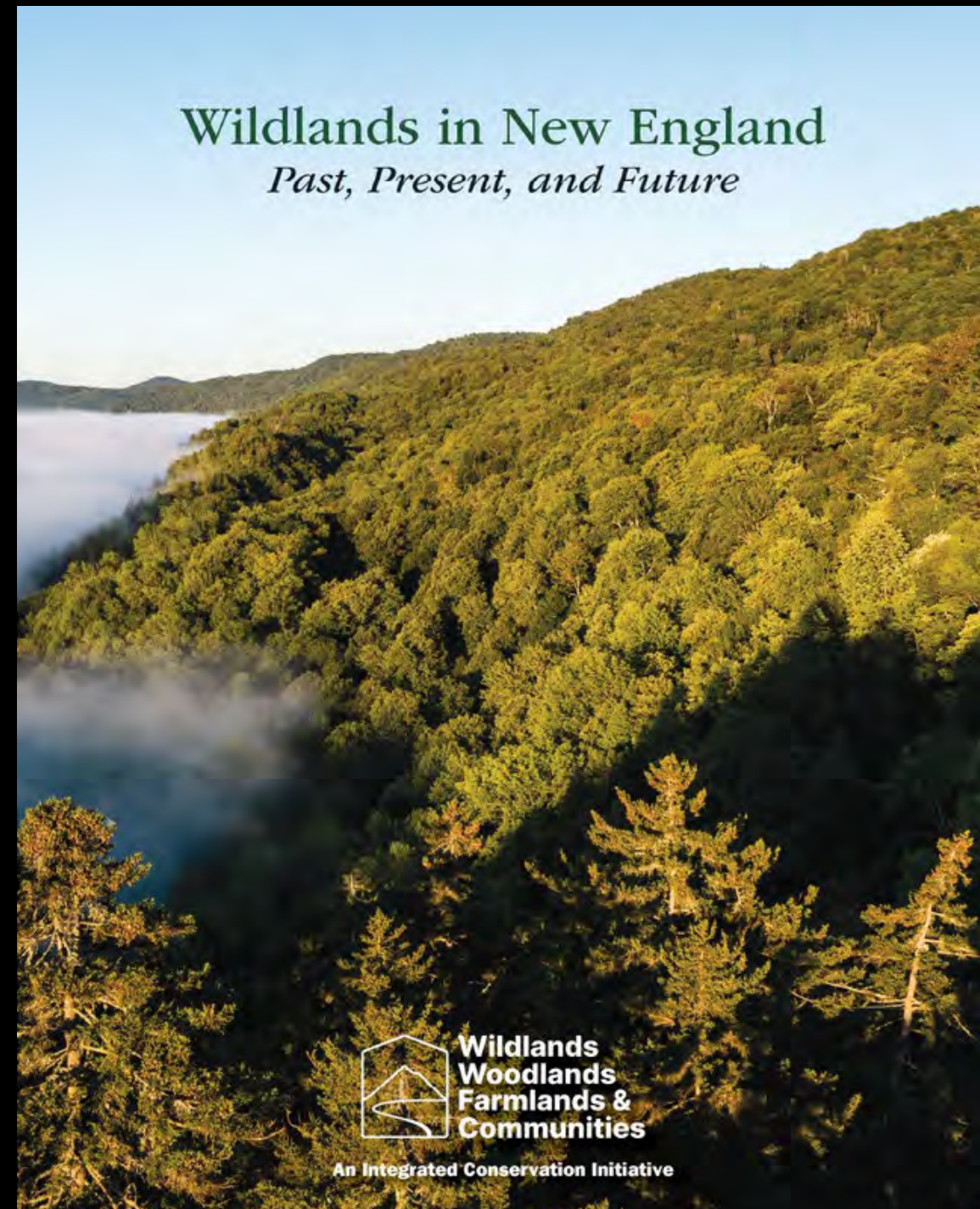


# Increasing Wildland Conservation

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# *Increasing Wildlands*

In the region  
In my state  
In my RCP  
In my town  
In my back 40

# *Increasing Wildlands*

In the region

**In my state**

In my RCP

In my town

In my back 40



Act 59: Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Act

June 12, 2023

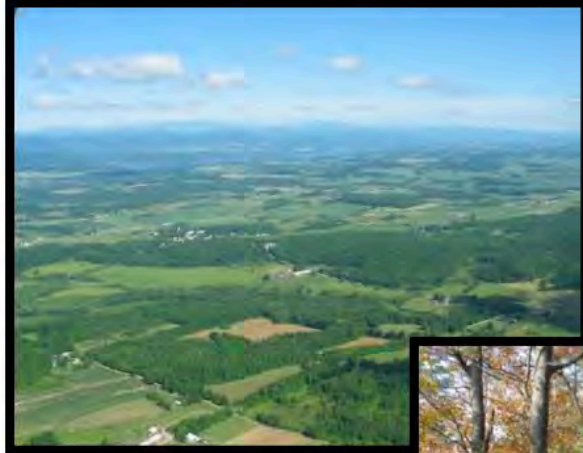
Sponsor: Rep. Amy Sheldon

Three categories of conserved areas

1. Biodiversity reserves (Wildlands)
2. Ecological conservation areas
3. Sustainable resource management areas

# VERMONT CONSERVATION DESIGN

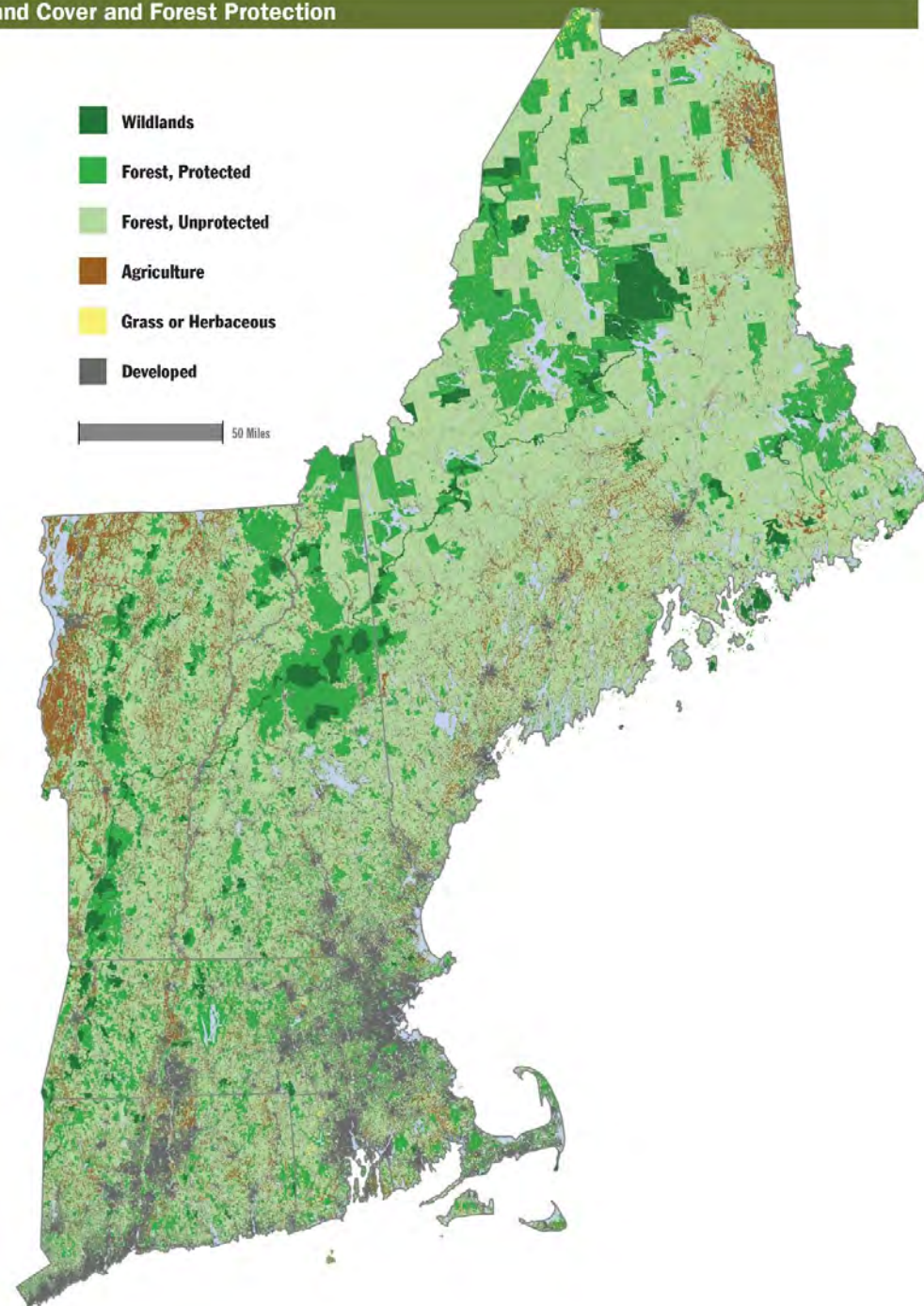
*MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING AN ECOLOGICALLY FUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPE*



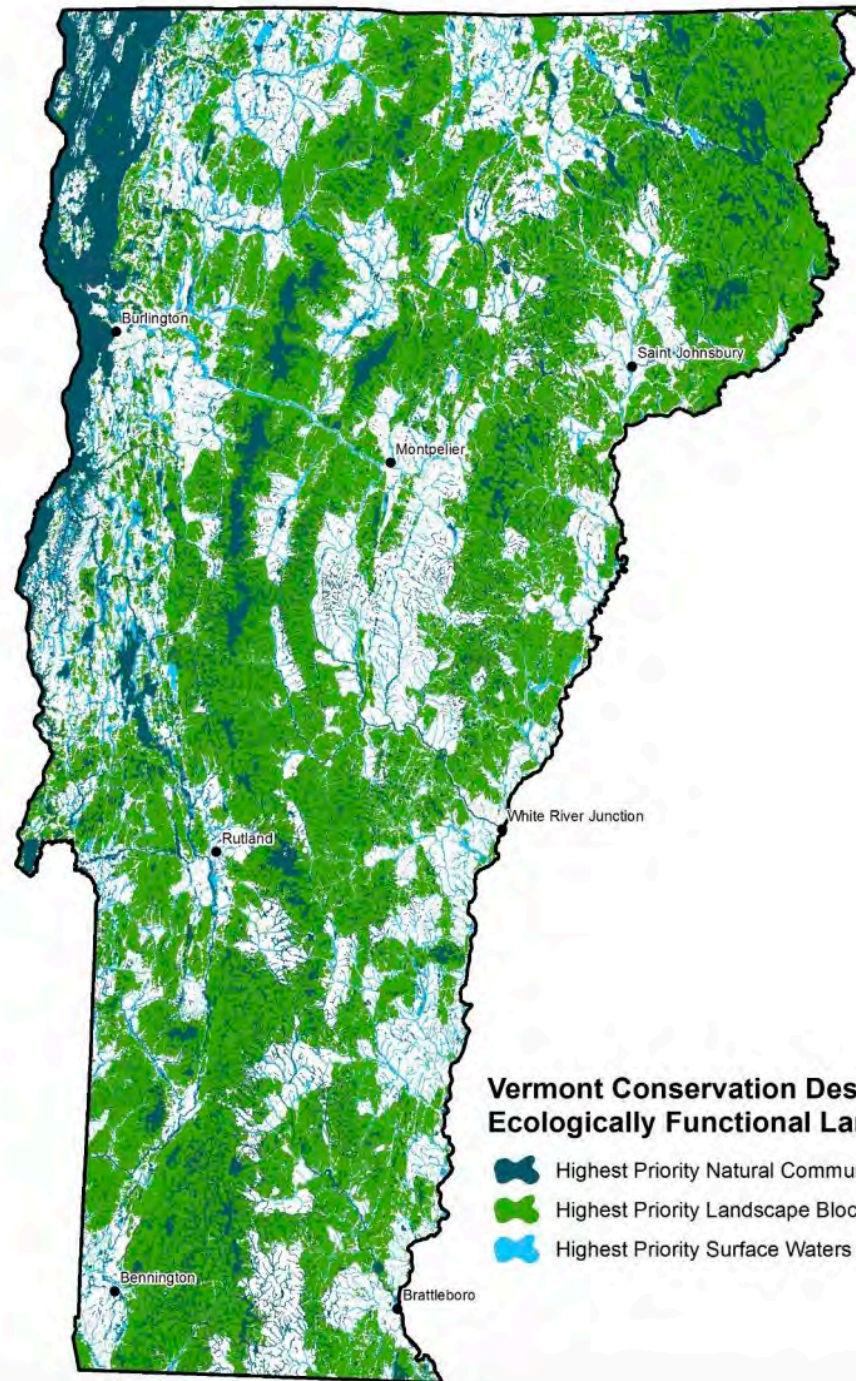
*Summary Report for  
Landscapes, Natural Communities, Habitats, and Species*

