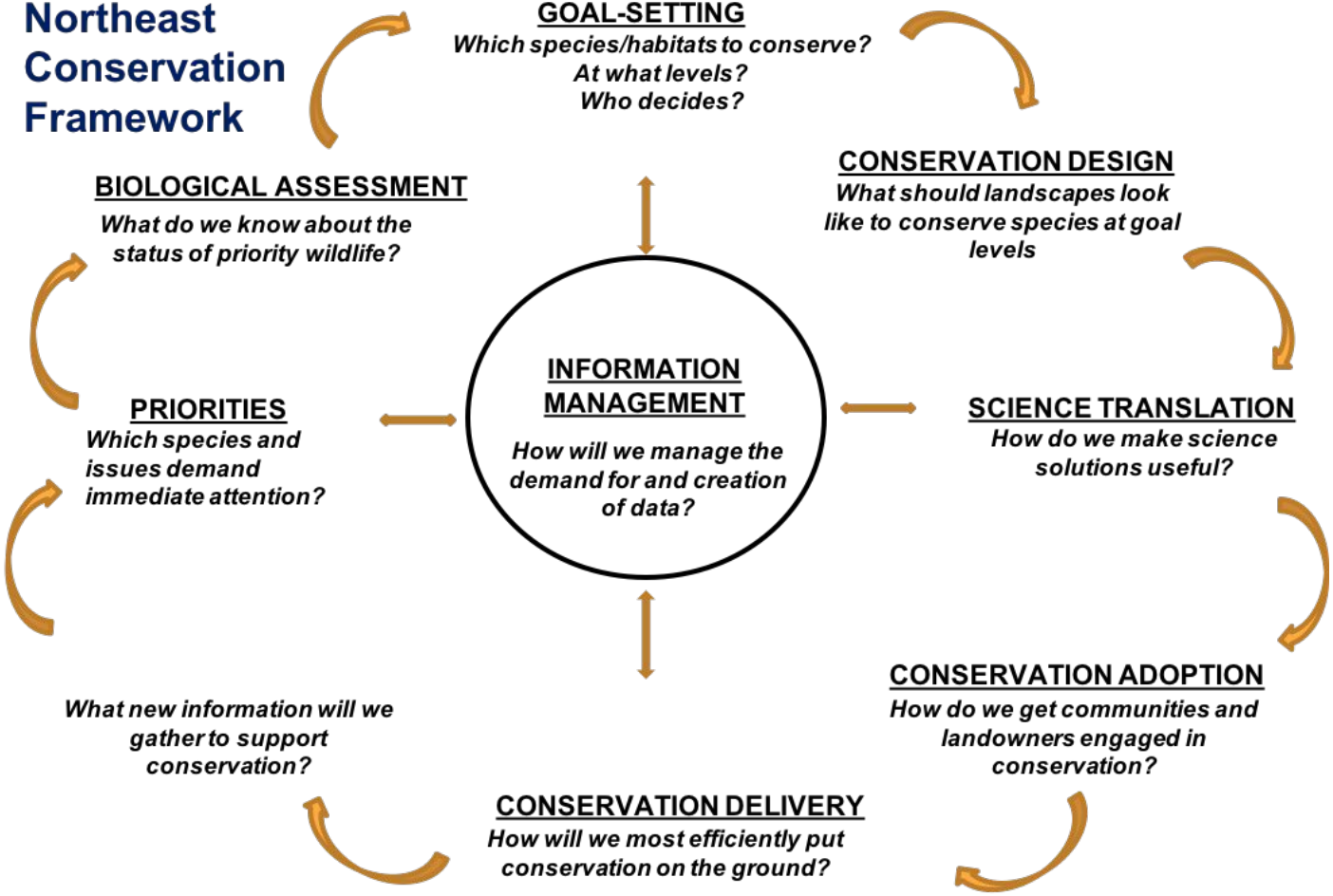
# A Conservation Design for the Northeast
## *Northeast Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas Version 1.0*

# RCOA Update

## October 24, 2016

# Northeast Conservation Framework



# What we did

A team of partners from **13 states, the NALCC, USFWS, NGOs,** and universities worked together to **align priorities** and map opportunities for unified conservation action across the Northeast region.

