

**NORTH ATLANTIC LANDSCAPE  
CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE GRANT  
2013 FINAL REPORT**

**Grant Program, Number and Title:** Grant 2012-04 “WHITE MOUNTAINS TO MOOSEHEAD LAKE INITIATIVE—PARCEL LEVEL PLANNING, PROGRESS TRACKING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE RESILIENT LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

**Organization:** The Trust for Public Land

**Project Leader:**

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**Introduction/Background:**

The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake corridor covers 2.7 million acres from northern New Hampshire into western Maine. The region is dominated by long ridgelines and high peaks, including ten out of Maine's fourteen mountains over 4,000 feet in elevation. The geography includes portions of the Androscoggin River watershed and the Kennebec River watershed, including the highest elevation Atlantic salmon habitat in the Kennebec drainage. It also contains a substantial concentration of major lakes, including Lake Umbagog and the Rangeley Lakes. The region hosts habitat for climate-sensitive species, such as Bicknell's thrush and eastern brook trout. The corridor contains a wide diversity of public land ownerships, including federal ownerships through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Department of Defense. It also includes tribal lands, myriad state lands, community owned lands, and private land under conservation easement. This landscape is of unique interest for climate resilience due to its role in mega regional connectivity, its regionally unique geology, such as ultramafic settings, its great diversity of elevation, slope, and aspect, and its well-watered hydrology.

**Abstract:**

The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Initiative involves parcel level planning, progress tracking, and stakeholder engagement to advance resilient landscape conservation. It is the first spatially explicit conservation plan to cover this entire corridor. In furtherance of this effort, The Trust for Public Land coordinates a coalition of more than twenty stakeholder organizations working collaboratively to conserve, restore, and appropriately manage this landscape.

Parcel level planning enables The Trust for Public Land and partners to prioritize tracts for conservation and other activities (e.g., development of ecological reserves on existing conservation land) based on their significance for climate resilience. A range of data has been used, including data funded with assistance from the NALCC. The online progress tracking tool developed through this initiative (hosted on Databasin) allows The Trust for Public Land and partners to assess how each potential and completed project addresses priority metrics and the data associated with them.

The overarching objective of the initiative is to create a science-based (GIS) framework for future conservation in the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake study area. This includes developing a parcel level analysis to prioritize tracts for conservation and other activities (e.g., development of ecological reserves on existing conservation land) based on their significance for climate resilience (among other key values).

## Methods:

The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake planning work was driven through a balance of complementary techniques—primarily data collection and analysis complemented by an expert panel. At the planning stage, TPL established a Technical Advisory Team (TAT) and a broader Advisory Group to develop this analysis. The work of these stakeholder groups complemented the planning capacity of The Trust for Public Land's Conservation Vision staff. The TAT helped to identify appropriate data sets and ground-truth GIS data with local knowledge. In addition, we worked with technical experts on different aspects of the plan, such as fisheries, to provide direct input beyond just data. Specifically, our methods for achieving the project objective include:

- (1) Identify the appropriate GIS data sets.
- (2) Incorporate expert local knowledge and stakeholder input.
- (3) Analyze priorities for resilience at the parcel level.
- (4) Create an online portal (DataBasin) and tracking tool (Measures of Progress Site). This includes coordinating with LCC staff to assure that all relevant NALCC science products are utilized and integrated appropriately.
- (5) Hold meetings for stakeholders, private landowners, and others who can play a role in utilizing this information (from Step #4) for the development of projects, forest plans, and other relevant activities.
- (6) Present about this project at conferences and workshops.

This balance of data-driven analysis complemented by expert evaluation was applied to new coarse filter and fine filter data for the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake focus area. Priority species within this landscape include Canada lynx, American marten, Bicknell's thrush, eastern brook trout, and Atlantic salmon, and our efforts were directed to promote resilience for these species.

The new White Mountains to Moosehead Lake resilience plan reshapes and integrates on the ground work in this landscape and reflects information developed by the NALCC and other sources. Our approach models parcel-level priorities within the context of new data such as the Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region and Designing Sustainable Landscapes Data (Kennebec River watershed). We also integrated multiple LCC- funded science products.

## Results:

The goals and objectives outlined in the grant have been met.