February 2018




## Land Cover and Forest Protection

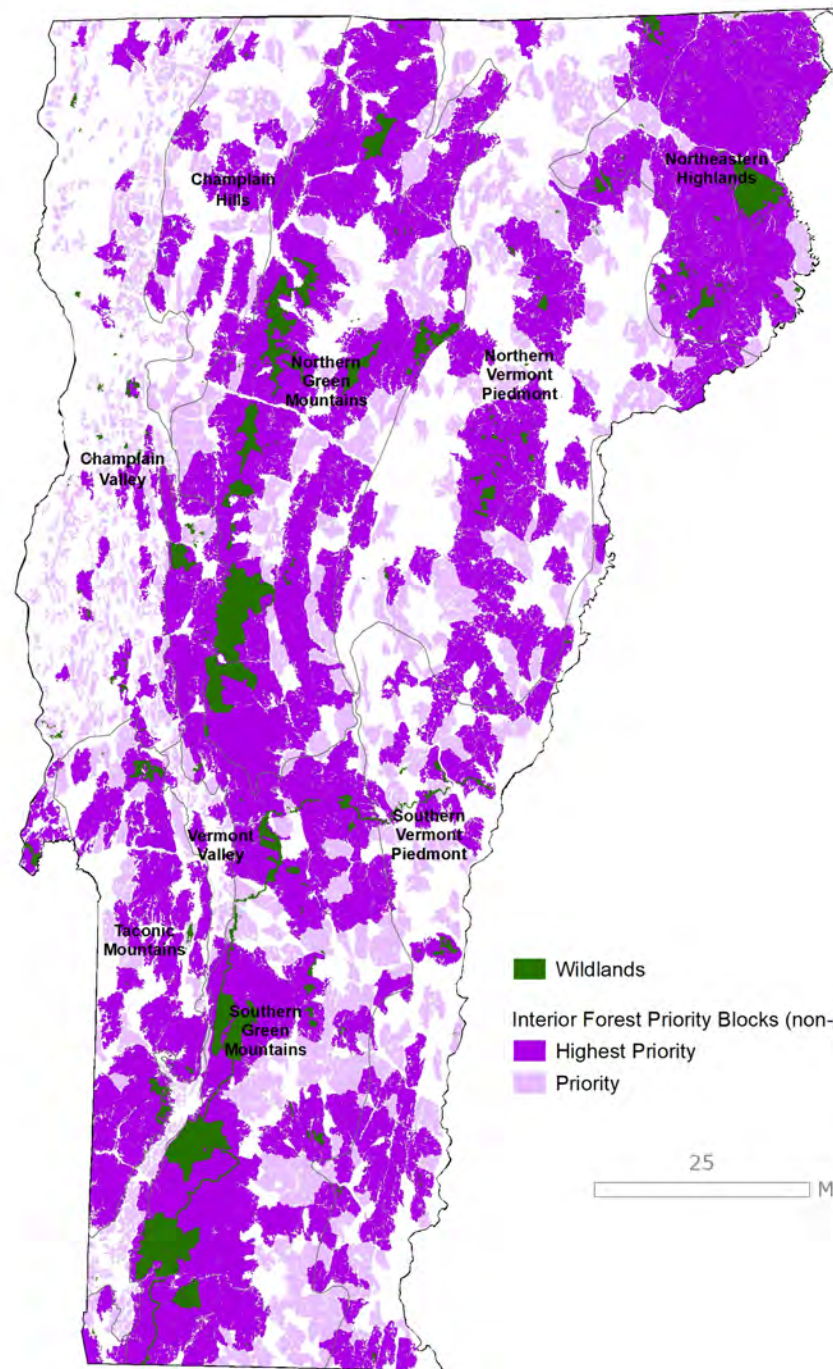






**Vermont Conservation Design  
Ecologically Functional Landscape**

-  Highest Priority Natural Community & Habitat Features
-  Highest Priority Landscape Blocks
-  Highest Priority Surface Waters and Riparian Areas



Wildlands

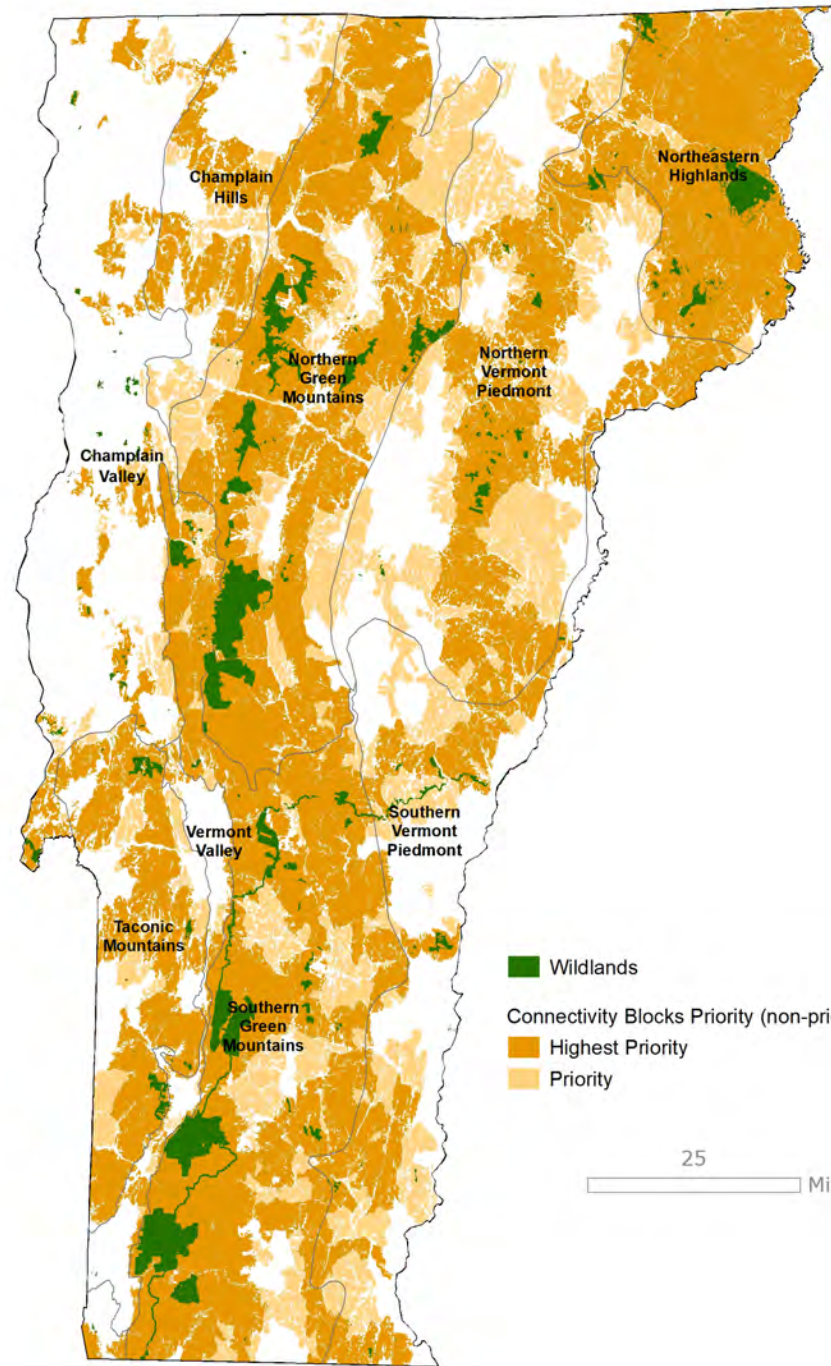
Interior Forest Priority Blocks (non-priority not shown):

Highest Priority

Priority

25

Miles



Wildlands

Connectivity Blocks Priority (non-priority not shown):