# Vision

A **connected** network of **resilient** and **ecologically intact** habitats that will support **biodiversity** under changing conditions...

# What it means

The project mapped a landscape pattern and created a **suite of resources** that partners can **use voluntarily** to help **identify opportunities for conserving key habitats** and the species that depend on them.

# What it means

**New tools for aligning priorities can help partners to:**

- **“all pull in the same direction”**
- **base actions on science**
- **implement efficiently and with precision**

# Background

## Investing in landscape science and SWAP coordination since 2006

| | RCN INVESTMENT | LCC INVESTMENT |
|---|---|---|
| CORE AREAS | Northeast habitat classifications and maps, geospatial condition analysis, Resilience (NatureServe, TNC, states) | Improved habitat maps (TNC, UMass)<br>Des. Sus. Landscapes, IEI, Rep spp. (UMass)<br>Natural communities (NatureServe) |
| IMPERILED & SGCN HABITATS | Northeast habitat maps, species ranking from SWAP synthesis<br>Updated SGCN compilation (TNC, TCI) | Expansion of PA SWAP habitat analysis (Western PA Conservancy)<br>Updated RSGCN analysis (NALCC, TCI, and NatureServe) |
| RESTORATION | Geospatial analysis, Northeast Aquatic Connectivity (TNC) | SWAP data synthesis on Data Basin (LCC)<br>Restoration tool (Chesapeake Conservancy) |
| CONNECTIVITY | RCN permeability analysis (TNC) | Revised permeability (TNC)<br>Regional connectivity (UMASS) |

# Summary of Review Process

## AUGUST 2016 - Launched Version 1.0 draft products for review

- **Developed website** to provide access to data and resources for reviewers
- **Developed review maps** on Data Basin
- **Led webinar series** to introduce users to components and facilitate review

## SEPTEMBER 2016 - Gathering and responding to input

- **Collecting feedback** from test users in webinars and online comment forms
- **Providing briefings** to update partners and identify needs for training and outreach
- **Synthesizing input** to share with reviewers in online forum on 9/28