### **Identify Appropriate GIS Data Sets**

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
  - Conducted online research.
  - Consulted with local, state and NALCC experts.
  - Updated and refined data.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to update and refine data as necessary.

### **Incorporate Expert Local Knowledge and Stakeholder Input**

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
  - Held four stakeholder meetings.
  - Convened "Technical Advisory Team."
  - Consulted with local, state and NALCC experts.
  - Coordinated with four Advisory Committee partner organizations.
- **Planned beyond grant period:**
  - One more Advisory Committee meeting in early 2014.
  - Continue coordinating with the Advisory Committee partner organizations.

### **Analyze Priorities for Resilience at Parcel Level & Create Online Portal and Tracking Tool**

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
  - Incorporated GIS data, including NALCC data, into online portal and mapping analysis tool.
  - Provided training to local partners on performing custom parcel analysis based on individual needs
  - Created progress tracking website (“Measures of Progress” site) to show the success of the initiative over time based on key metrics.
  - Collected and shared important regional data with our partners on the DataBasin site.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** None anticipated.

### **Hold meetings for stakeholders, private landowners, and others to utilize this information and these tools**

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
  - Incorporated training into two Advisory Committee meetings.
  - Negotiated MOUs with four partner organizations to assist in disseminating information about this project with their networks.
  - Work with landowners to incorporate protective measures into conservation easements that will assist with species’ climate adaptation.
  - Held briefings for staff from USDA, DOI, and DOD to demonstrate how the portal can be used to align federal activities and funding.
  - Held meeting for federal agencies, the Northern Forest Center, SFFI, and the American Forestry Foundation in November 2013.
  - Participated in one-on-one meetings to apprise state agency partners on the use and content of the DataBasin and Measure of Progress tools.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to track progress of partner organizations

### **Share information about this project at conferences, workshops, and other gatherings beyond the region**

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
  - Presented this concept at the Regional Plan Association Large Landscapes conference (June 2012).
  - Presented this concept at Society for Conservation Biology annual conference (July 2012).
  - Presented this concept at ESRI Federal Users Conference (February of 2013).
  - Presented this concept at Northwoods Climate Summit in Bayfield, Wisconsin. (June 2013).
  - Presented this concept at National Land Trust Rally (September 2013).
  - Presented on this project at an all-staff webinar for The Trust for Public Land employees located around the country.
  - Introduced this project in a variety of small group settings with federal agency partners.
  - Presented this project to NALCC Science Delivery Committee (September 2013).
  - Presented this concept to the New England Regional Conservation Partnership Conference, Nashua, New Hampshire (November 2013).
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to present at workshops and conferences where opportunities arise.

**Publication created with initial results.** Note: this was anticipated as a final product when we drafted the initial grant request to NALCC. However, rather than develop a separate written publication, we developed a power point deck and presented it (with modifications appropriate to each audience) at a variety of conferences and workshops, as described just above.

**Discussion:**

Building on a strong legacy of conservation work that has already protected more than 100,000 acres in the White Moose, we are on track to conserve another 49,000 acres by March of 2014. These acquisitions are stitching together a pattern of conservation that connects habitat corridors, keeps intact large blocks of working forest, and protects high-elevation habitats and cold water stream critical to plants and animals adjusting to a changing climate. These successes also are protecting motorized and non-motorized recreation corridors and access to beautiful natural areas.

Our investment in this planning exercise is already helping inform how we grow our capacity to protect another 100,000 acres over the next six to ten years. While some work remains on-going, we have completed our commitments and accomplished our objectives related to this project. Details related to our most recent work is detailed in our 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter report submitted in December, 2013. That work includes updates to our conserved lands data, data collection and sharing with our partners, and outreach to local, state, and federal partners.

We anticipate that we will continue working with our local organization partners to provide education and encourage use of the tools developed for this project at the local level. We will also work on disseminating information about this project at the state and federal level and encourage the use of the tools developed for this project. The project is complete at this time.

**Literature cited:** not applicable

**Figures and tables:** not applicable

**Project End Date:** December 31, 2013

**Costs:**

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$215,034

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$20,000 from NALCC

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? Yes

Signature:



Date:

1/2/14