Highest Priority

Priority

25 Miles

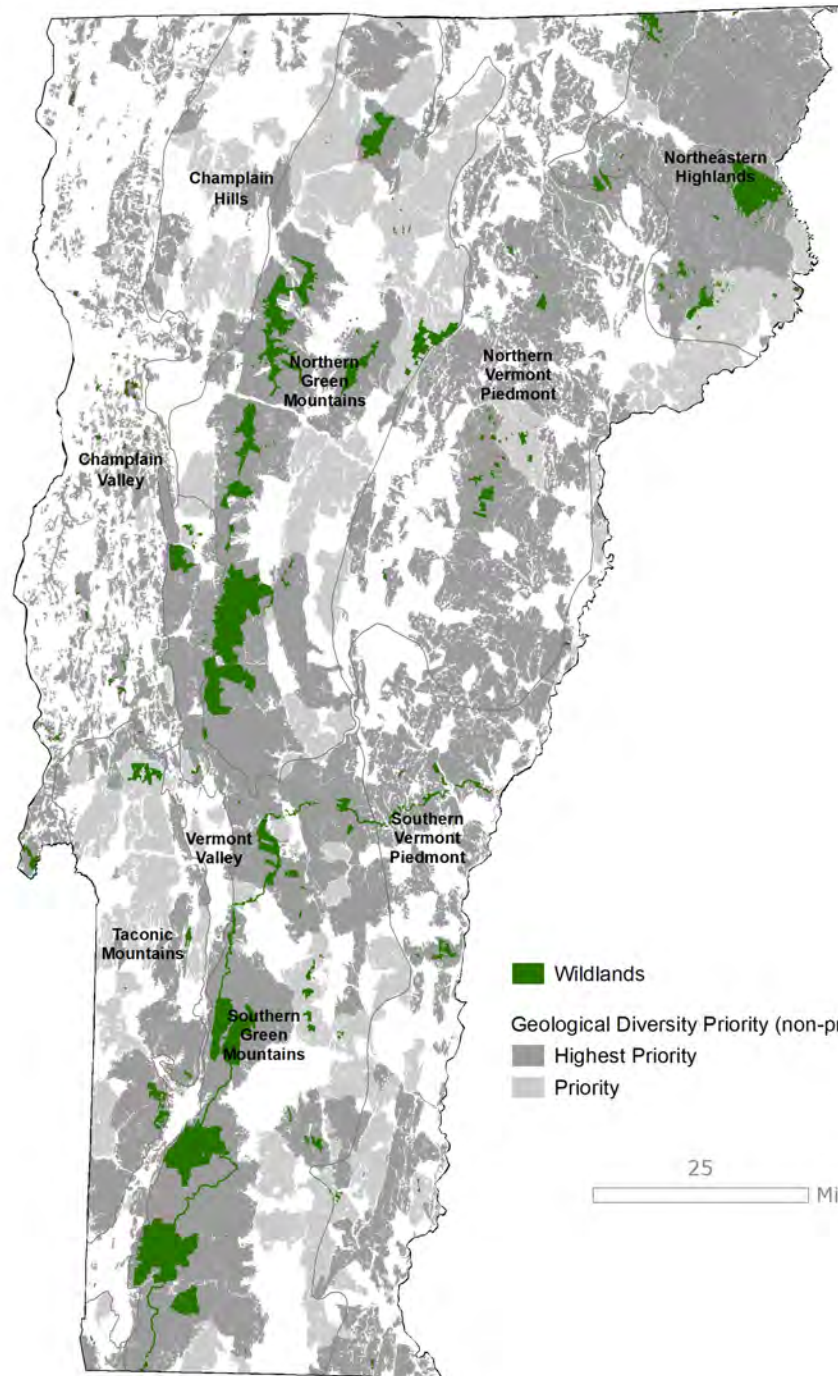


**BEDROCK GEOLOGIC MAP OF VERMONT**

by  
 Malcolm M. Reynolds, Ralph S. Harlan, Stephen H. Lisle, Peter J. Thompson, and Gregory J. Walter  
 with assistance from  
 Norman C. Mack, Jr., Douglas W. Ruppel, Jr., Charles E. Groat, Jr., Robert A. Johnson, John B. Harland, and J. Gregory Wilson

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■ Wildlands

Geological Diversity Priority (non-priority not shown):

- Highest Priority
- Priority







# *Increasing Wildlands*

In the region

In my state

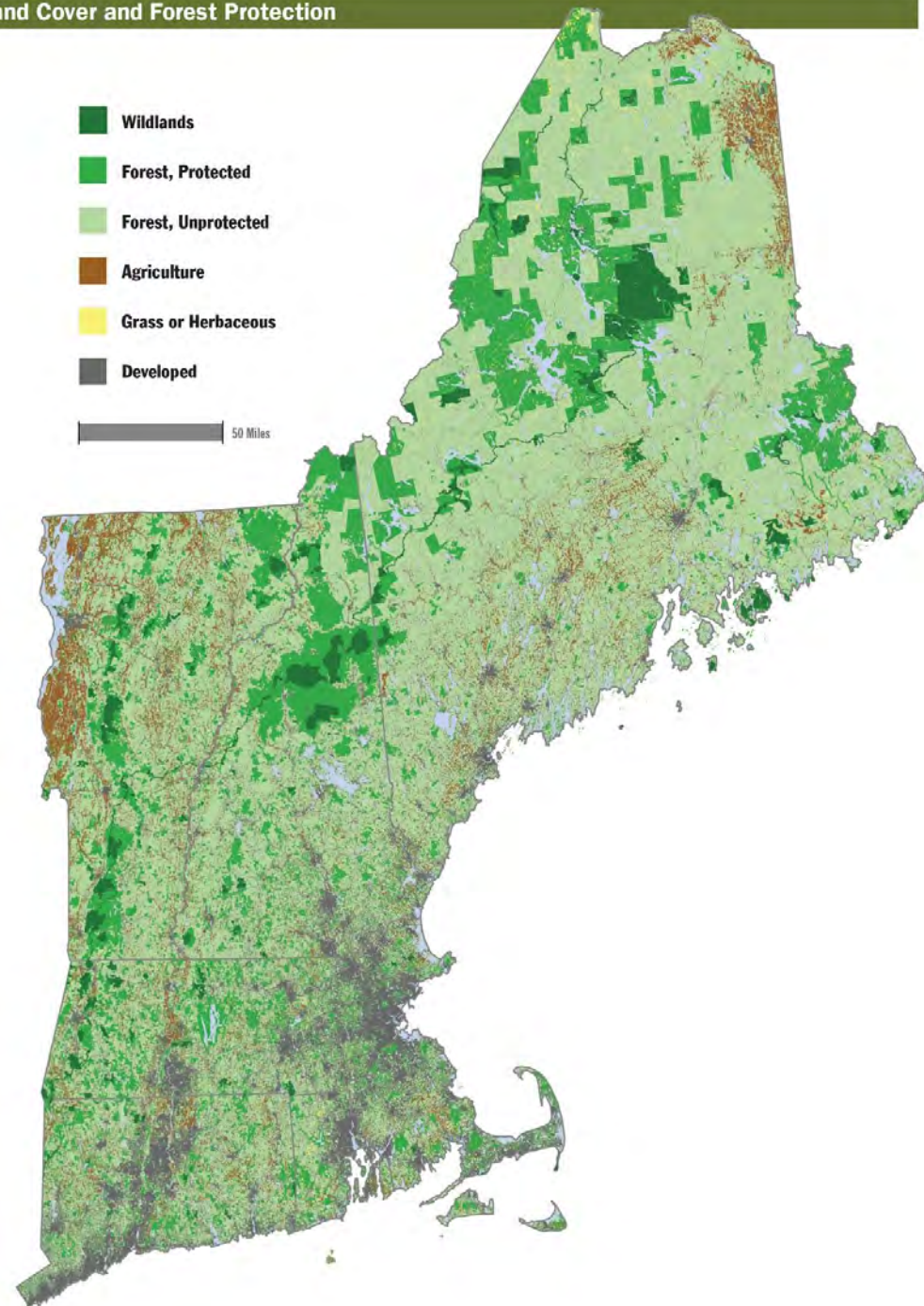
**In my RCP**

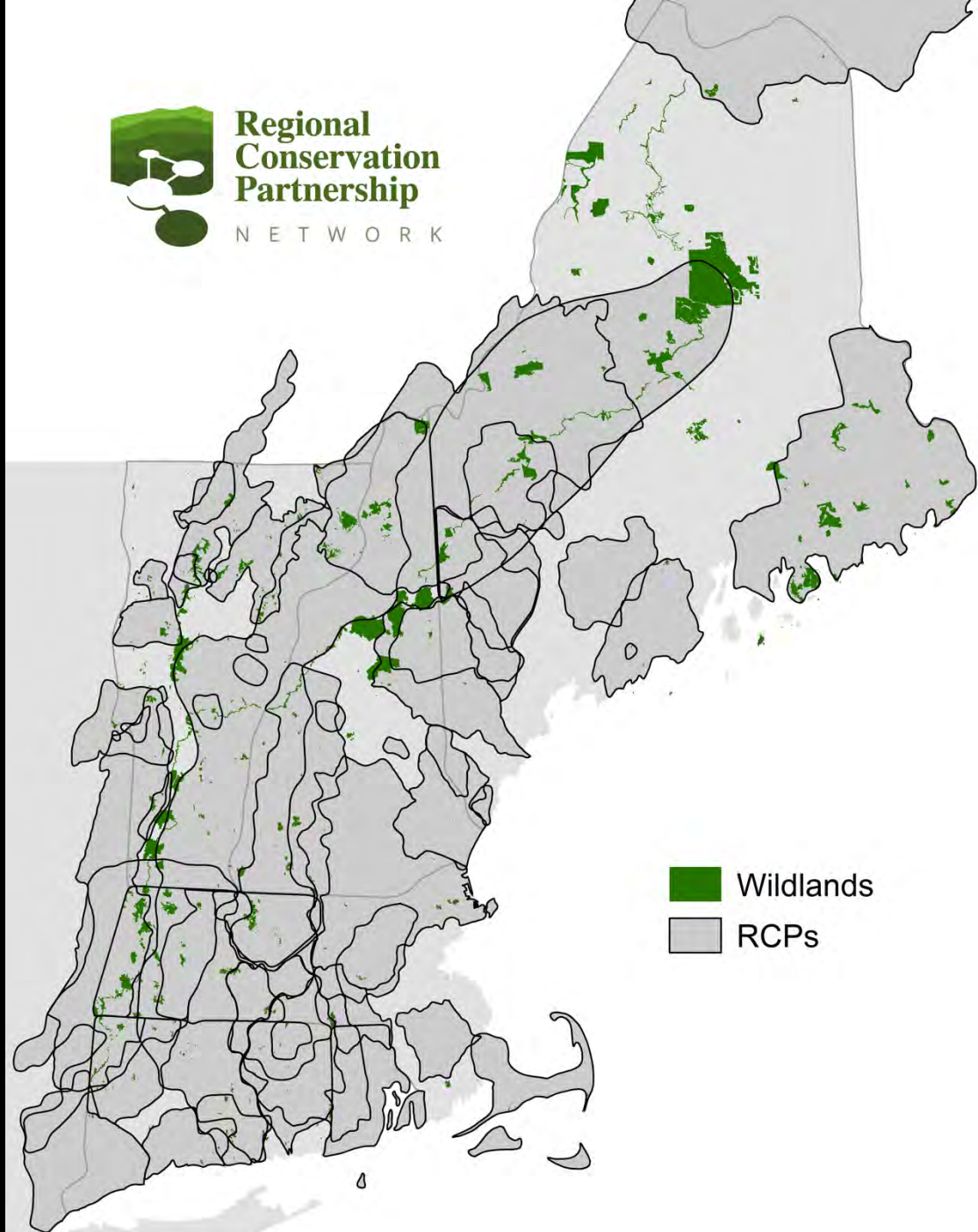
**In my town**

**In my back 40**



## Land Cover and Forest Protection





 Wildlands  
 RCPs

# Increasing Wildland Conservation

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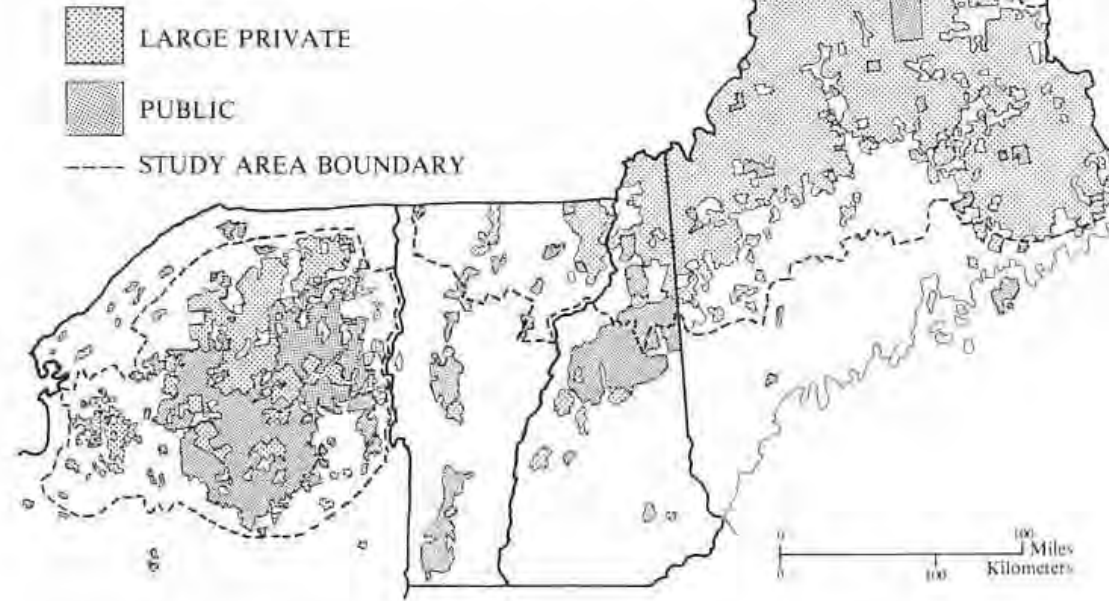
## Wildlands in New England *Past, Present, and Future*



Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
Communities

An Integrated Conservation Initiative

**Table 1. Northern Forest Lands Study Area**

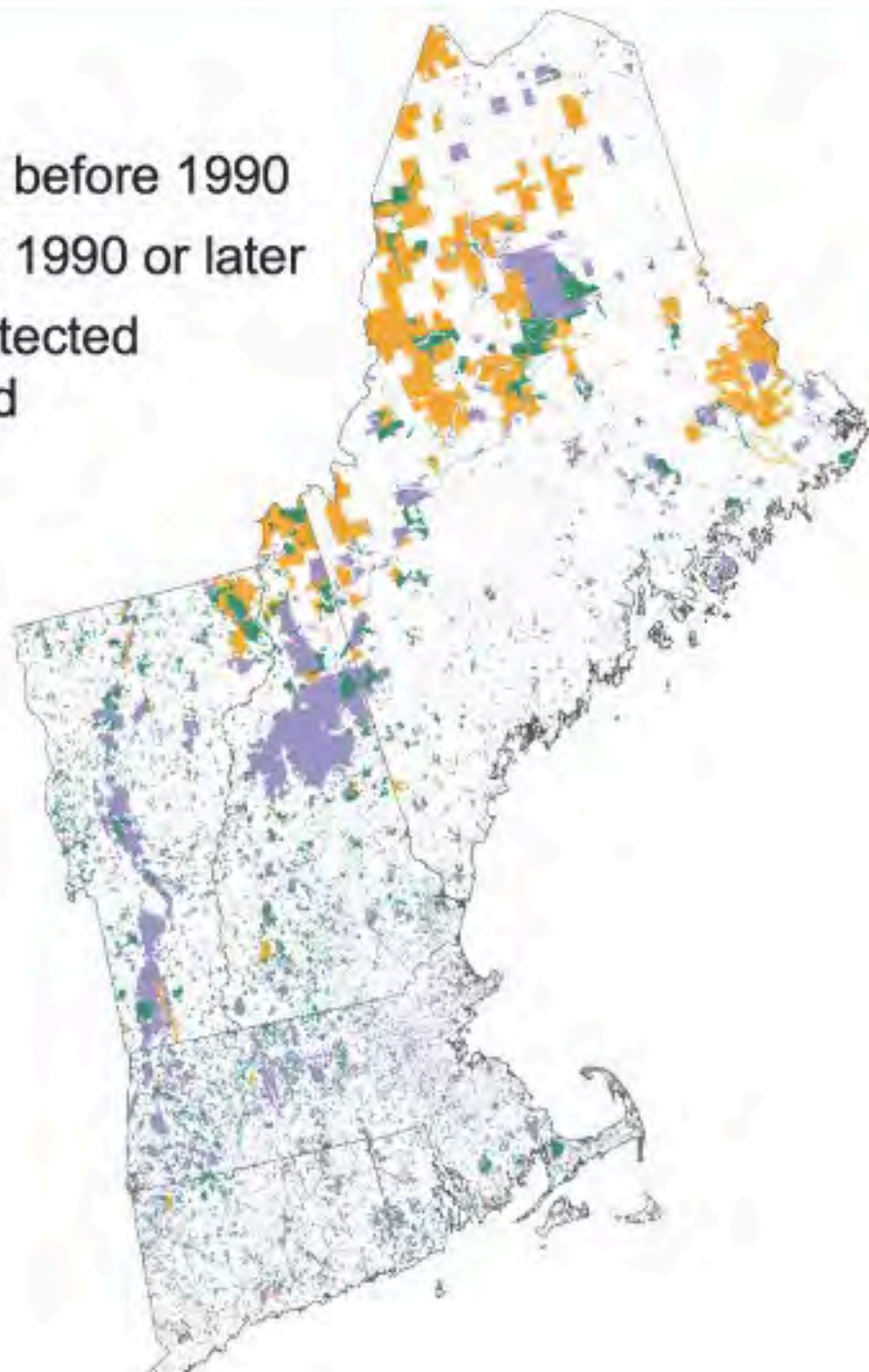


**Figure 1. Land Ownership in the Study Area (Thousands of Acres)**

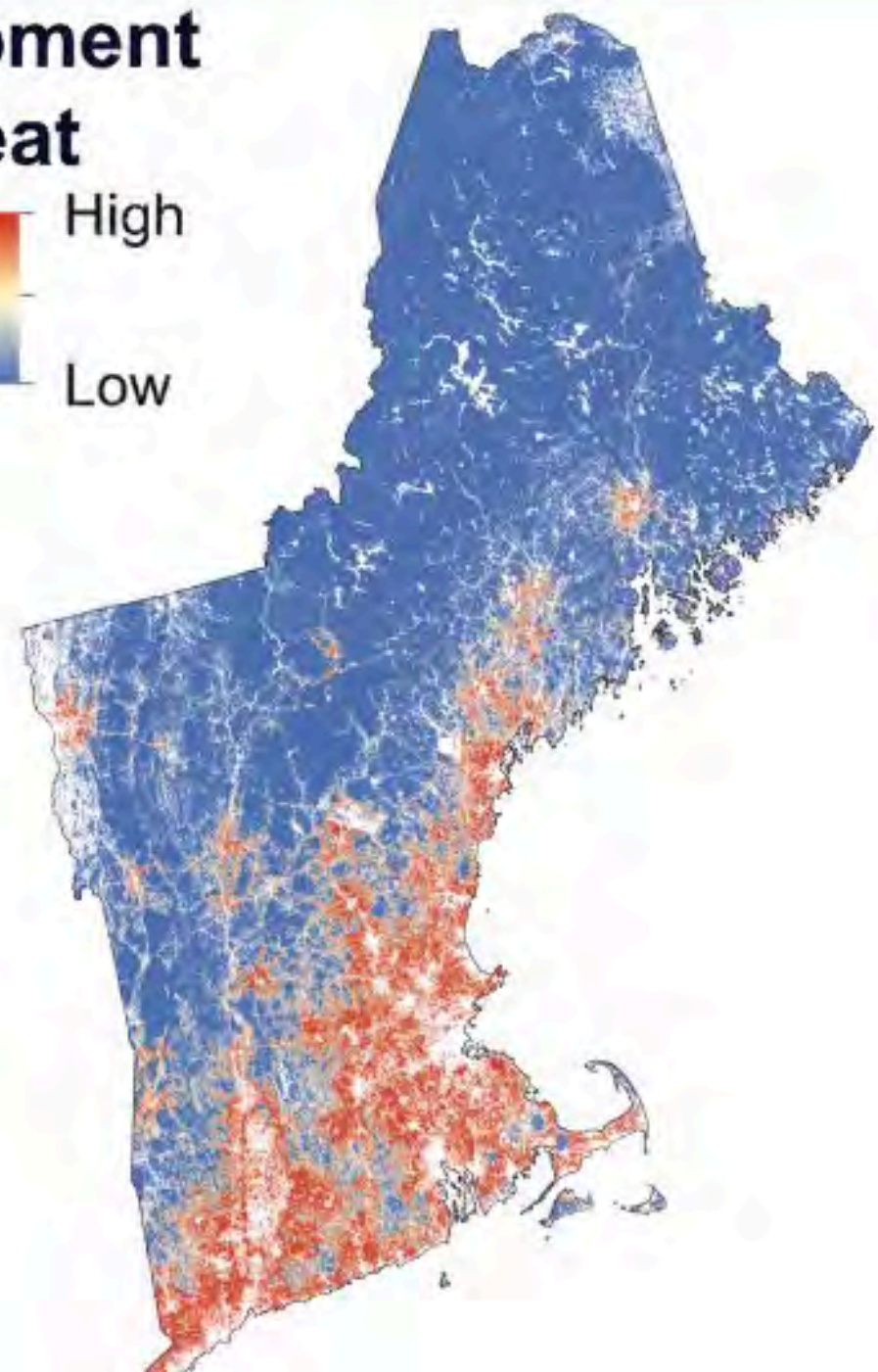
	Maine	New Hampshire	New York	Vermont	Total
<b>PRIVATE LAND</b>					
Industrial	7,700	500	1,200	300	9,700
Large Non-Industrial	3,100	50	500	50	3,600
Other Private	3,400	350	3,100	1,550	8,400
<b>Total Private Land</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>4,800</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>21,800</b>
<b>PUBLIC LAND</b>					
State	700	50	2,800	90	3,700
Federal	80	200	0	6	300
<b>Total Public Land</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>7,600</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>25,800</b>

Data from 1987 and 1988

- Protected before 1990
- Protected 1990 or later
- Large protected timberland



## Development Threat



WITH A NEW PREFACE  
BY THE AUTHOR

Jamie Sayen

YOU HAD A JOB FOR LIFE

*Story  
of a  
Company  
Town*





## 'No Jobs on a Healthy Planet'

The Maine Forest Service & State Planning Office Economic Impact Study of Ban Clearcutting Referendum 'Proves' Maine Economy Will Collapse if Citizens Vote to Ban Clearcutting and Protect Maine Forests

↳ Mitch Lansky & Spencer Phillips take us Beyond the Myths of the State's Biased Economic 'Study' (See pages 9-14)

↳ Michael Phillips Profiles 'Local Economy Towns' (See pages 16-17)