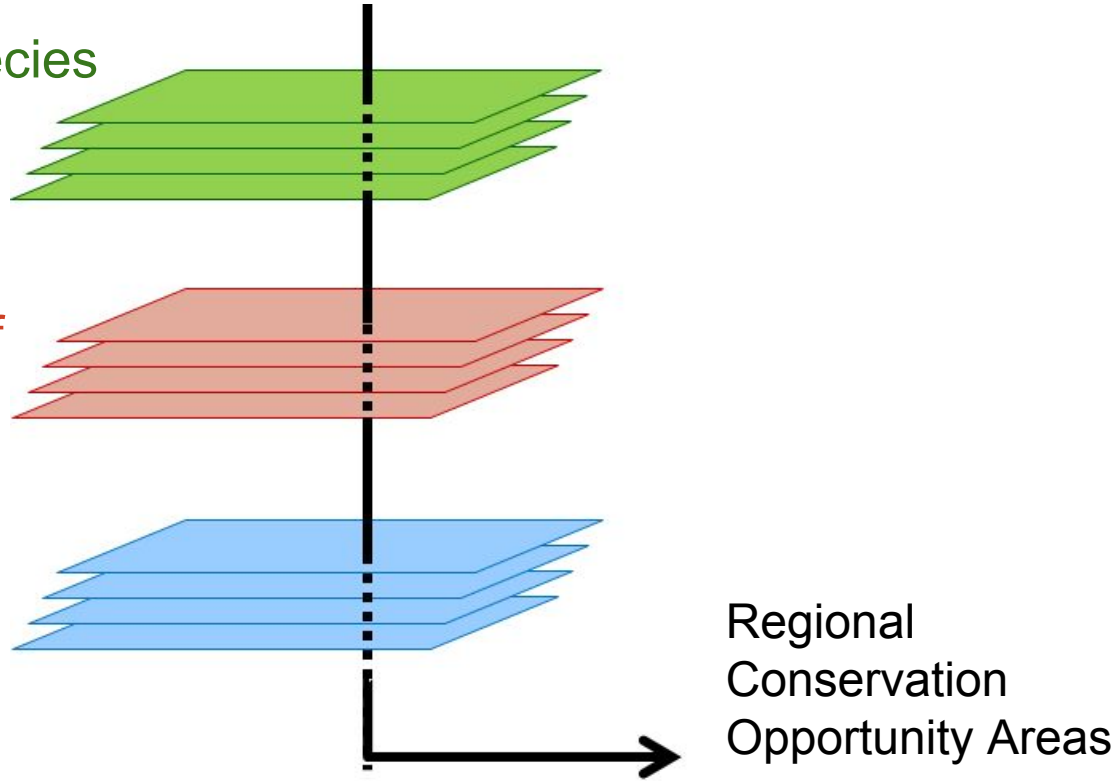
# Summary of Review Process

## Snapshot of participants in August webinar series

| TOPIC | ATTENDEES | AGENCIES/ ORGS | STATES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview of Data Use & Application (Repeated 4 times)** | 60 | 25 | MA, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA |
| **Terrestrial Core Networks** | 19 | 10 | MA, ME, NH, NJ, PA, VA |
| **Connectivity** | 19 | 8 | ME, NH, NJ, VA |
| **Restoration** | 17 | 8 | MA, ME, NH, NJ, VA |
| **Aquatic Core Networks** | 11 | 8 | ME, NJ, VA |
| **Important Habitats** | 19 | 8 | NH, NJ, PA, RI, VA |

# Design Builds Upon a Host of Datasets and Assessments

- Habitat for dozens of species of fish and wildlife
- Integrity and resilience of ecosystems
- Locations of rare natural communities

