

# **Overview**

#### Connecticut's Forests: Where we are today:

**Forest Size:** 1.76 million acres (55% of land base); private landowners own 73% of forests

**Current Forest Carbon Storage:** 209 million tons, 91 million tons aboveground

**Co-Benefits:** Clean water, clean air, shading and cooling, recreation, healthier people, equitable access to the benefits of forests, and jobs and economic opportunity.

#### Five Pathways for Maximizing Forests' Potential

The 2022 paper, *New England's Climate Imperative: Our Forests as a Natural Climate Solution,* lays out a way forward for Connecticut and all New England states to reduce forest loss, increase the forests' contribution to mitigating climate change, and help achieve state climate goals through five complementary pathways. These pathways have been developed to be supportive of existing state climate-related focal areas and actions by providing information on the potential climate mitigation and co-benefits of different forest-related strategies. The five pathways are:

- Avoided Deforestation Minimize the loss of forest to development
- Wildland Reserves Establish additional wildland reserves that are left to grow old and accumulate more carbon
- Improved Forest Management (IFM) Manage forests more effectively to yield increased carbon storage and sequestration
- Mass Timber Construction Store more carbon by constructing more buildings with wood products
- Urban and Suburban Forests Increase tree cover and patches of forest in urban and suburban areas

Every state in New England is addressing the climate challenge in ways that align with its current forest cover and its unique opportunities and challenges. Connecticut can realize significant additional climate benefits by exploring these five pathways. And if the state works with its New England neighbors on a coordinated approach, the region can serve as a global example of forests' potential as a natural climate solution.

#### **Connecticut Climate Action & Emissions Reductions Goals: A Summary**

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals & Legislation	State-level Climate Advisory Bodies	State Focal Areas Relevant to Forests
80% below 2001 levels by 2050 – Act Concerning Connecticut Global Warming Solutions (2008) 45% below 2001 levels by 2030 – 2018 interim benchmark	Connecticut has an active policy process around climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. The Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) has been working since 2015 to develop strategies for and address mitigation, adaptation and resilience of CT's forests in the face of climate change.	<ul> <li>From GC3 Phase I Report (January 2021):</li> <li>Statewide no-net-loss of forest policy</li> <li>Support for keeping forests as forests</li> <li>Increased carbon sequestration and storage through improved forestry practices</li> <li>Protect vulnerable communities, protect against heat, and improve health outcomes through urban forestry</li> </ul>

## **Potential Pathway Impacts**

Together, the five pathways in Connecticut could increase the amount of atmospheric carbon absorbed by Connecticut's forests by 2.6%. And as Connecticut implements its ambitious emissions reduction goals, the state's forests become even



The accumulated carbon benefits of each pathway by 2050, shown at low, middle, and high levels of adoption.

more valuable, with the potential of absorbing around 38% of Connecticut's projected emissions by 2050 if proposed emissions reductions scenarios are implemented.



Additional CO2e sequestered by 2050 above the business-as-usual (BAU) scenario in Connecticut and the New England region as a whole. Estimates shown are associated with the adoption of each pathway at its middle tier.



The adoption of each pathway (shown here at their average annual contribution when adopted at their middle tier) lowers Connecticut's net emissions by sequestering more carbon in the forests. Please note, to show the detail associated with each pathway, the vertical axis has been scaled to start at 40 million tons C02e.

### About this Brief

Highstead

The information in this document is drawn from the 2022 paper, *New England's Climate Imperative: Our Forests as a Natural Climate Solution*, which lays out, in detail, five pathways that can help Connecticut, and New England as a whole, increase the climate benefits of forests. The paper was developed by Highstead, a regional conservation non-profit based in Redding, Connecticut. The full report can be found at highstead.net.