Vermonters Say 'NO' to Herbicide Spraying

↳ See page 4

Herbicide Project Appeals NH Spray Permits

↳ See page 5

Maine Timber Industry Sabotages LURC Plan

↳ See page 7

NH Forest Resource Plan Released

↳ See pages 18-19

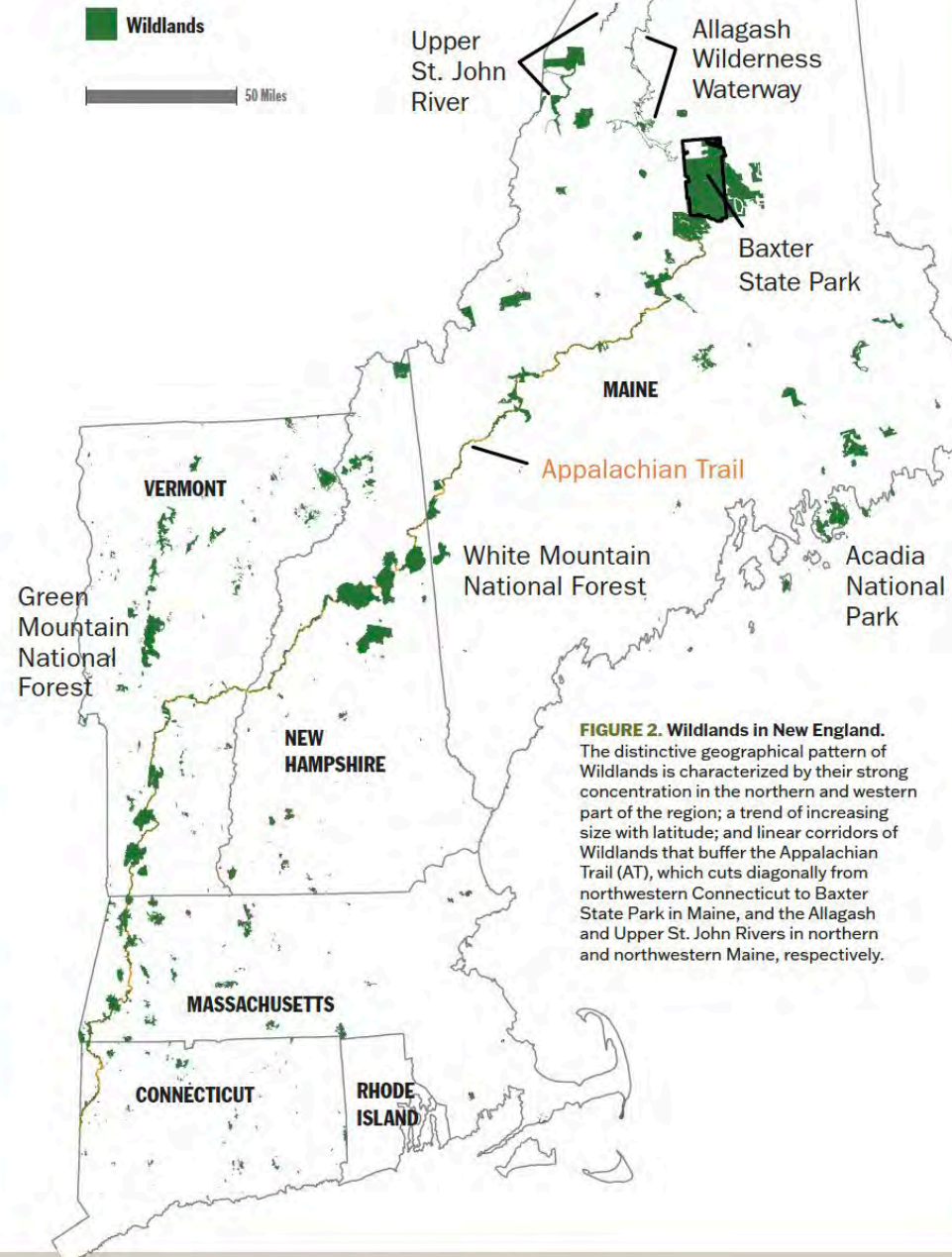
Paul Bofinger Retires - A Forum Interview

↳ See pages 21-25

A2A - Adirondacks to Algonquin

↳ See page 29

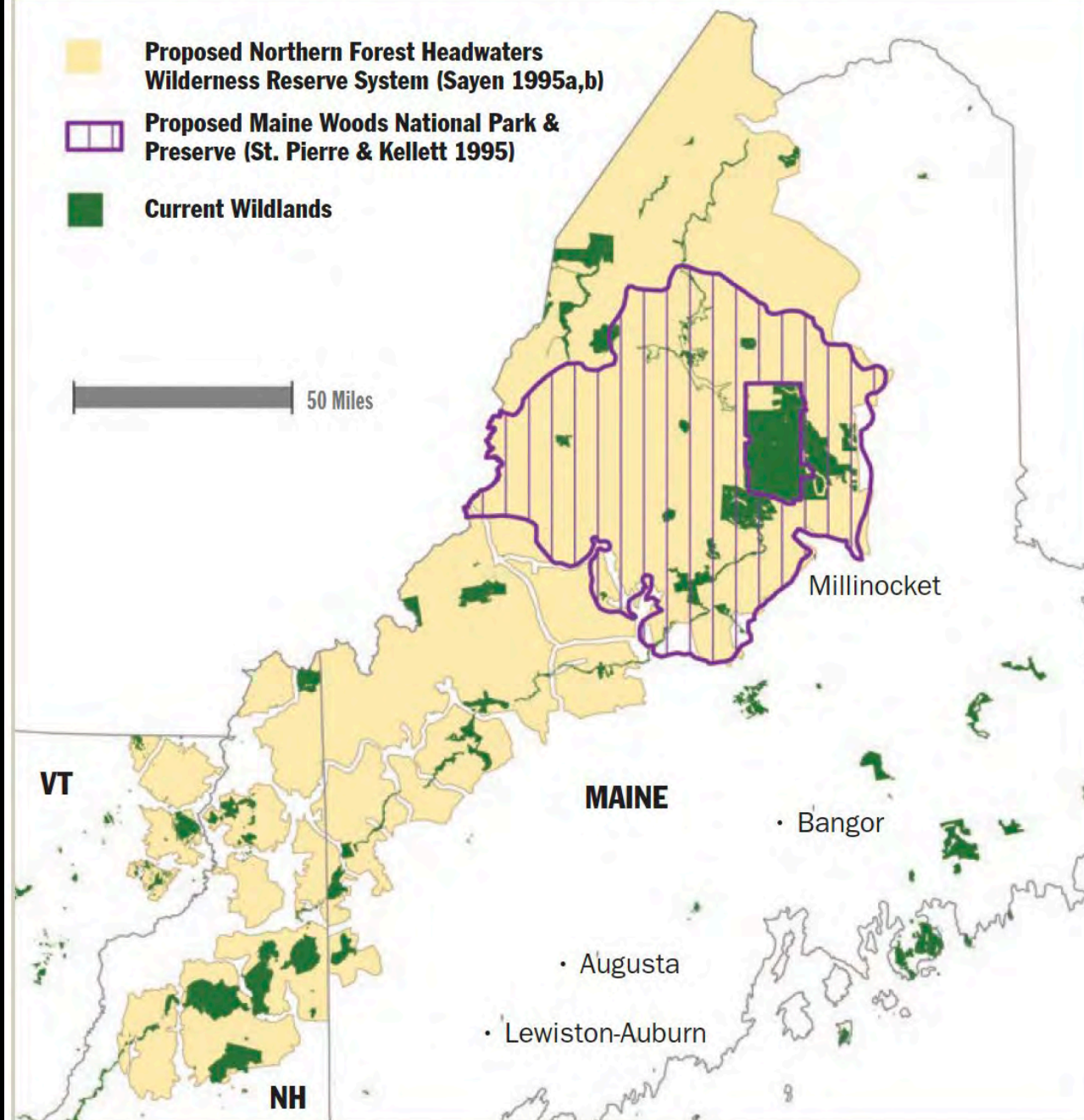
## Wildlands in New England



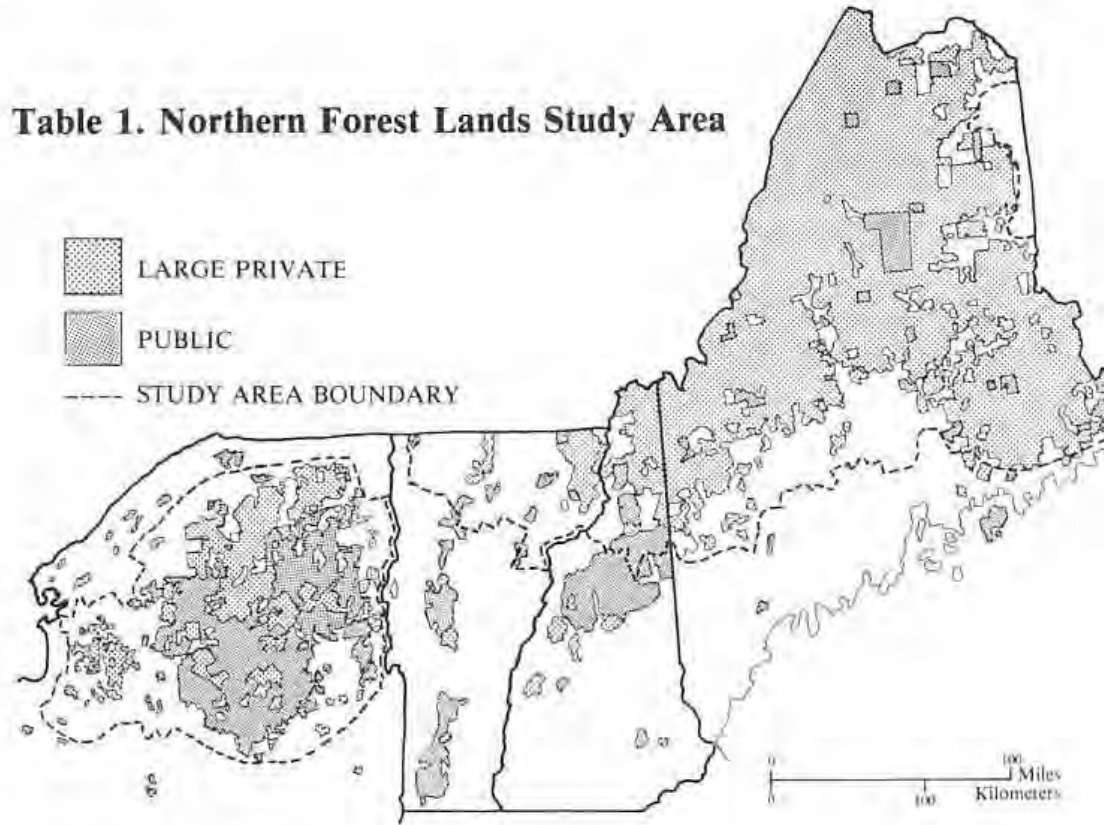
**FIGURE 2. Wildlands in New England.** The distinctive geographical pattern of Wildlands is characterized by their strong concentration in the northern and western part of the region; a trend of increasing size with latitude; and linear corridors of Wildlands that buffer the Appalachian Trail (AT), which cuts diagonally from northwestern Connecticut to Baxter State Park in Maine, and the Allagash and Upper St. John Rivers in northern and northwestern Maine, respectively.