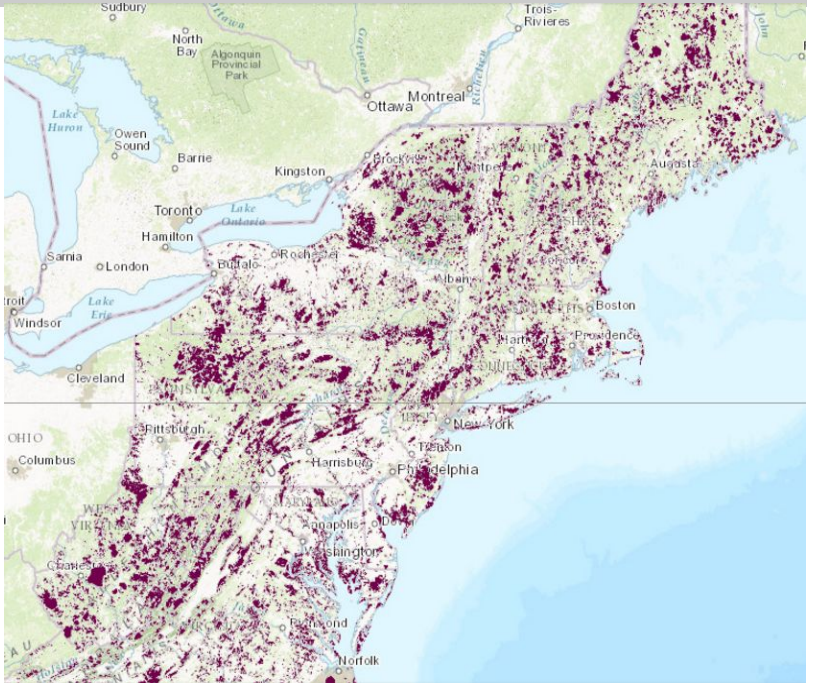


# Core habitat network

## Based on terrestrial and aquatic habitats (Northeast Habitat Classification)

**Mapped core areas show alignment of:**

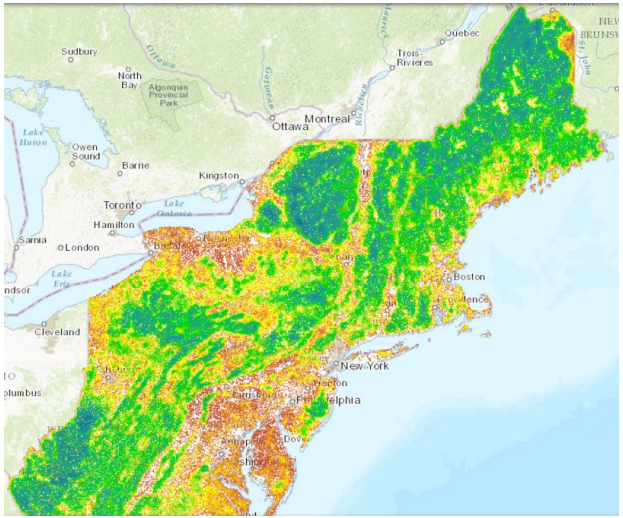
- **UMASS** Index of Ecological Integrity
- **TNC** Resiliency
- Representative species
- State Natural Communities



