

Spring 2016 Newsletter



Highstead

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

Enhancing our efforts

People working together



To the Members and Friends of Highstead



Ten years ago Highstead committed to advancing the Wildlands and Woodlands vision for New England, a region-wide effort embracing forests, farms, and healthy livable spaces for rural and urban communities. This year we are assessing what has been accomplished, what we have learned, and what we all must do to see this vision realized.

Highstead itself has grown and accomplished much: an effective internship program that mentors undergraduates as they advance land protection, conservation, and science while becoming effective problem solvers; a network of regional conservation partnerships that has grown from a half dozen to 44 groups that cover 60 percent of New England and connect individual landowners and communities in regional initiatives; collaboration with neighbors and partners

to conserve lands in Redding, through Fairfield County, and into New York; and, of course, stewardship and research on our own landscape to maintain its inspirational qualities.

Our Senior Fellows complement these efforts superbly. Jim Levitt is leading ALPINE – Academics for Land Protection in New England – which taps the collective energy of students, faculty, administrations, and alumni at a growing number of institutions to advance the protection and sustainable use of lands from inner cities to the North Woods. Kathy Lambert's Future Scenarios project is modeling the consequences of different futures for New England and sharing these with communities, land managers, conservation organizations, and local, state, and federal policy makers. Brian Donahue's Sustainable Working Landscape program is bringing Highstead together with other conservation landowners to advance, evaluate, and share examples of sound forest, farm, and openland management.

Landowners and collaborators across the region have contributed even more. In the past 25 years New England has averaged two land conservation projects a day and 180,000 acres conserved annually. In the past decade the ten largest projects totaled more than 2.4 million acres, accounting for one-quarter of New England's conservation land. More than 40 percent of permanently protected land is now privately owned and protected through conservation easements. Efforts like the Community Forest initiative of the Northern Forest Center are galvanizing towns to invest in conservation as cost-effective means of ensuring the protection of clean water, critical recreational, tourism and production lands, and the special qualities of their communities.

Challenges abound but the vision to maintain a healthy, productive, and resilient region in the face of change is possible for New England. But, success in this venture will require us all: individuals, families, communities,

professionals, academics, and volunteers from cities to our most rural landscapes. Engaging that collective energy for the good of the land is our ongoing endeavor.



David Foster is Director of the Harvard Forest at Harvard University and President of the Board of Highstead Foundation.

Highstead + Wildlands & Woodlands

Highstead's work with Wildlands and Woodlands began a decade ago and over time, the two have enhanced and shaped one another.

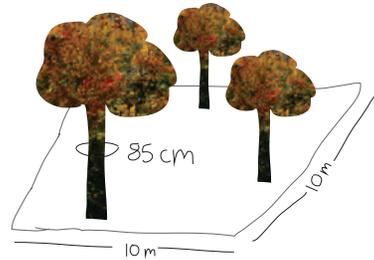
This co-evolution spurred many fruitful activities, leading to advances and success that would not have been possible otherwise. As we venture along this 50-year journey, it is our goal to support innovation and collaboration. We will continue empowering individuals and groups across the region to work together to protect the natural landscapes of New England.



Cultivating The Next Generation Of Conservationists

Highstead and Wildlands and Woodlands partners are connecting with the next generation, inspiring children and young adults to get involved in conservation.

With programs ranging from K-12 to the university level, our message is reaching the people who will grow up to protect our forests, farms, and natural spaces for generations to come.



To track forest changes, the students set up 10-meter by 10-meter plots, record tree measurements, and compare differences over time.

Teaching About Trees

In 2016 the Harvard Forest Schoolyard Ecology program, in collaboration with Highstead, will expand its reach to elementary and high school children in southwestern Connecticut. In the 2014-2015 academic year more than 3,200 urban and rural students participated in forest monitoring projects. The associated Teach the Teachers program has trained more than 250 teachers in various ecological studies. Experience with activities such as forest monitoring has allowed the teachers to incorporate conservation into their individual classrooms.



Learn more about the Schoolyard Ecology program at harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/schoolyard-liter-program

Connecting Colleges And Conservation

Guided by Jim Levitt, Highstead Senior Fellow, ALPINE (Academics for Land Protection in New England) is a newly formed network that works to connect academic and conservation communities. Many colleges and universities have students, faculty, and alumni interested in land protection. However, the infrastructure to connect them with the conservation community has not been well developed. By building that connection, ALPINE aims to add vital capacity to the conservation community. This effort will also offer valuable experiences for people associated with colleges and universities. ALPINE plans to expand its efforts in 2016 to strengthen the academic-conservation connection and drive on-the-ground land protection.

