

Overview

New England's Forests: Where we are today:

Forest Size: 32 million acres (75% of land base)

Current Forest Carbon Storage: 3.2 billion tons,

1.3 billion tons aboveground

Co-Benefits: In addition to natural climate benefits, New England's forests provide 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 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.

New England states have enacted emissions reductions goals and many have active climate change activity ongoing (Table 1). New England states also participate in other Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reductions initiatives, regionally, nationally, and globally. These initiatives include the Under2MOU (global); the US Climate Alliance (national); the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (regional); and the Transportation and Climate Initiative (regional).

Table 1: New England State-level Climate Action

State	Emissions Reductions/Climate Change Goals	Recent Climate Change Activity	Most Recent Action Report
СТ	45 and 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2030 and 2050, respectively. (Statutory)	GC3 – Governor's Commission on Climate Change	2021 GC3 Phase 1 Report: Near-Term Actions
ME	45% GHG reduction in gross emissions by 2030 and 80% by 2050 (from 1990 levels). (Statutory)	MCC – Maine Climate Council	2021 Maine Won't Wait, A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action
MA	45% GHG reduction in gross emissions by 2030; net zero by 2050; up to 15% allowed by offset sequestration (previously 80% reduction by 2050). (Statutory)	Global Warming Solutions Act Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)	2020 MA 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap
NH	80% by 2050 from 1990 level. (Aspirational)	NH Emission Commission	Final Report of the 2020 New Hampshire Ad Hoc Emissions Commission
RI	80% below 1990 levels by 2050. (Statutory)	EC3 – Executive Climate Change Council	2016 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan
VT	26% below 2005 levels by 2025, 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. (Statutory)	Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group Vermont Climate Council	2020 Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group Final Report 2021 Vermont Climate Action Plan

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. As a region, the sum of potential state actions could lead New England to realize significant additional climate benefits through these five pathways. And if New England states work with their New England neighbors on a coordinated approach, the region can serve as a global example of forests' potential as a natural climate solution.

Together, the five pathways in New England could increase the amount of atmospheric carbon absorbed by New England's forests by 6.4%. And as New England implements its ambitious emissions reduction goals, the region's forests become even more valuable, with the potential of absorbing almost 100% of New England's projected emissions by 2050 if proposed emissions reductions scenarios are implemented.





Additional Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e) sequestered by 2050 above the business-as-usual (BAU) scenario in New England. 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 New England'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 100 million U.S. tons C02e.

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About this Brief

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 New England states 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.