# Wildland Visions for Northern New England



**Table 1. Northern Forest Lands Study Area**



**Figure 1. Land Ownership in the Study Area (Thousands of Acres)**

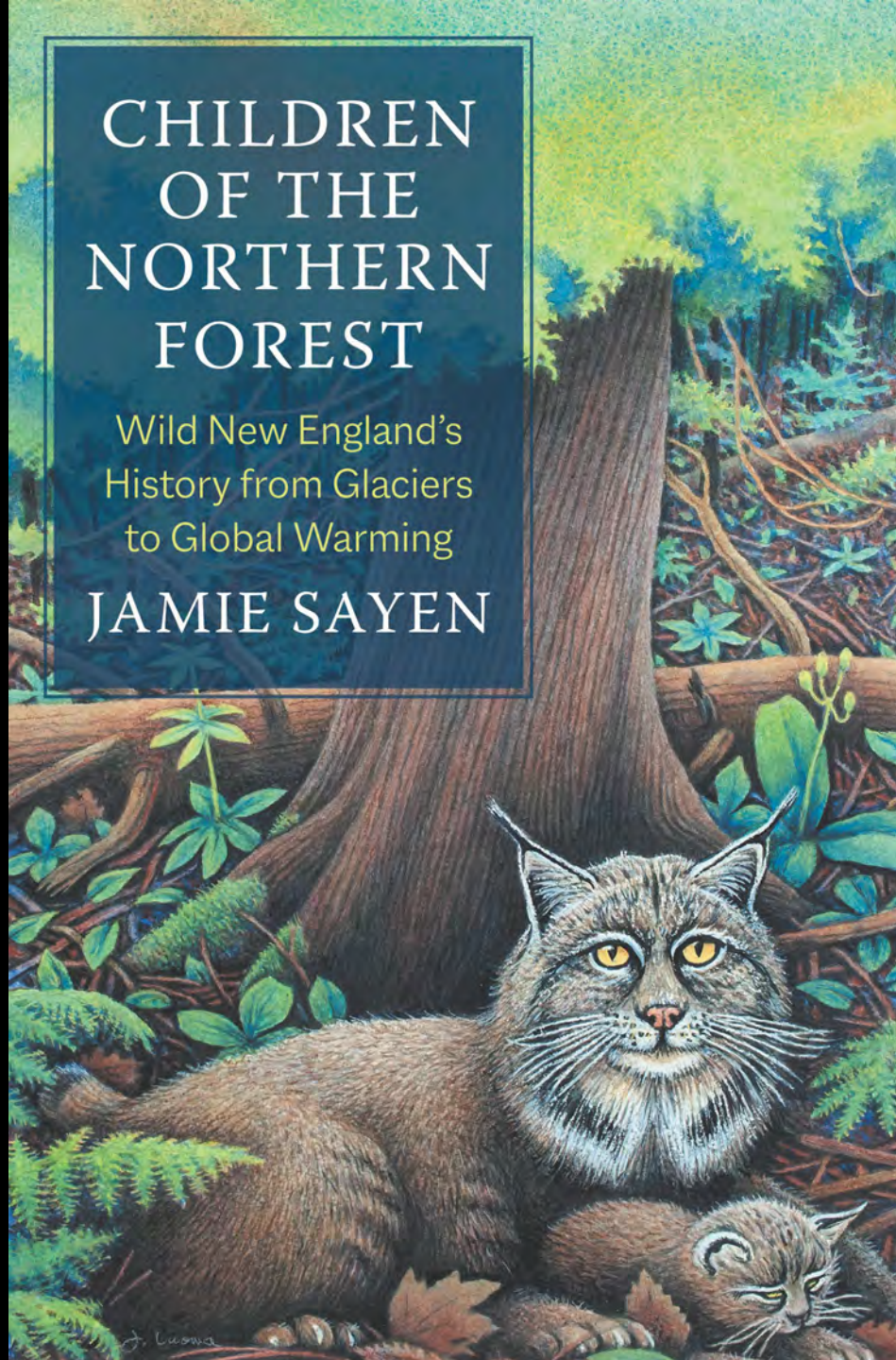
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Data from 1987 and 1988

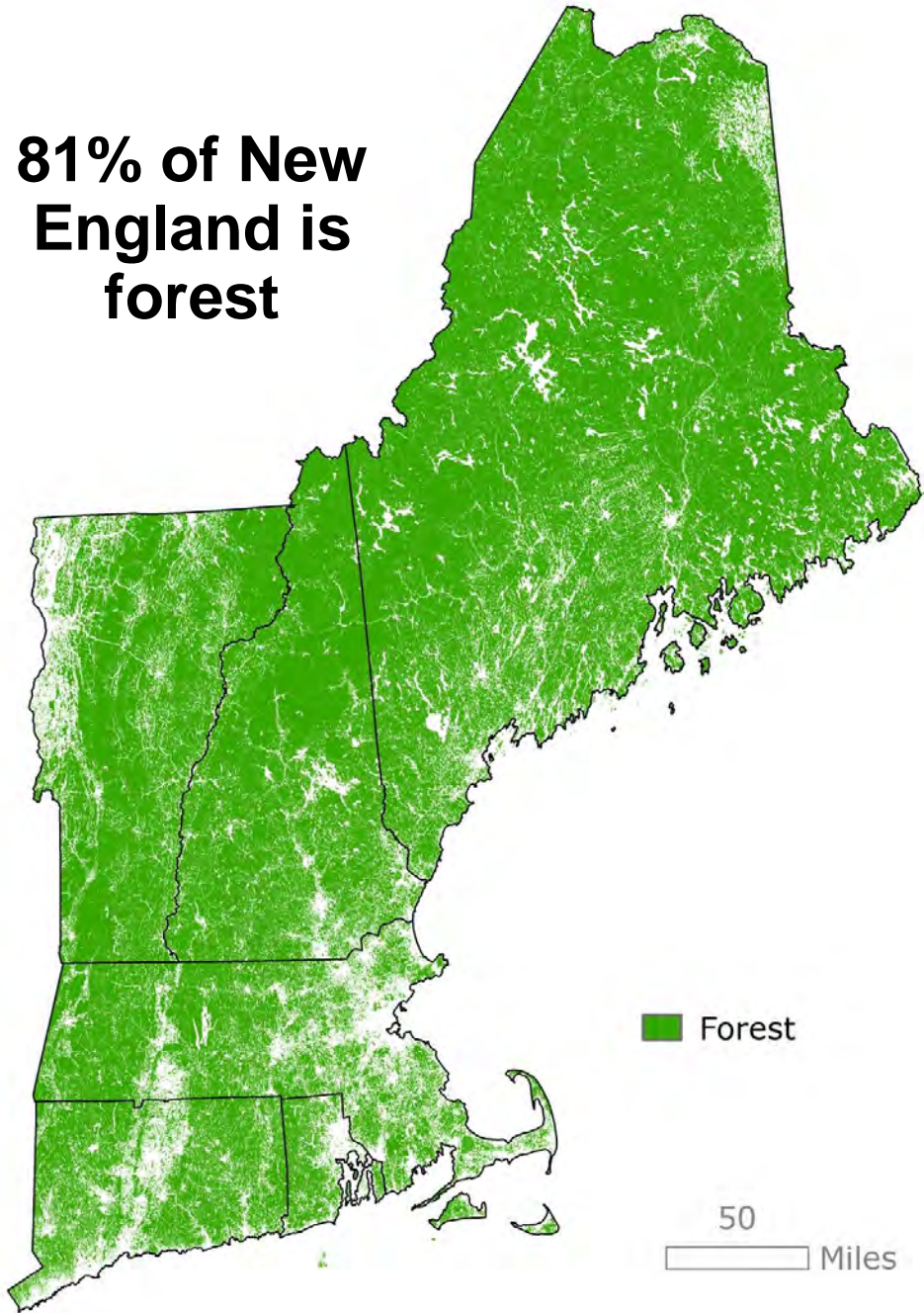
# CHILDREN OF THE NORTHERN FOREST

Wild New England's  
History from Glaciers  
to Global Warming

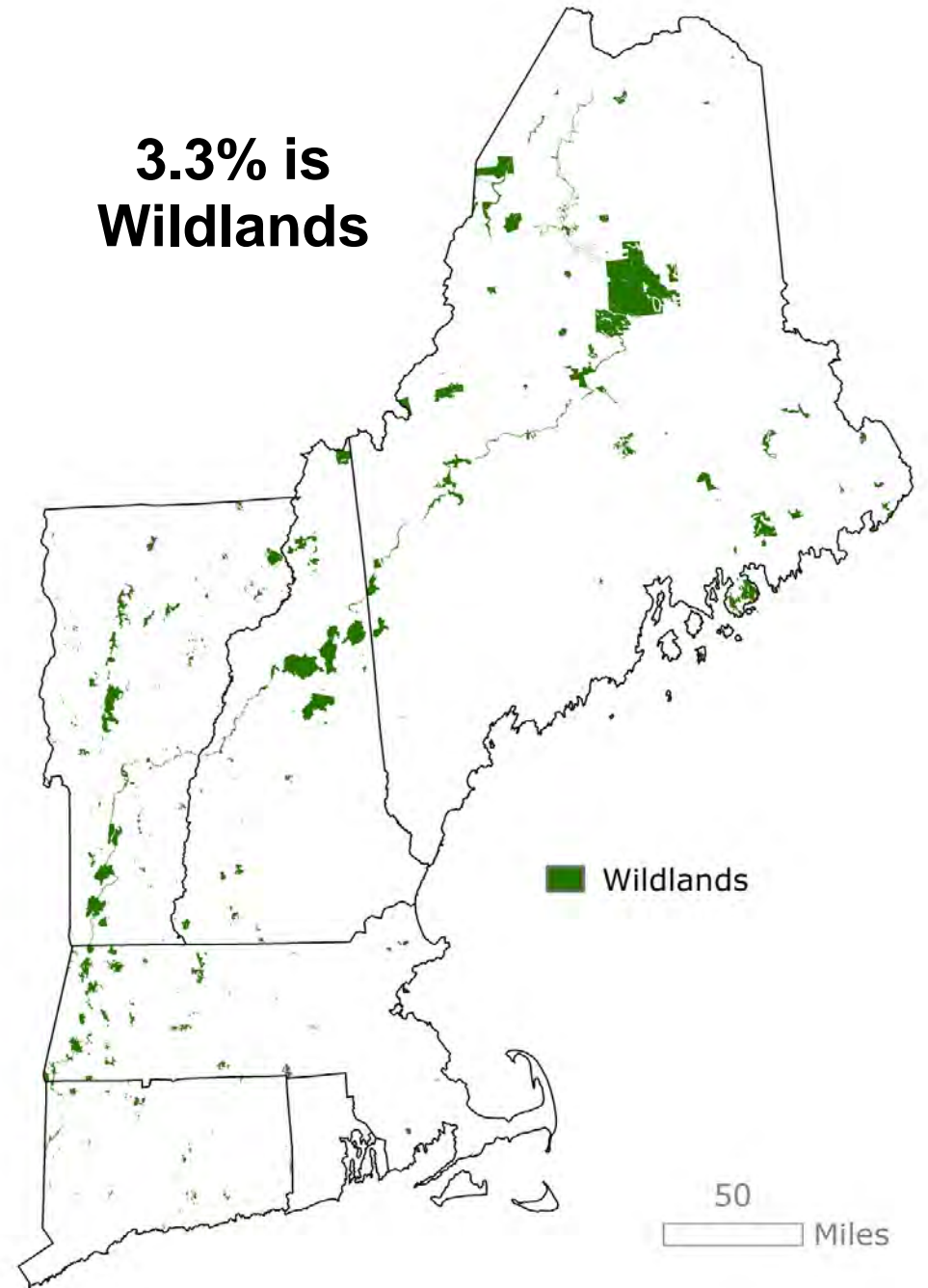
JAMIE SAYEN



**81% of New  
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# Increasing Wildland Conservation

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# Embrace Disturbance & Uncertainty