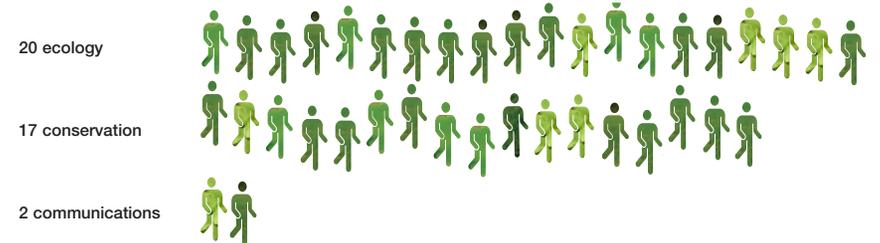


Learn more about ALPINE at wildlandsandwoodlands.org/ALPINE

Internships Inspiring Conservation Careers

Over the past 10 years Highstead's internship program has helped expand our initiatives and activities while giving young adults valuable experience in the field. Interns spend 12 weeks at Highstead focused on ecology, conservation, or communications. Many have gone on to careers that advance Highstead's goals and the W&W vision.

To date we have hosted the following interns:



Their Current Positions:

8th grade science teacher, research consultant, biology adjunct professor, USDA Forest Service research forester, farm education programs assistant, landscape designer, NY State Parks natural resource steward assistant, graduate teacher's assistant, nonprofit media coordinator, adult and family educator, geography adjunct professor, ecology research assistant, sustainable forestry program manager

Continued Education:

master of ecology and environmental science, master of biology pursuing a doctorate in environmental and evolutionary biology, master of natural resource science and management, doctorate of forest resources, master of forest ecology and sustainable agriculture, master of environment and sustainability, master of fish and wildlife biology and management, master of regional planning, master of forest and wildlife ecology

Tools to Advance Conservation



New Publications from Highstead

Solving The Conservation Finance Puzzle

Public spending is an important source of conservation funding in New England.

A new report written by Mary Buchanan, Highstead Conservation Associate, titled "Public Conservation Funding in New England: Recent Trends in Government Spending on Land Protection," looks at the history of public funding streams.

The report analyzes past funding sources for New England conservation and lays the groundwork for identifying funding opportunities for the future.

The data shows that public spending varies greatly across states and time. Inconsistent and unreliable funding presents troubling possibilities for the future of New England conservation. This report will help guide the conservation community as it works to protect existing programs at risk and look for new and stable avenues to support future conservation.

The report will be released in early 2016.

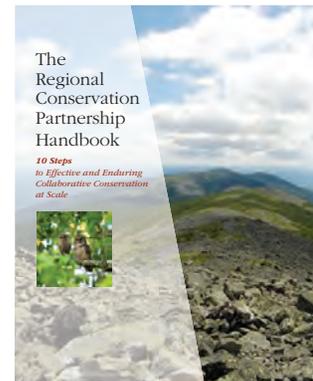


Learning To Succeed Together

Regional conservation partnerships (RCPs) are playing an increasingly important role in protecting natural resources for future generations.

These groups of organizations work together to achieve conservation at a larger scale and faster pace than they could alone.

The process of forming and growing an RCP can be challenging. To help partnerships navigate all stages of RCP growth, Highstead staff, with input from the RCP Network, has produced The Regional Conservation Partnership Handbook. The step-by-step guide brings together insight from established RCPs and serves as a resource for newly forming partnerships. The manual outlines how to build strong organizations that successfully conserve land.



Learn more and download a copy of *The RCP Handbook* at wildlandsandwoodlands.org/rcpnetwork

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H2H Becomes A Regional Conservation Partnership



In late 2015, Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) Conservation Initiative partners announced their intentions to become a regional conservation partnership (RCP).

H2H was established as a grant-funded initiative through a two-year US Forest Service grant. It will now operate as an informal network of people and organizations working to advance conservation and stewardship in Connecticut and New York.

As an RCP, H2H will continue to work with individual landowners to encourage conservation and stewardship activities. Programs and events held across Connecticut and New York in 2015 helped H2H identify landowners' areas of interest. That insight will now be used to develop additional programs and workshops tailored to specific conservation and stewardship issues.

Some areas of landowner interest identified in the 2015 events include lake water quality and edge buffers, habitat connectivity, pollinator habitat, and riparian protection and restoration.

H2H will launch a website in spring 2016 featuring news, landowner resources, maps, partner information, and more.