



Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot



In the Connecticut River watershed and across the nation, large connected natural areas provide habitat for fish, wildlife and plants and provide jobs, food, clean water, storm protection, recreation and many other natural benefits that support people and communities. To ensure a sustainable future for these resources in the face of climate change, urban growth and other land-use changes and pressures, scientists and conservationists must work together to strategically conserve these large landscapes.

Facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and supported by the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC), the Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot is a collaborative effort to plan and design such a landscape. The pilot is led by a Core Team of conservation partners composed of federal and state agencies and private organizations working at various scales in the Connecticut River watershed. FWS will coordinate with partner agencies and organizations and request participation through the North Atlantic LCC, Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and other partnerships.

The pilot involves setting goals and measurable objectives for ecosystems and representative species of fish, wildlife, and plants they support and using best available information and tools to collaboratively plan how to best achieve these goals. Landscape conservation designs informed by this planning effort are intended to guide our collective conservation actions within the watershed and connect to broader regional conservation goals for conserving sustainable fish and wildlife populations. The pilot also hopes to establish a landscape conservation design process that can be applied in geographies throughout the Northeast region and beyond.

Pilot objectives include:

- Agreeing on common **conservation** goals and objectives for the Connecticut River watershed that are informed by watershed and regional priorities (while recognizing social, economic and recreational contributions to future iterations of landscape conservation designs);
- Providing conservation design information that is available at scales (including local scales) and in formats needed by partners to guide conservation decisions and inform planning (e.g. National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans, National Forest Plans, State Wildlife Action Plans); and
- Using and refining regional and landscape-scale conservation design information and tools to prioritize and make better conservation decisions (including habitat protection, management and restoration) to most efficiently achieve these objectives, including biological outcomes for fish, wildlife and plant species.

Pilot deliverables will include information, maps and tools that show landscape conservation design options for prioritizing conservation actions needed in the Connecticut River watershed and a process paper describing lessons learned that can be applied to landscape conservation design in other landscapes across the Northeast.

Visit the pilot website at: <http://northatlanticlcc.org/groups/connecticut-river-watershed-pilot>