1920

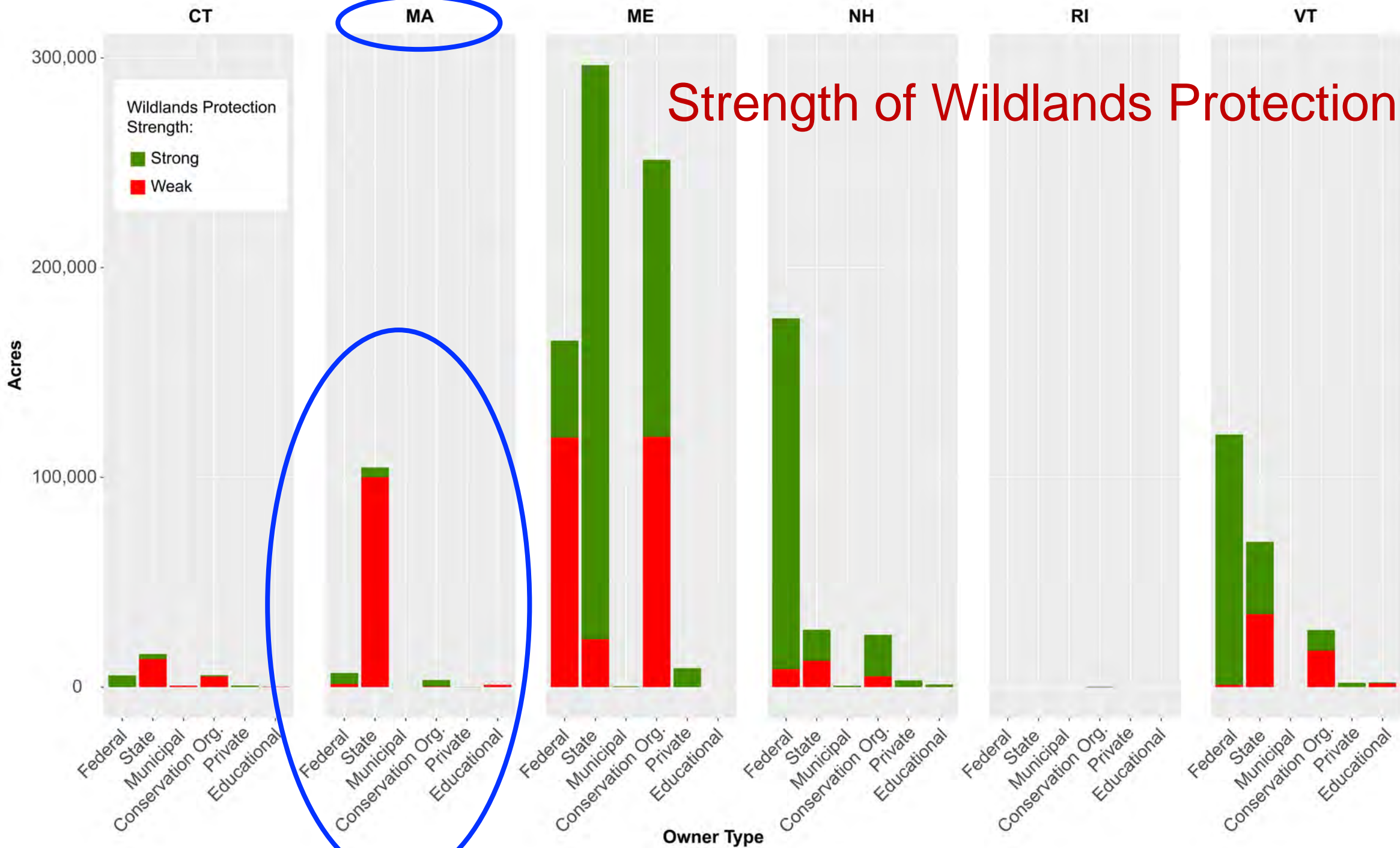


1940



2020

# Strength of Wildlands Protection



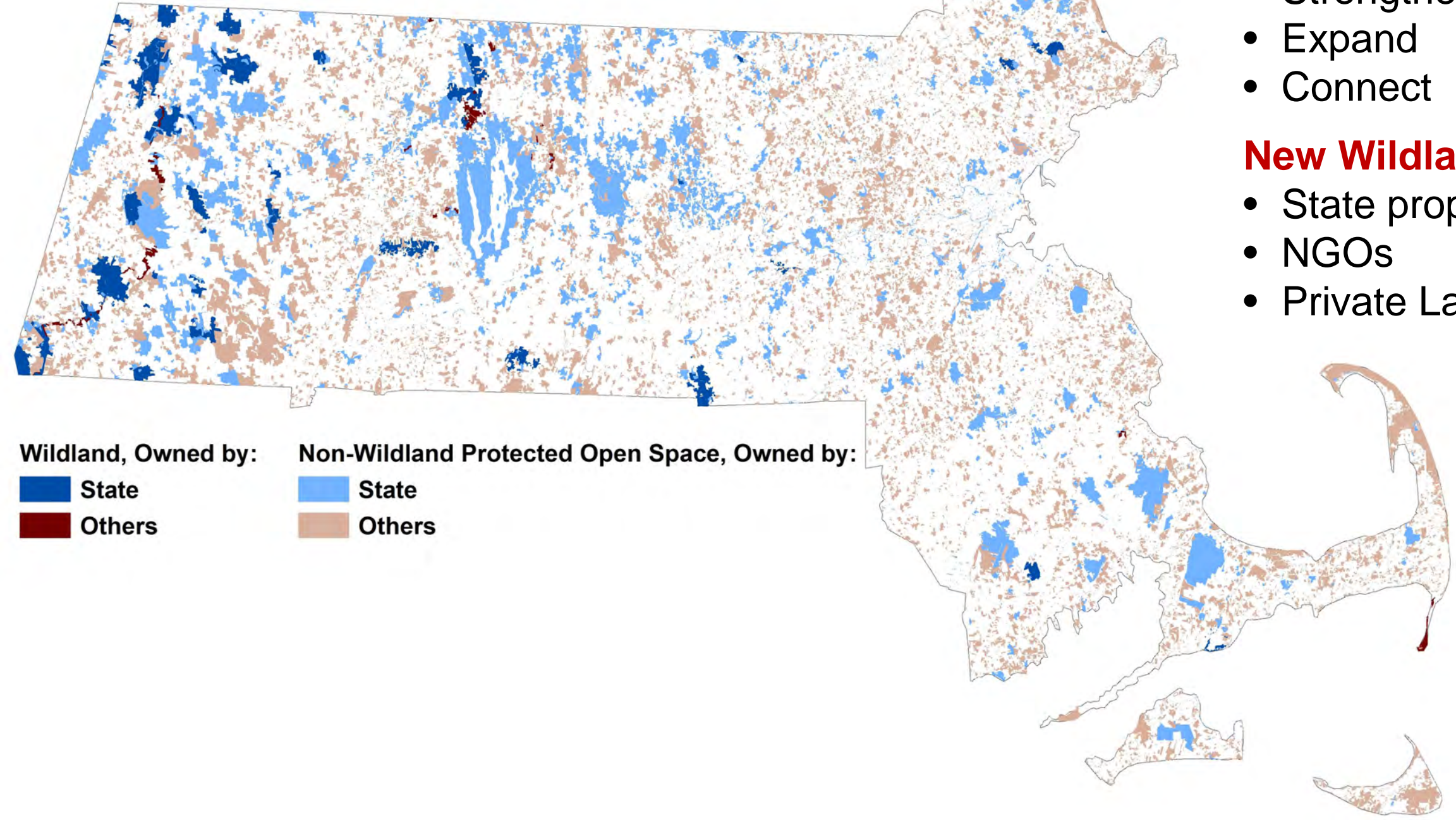
# Massachusetts State and Private Lands

## Existing Wildlands

- Strengthen
- Expand
- Connect

## New Wildlands

- State property
- NGOs
- Private Lands



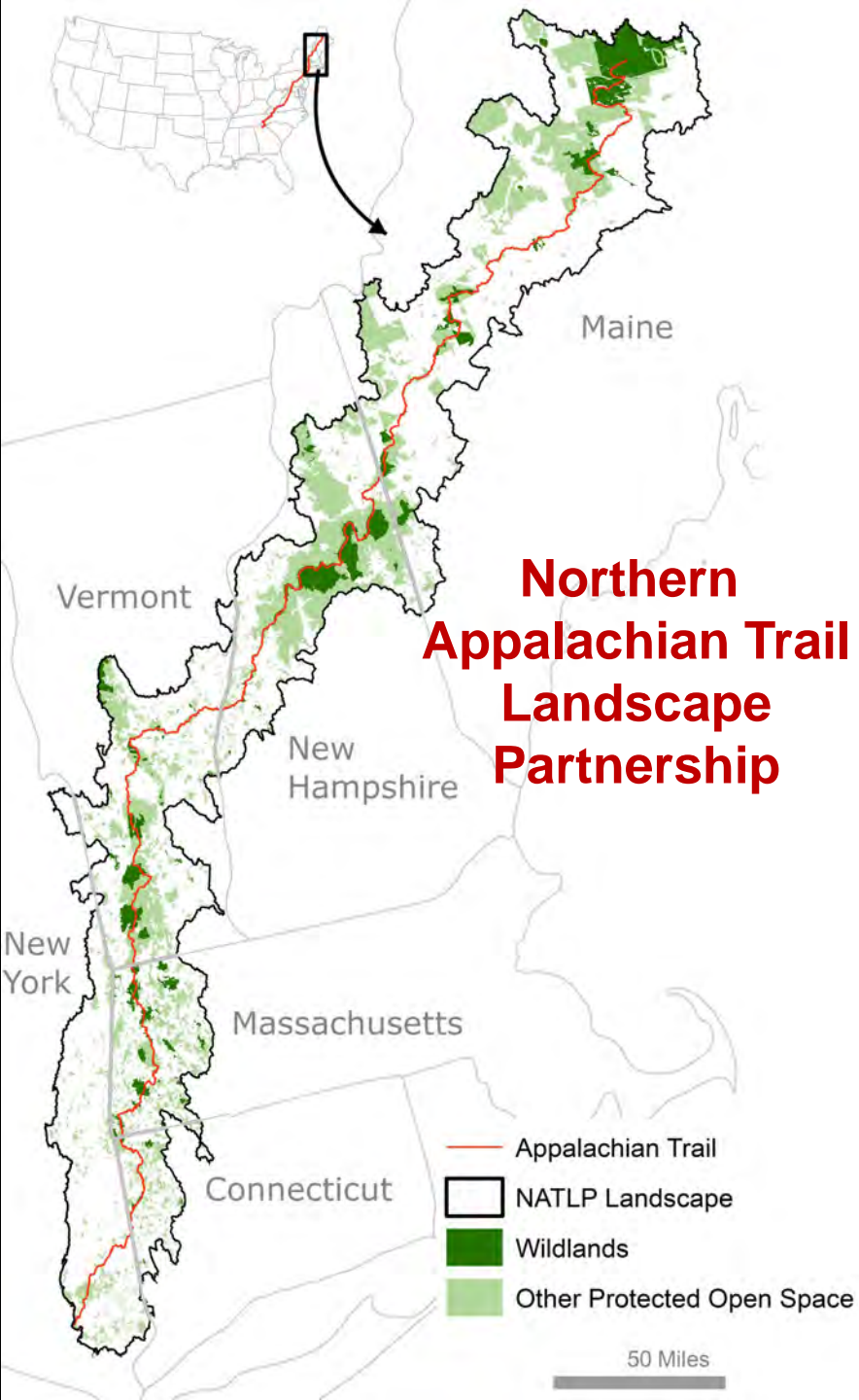
Wildland, Owned by:

