

# Connect the Connecticut

*A shared vision for conserving the Connecticut River watershed for future generations*

## Common resources, shared vision

Encompassing New England's largest river system, the Connecticut River watershed provides important habitat for a diversity of fish, wildlife and plants — from iconic species like bald eagle and black bear to threatened and endangered species like the shortnose sturgeon, piping plover, and dwarf wedgemussel. The watershed is also a source of clean water, recreation, food, jobs, and more, for the millions of people living in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

## The best places to start

The most effective long-term strategy for sustaining natural resources across a large landscape like the Connecticut River watershed is to keep important parts of it intact and connected. *Connect the Connecticut* is a collaborative effort to identify the best places to start: the areas within the watershed that partners agree are priorities for conservation to ensure that important species, habitats, and

natural processes will be sustained into the future — even in the face of climate and land use change.

## Tools for diverse partners

Using the best available science and information from the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, including an innovative modeling approach developed by the Designing Sustainable Landscapes Project at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a team of more than 30 partners from state and federal agencies and private organizations spent more than a year creating a conservation “design” for the watershed. Outlining a network of core areas, or intact, connected, and resilient places within the watershed, the design serves as a roadmap for conservation. It includes a variety of datasets and tools people from all sectors can use voluntarily to make more informed decisions about managing lands and waters. These natural areas provide habitat for wildlife and support local economies and the overall health and well-being of communities.

## Protecting fish, wildlife, and natural systems

*Connect the Connecticut* is a unified vision that considers the value of fish and wildlife species and the natural systems they inhabit. High quality habitat for a set of 15 fish and wildlife species —including American woodcock, black bear, and Eastern brook trout — is a key component of the network of core areas. The partnership identified these species to represent others that rely on similar habitats within the major types of natural systems in the watershed — from spruce-fir forests to small streams to freshwater marshes. By ensuring that high quality habitat for these representative species is included, the design addresses the needs of a range of fish and wildlife. Other key components of the core areas include high quality, resilient locations of both rare and common ecosystem types throughout the watershed, from Long Island Sound to the peaks of the White Mountains.



Connecticut River Watershed Council

Connecticut River



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Wood thrush

**Meaningful, measurable results**

*Connect the Connecticut* is intended to help resource managers, planners, and others prioritize effective conservation actions and adjust course as needed to achieve meaningful and measurable conservation results. The tools and information complement local knowledge by offering broader state, regional, and national context to help sustain important natural resources across large regions in an era of accelerated change.

**Informing Conservation Planning and Actions**

The design can be used by a variety of stakeholders to inform community planning and conservation actions. Here are a few examples of how it can be applied at different scales:

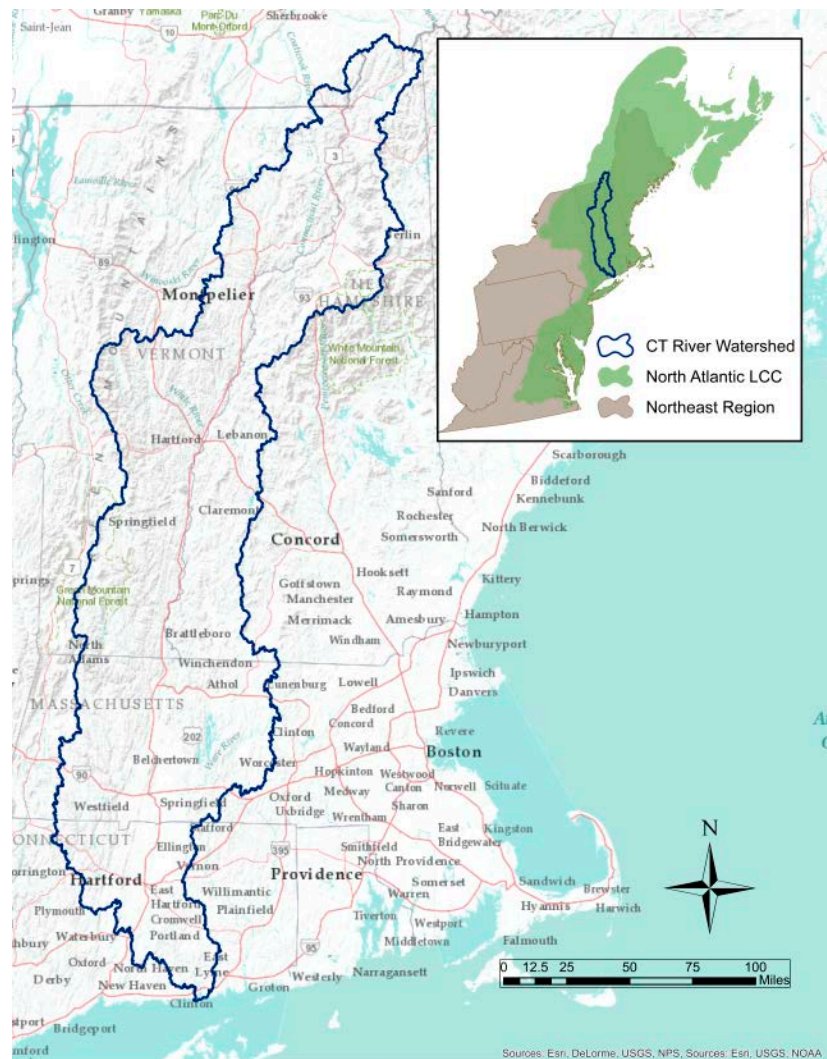
*Local* – Land trusts can use the design to help local landowners understand what makes a particular parcel valuable ecologically, and then choose what type of stewardship or protection best fits their vision for their lands.

*State* – State wildlife agencies can use the design to efficiently and effectively identify areas in the watershed that should be further studied to confirm their conservation potential for species and habitat types of interest.

*Federal* – The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife refuge can use the design to prioritize within or among the Conservation Focus Areas identified as part of the ongoing planning process for that refuge.

**For more information**

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USFWS

Black bear

Partners are now testing the design and exploring potential applications with their agencies and organizations. Information and lessons learned from the landscape conservation design process will be used to refine the products over time, and can be applied in other geographies throughout the Northeast.

**About the North Atlantic LCC**

The North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is an applied science and management partnership that builds upon a long history of conservation in the region to unite stakeholders around common goals for sustaining natural and cultural resources, and to develop tools and strategies to achieve those goals in the face of threats and uncertainty. For more information, visit [www.northatlanticlcc.org](http://www.northatlanticlcc.org)