# Habitat for Representative Species

## UMass Designing Sustainable Landscapes project + others

30 representative species of terrestrial and wetland wildlife

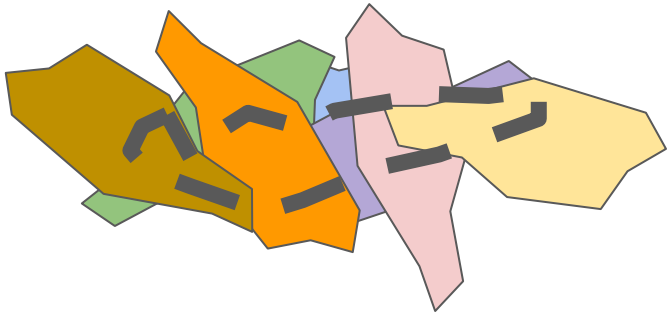



Brook trout and anadromous fish

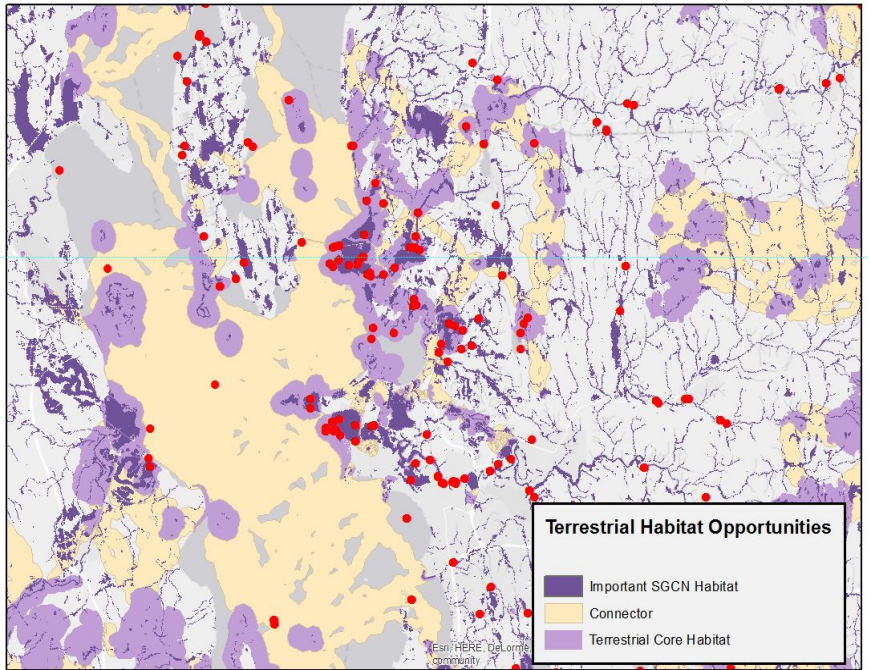
# Important habitats for SGCN

A clear pattern for biodiversity based on thousands of species

- It is most efficient to find maximum **alignment** of habitats



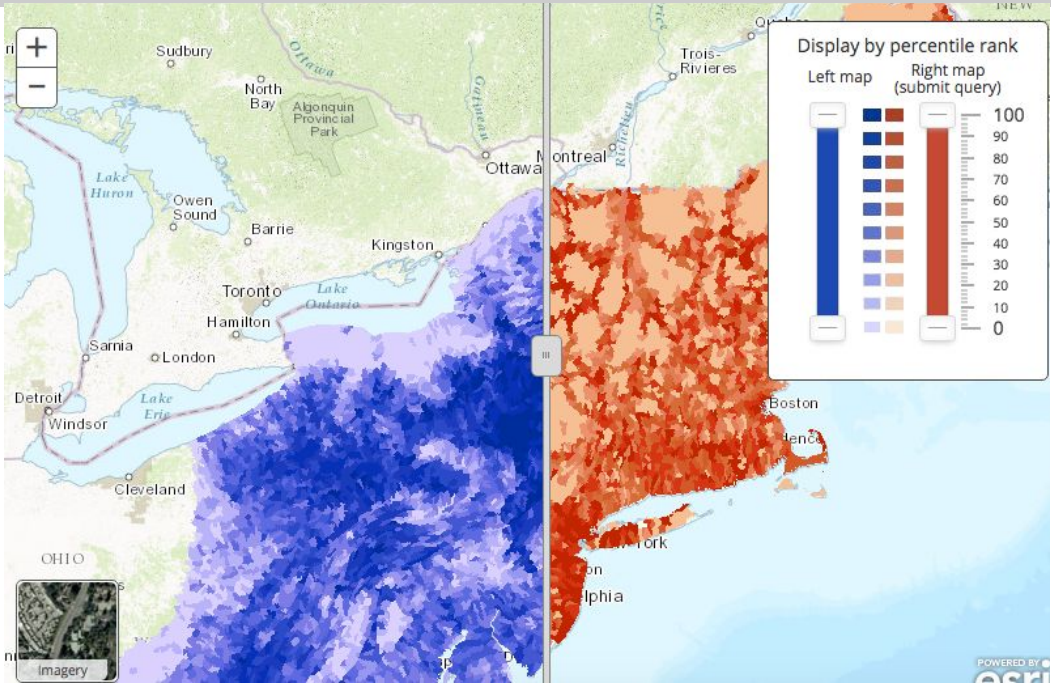
- **Riparian habitats are critical for all plants and animals**



# Restoration Tool

## Interactive tool for interactive conservation planning

- Allows managers to develop custom prioritization scenarios and download their own results



# Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas Version 1.0

One region, 13 states, thousands of opportunities to move conservation forward together

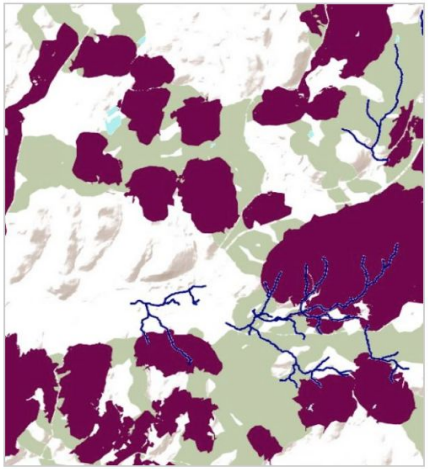
LEARN MORE | EXPLORE THE MAPS

# Data & Tools

Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas Version 1.0 offers a suite of decision-support tools that are intended to complement information and expertise developed by state agencies, federal programs, and partner organizations. These resources provide regional context to help people working at any scale identify best opportunities for conserving intact terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, supporting habitat for species, restoring habitats, and connecting natural areas across the Northeast.

Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas Version 1.0 is a dynamic tool that will evolve over time based on updated information. Feedback on this product will be used to improve the next iteration, Version 2.0.

To review the maps, click the button below to visit the Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas Version 1.0 gallery on the North Atlantic LCC's Conservation Planning Atlas (Data Basin), a free mapping platform where you can access all the spatial data.