- State
- Others

Non-Wildland Protected Open Space, Owned by:

- State
- Others





# The Appalachian Trail

“A Wilderness Way”

-- Benton MacKaye

## Regional Conservation Partnerships within the Appalachian Trail Landscape

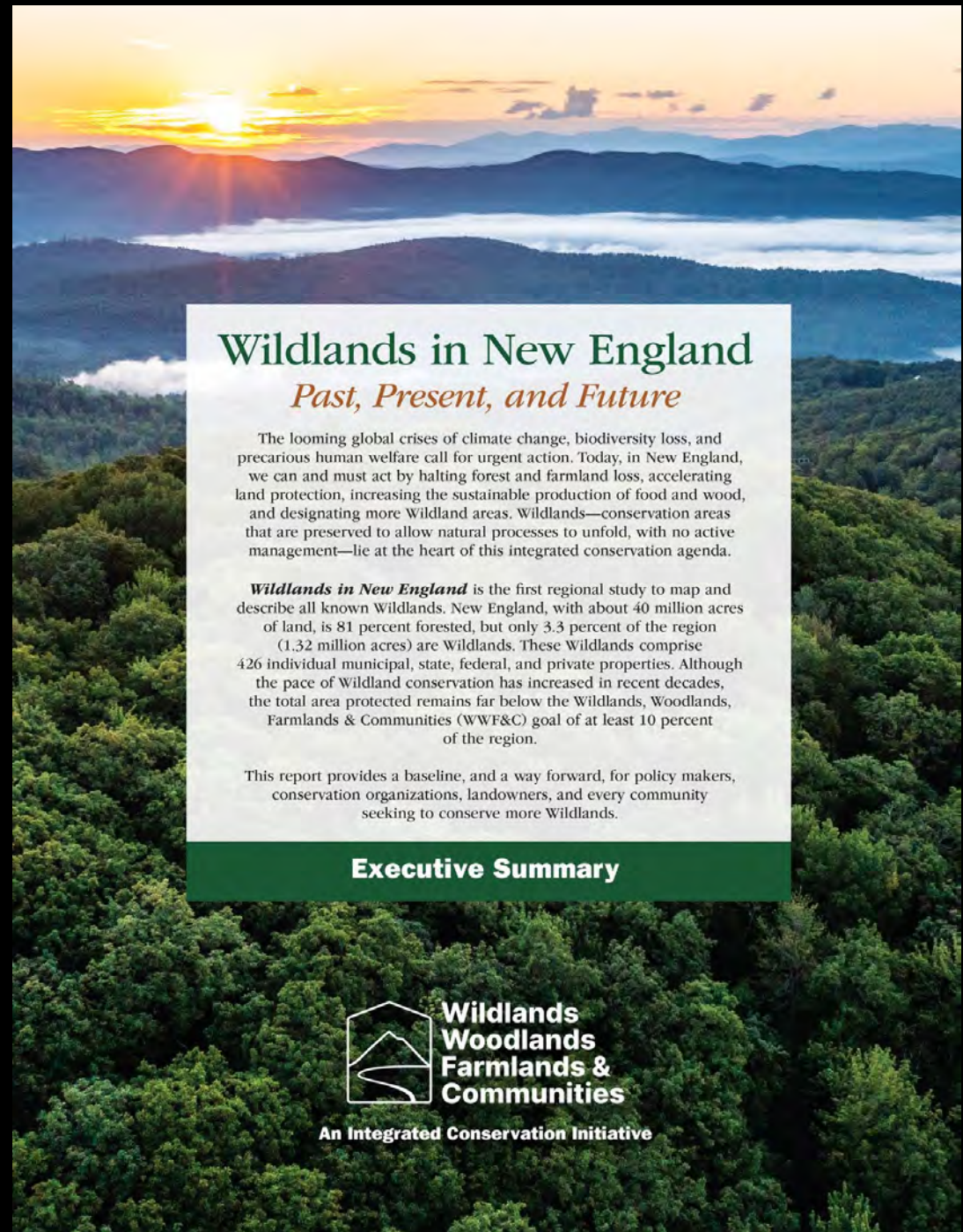


# Report Products

- **Full Report** 112 pages
- **Executive Summary** 12 pages
- **State Summaries** one for each state
- **Figures**, graphs, tables and illustrations

## WWF&C Ongoing Activities

1. **Advance** research, outreach and **policy**
2. **Expand** the New England Protected Open Space database and Interactive Wildlands Webmap
3. **Evaluate** the goal for Wildlands to 20 percent or more
4. **Integrate** Wildland conservation, local food and resource production, and community development



### Wildlands in New England

#### *Past, Present, and Future*

The looming global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and precarious human welfare call for urgent action. Today, in New England, we can and must act by halting forest and farmland loss, accelerating land protection, increasing the sustainable production of food and wood, and designating more Wildland areas. Wildlands—conservation areas that are preserved to allow natural processes to unfold, with no active management—lie at the heart of this integrated conservation agenda.

*Wildlands in New England* is the first regional study to map and describe all known Wildlands. New England, with about 40 million acres of land, is 81 percent forested, but only 3.3 percent of the region (1.32 million acres) are Wildlands. These Wildlands comprise 426 individual municipal, state, federal, and private properties. Although the pace of Wildland conservation has increased in recent decades, the total area protected remains far below the Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C) goal of at least 10 percent of the region.

This report provides a baseline, and a way forward, for policy makers, conservation organizations, landowners, and every community seeking to conserve more Wildlands.

#### Executive Summary



**Wildlands  
Woodlands  
Farmlands &  
Communities**

An Integrated Conservation Initiative

Discussion

# From the Ground Up

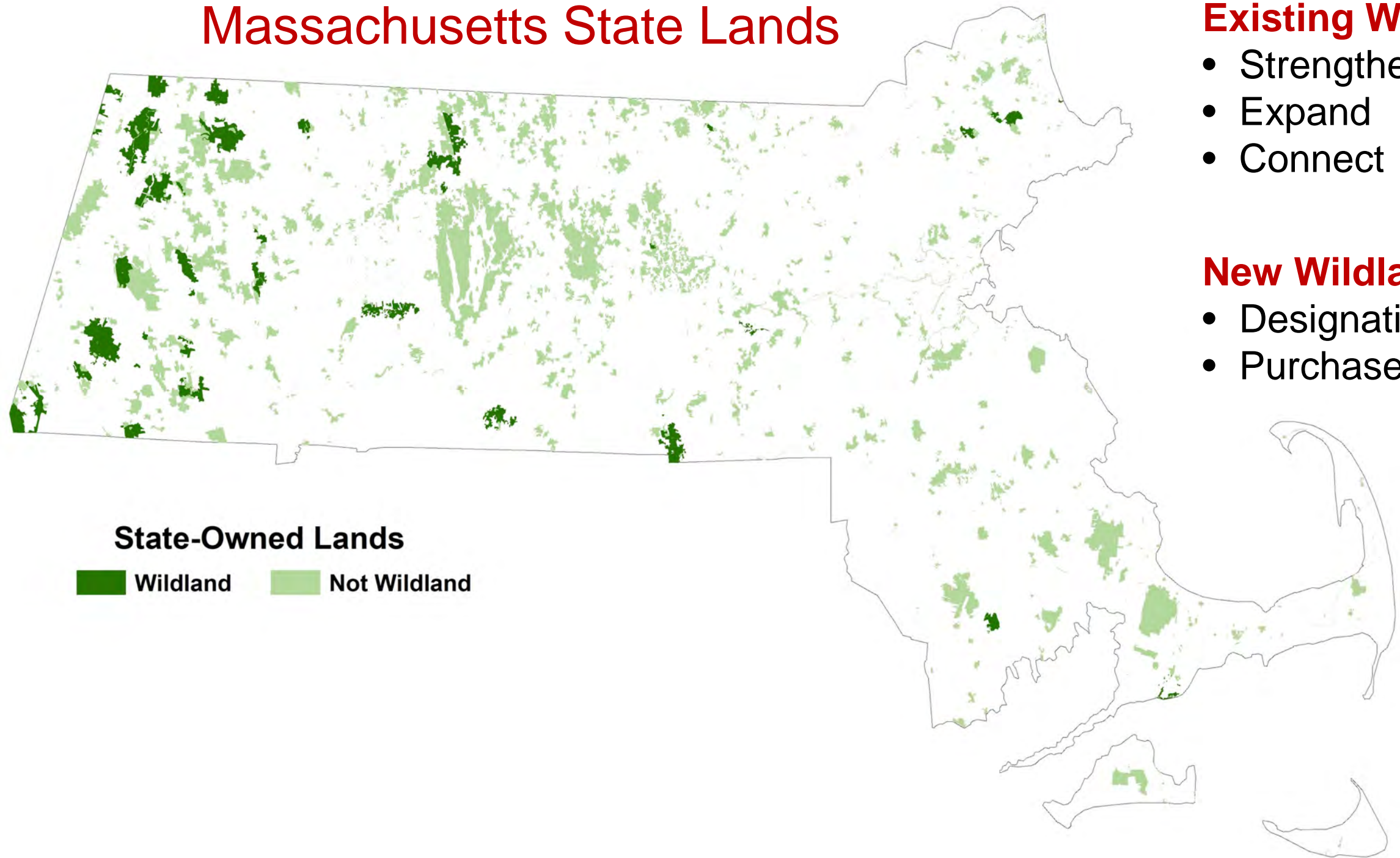
Conversation

*Conversations about conservation, climate, and communities in New England.*





# Massachusetts State Lands



## Existing Wildlands

- Strengthen
- Expand
- Connect

## New Wildlands

- Designations
- Purchase

### State-Owned Lands

-  Wildland
-  Not Wildland