

To inspire curiosity and build knowledge

Highstead

about plants and wooded landscapes
in order to enhance life, preserve nature
and advance sound stewardship practices

Highstead's Conservation Program is dedicated to advancing the Wildlands and Woodlands vision, reversing the current trend of forest loss and conserving 70% of New England as forest.

Regional Conservation

The Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative

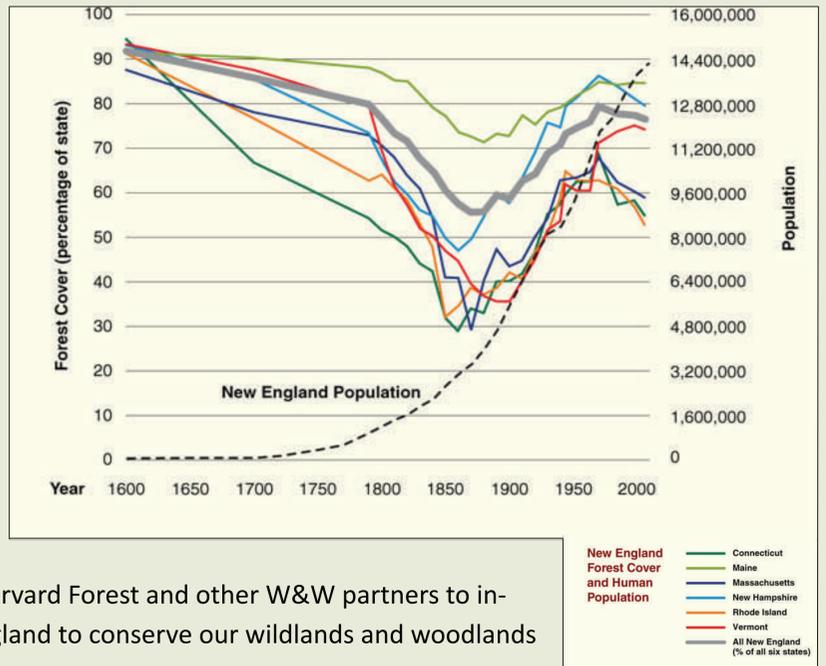
New England is at a historic crossroads: our forested landscape experienced a remarkable recovery after massive deforestation 150 years ago, but that trend has peaked, and now every state in the region is experiencing net annual forest loss due to development pressures. In response to this emerging threat, a group of scientists from the Harvard Forest and across the region came together in 2010 to write *Wildlands and Woodlands: A Vision for the New England Landscape*, calling for permanent conservation of 70% of the region's landscape as forest, with about 90% as managed woodlands and 10% as protected wildlands. The W&W vision would allow a doubling of development and also an increase in agricultural lands to support more locally-grown food.

Highstead plays a leadership role in the W&W Initiative, a growing collaborative of groups and individuals across the region working to conserve the forests that clean our air, filter our water, shelter our wildlife, combat climate change, and fuel our economy. Highstead works with the Harvard Forest and other W&W partners to inform and inspire people across New England to conserve our wildlands and woodlands while we still have this extraordinary chance.

1880's - Agriculture dominated



1990's - Forest dominated

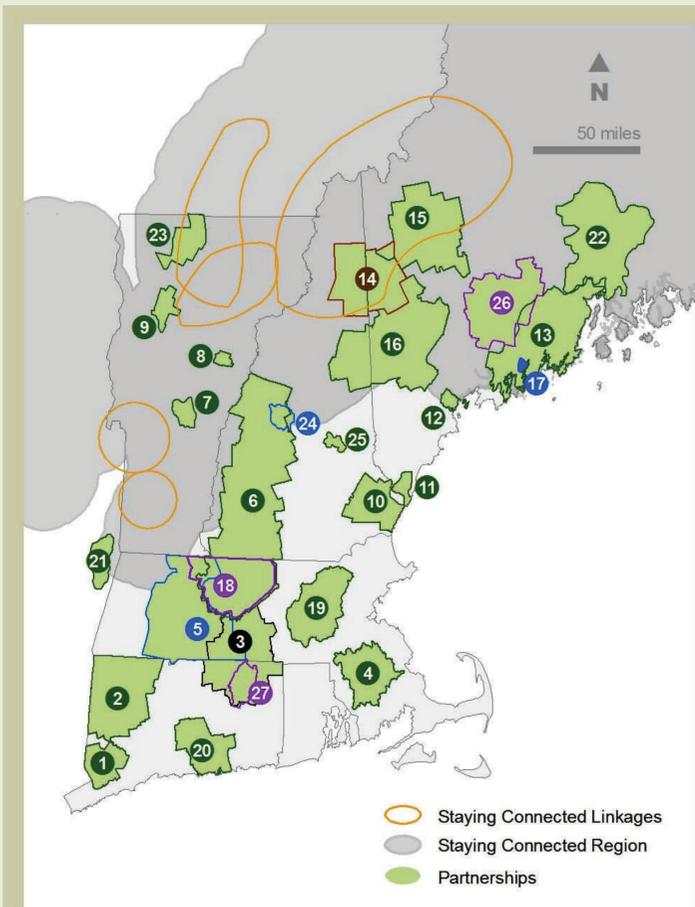


Land Protection: Regional Conservation Partnerships

Across New England, conservation groups, public entities, and communities are banding together to achieve conservation at a larger scale. These regional conservation partnerships (RCPs) work together to implement a shared conservation vision. The 30 RCPs in New England play an increasingly important role in achieving large-scale conservation that is also firmly woven into the needs and interests of the local communities.

Since 2008, Highstead has convened these groups on a regular basis for peer exchange and technical training. Highstead has analyzed each of these efforts in order to provide detailed guidance to emerging RCPs on what collaborative elements lead to success.

Highstead also plays a leadership role in an RCP close to home: the Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP). Progress includes creating a regional conservation map that enables towns to make more informed decisions about land purchases and conservation.



Conservation Policy and Finance

Since 2011, Highstead has convened conservation groups across the region in the *New England Forest Policy Working Group* to highlight the critical importance of New England's forests and advocate for increased federal funding and improved policies to conserve them.



The group's annual publication, *A Policy Agenda for Conserving New England Forests*, makes a compelling case that our region's forests provide valuable and irreplaceable benefits—from ecosystem services including clean air and water to economic benefits including tourism and the wood products industry.

In 2012, 85 organizations endorsed the forest agenda, and this Influential effort continues to build momentum in Congress and beyond for redoubling our forest conservation efforts.

Highstead also works with policy makers to advance financial incentives to make conservation more affordable and attractive for the many small private landowners that characterize New England and that will be key to the long term success of W&W.



In 2011-12, Highstead Senior Fellow Jim Levitt (third from right) served as staff on the Massachusetts Commission on Financing Forest Conservation, which recommended a series of innovative conservation finance strategies to increase the pace and scale of land conservation.