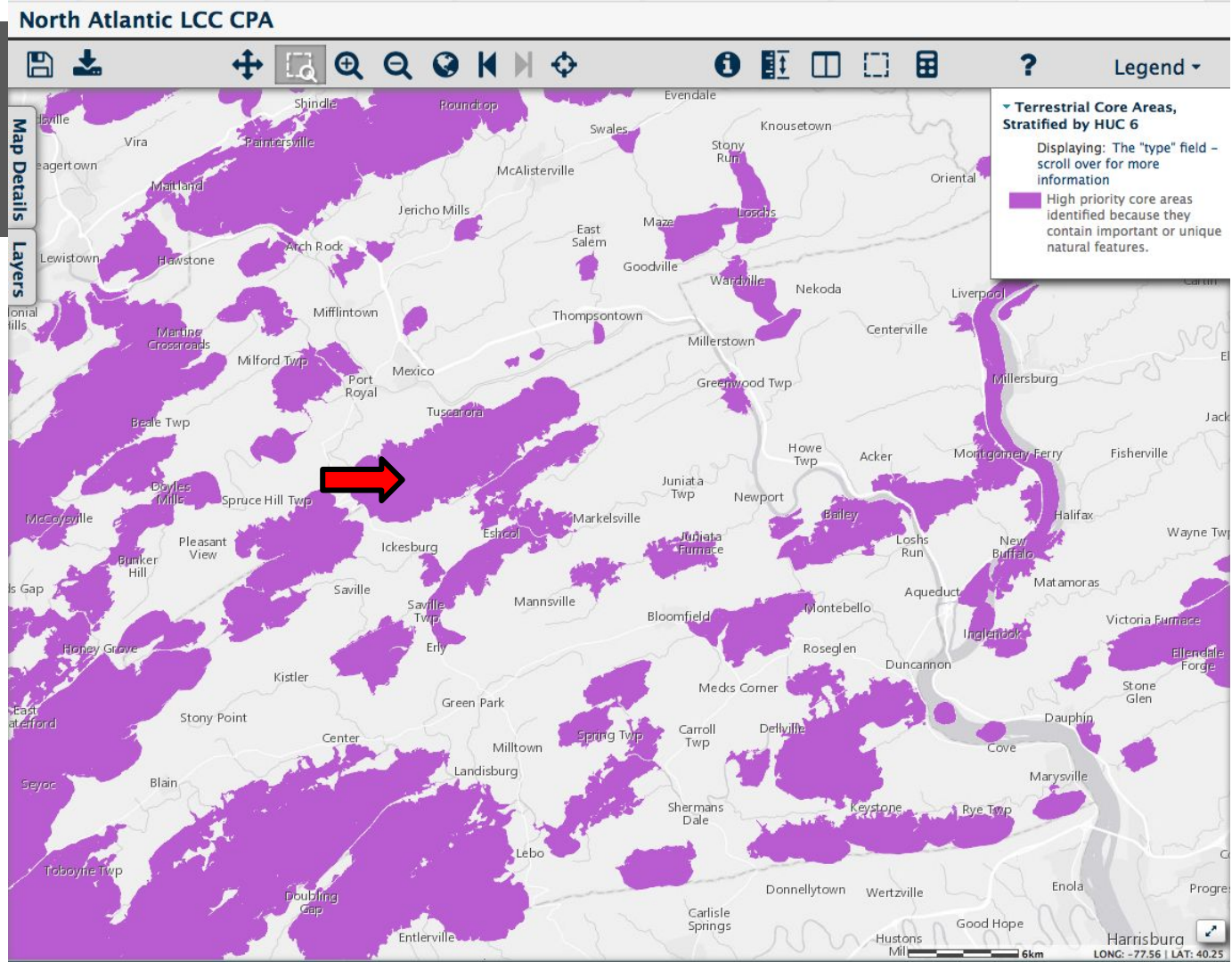
Review the maps here

Access restoration tool

# What maps are available?

## Core Areas

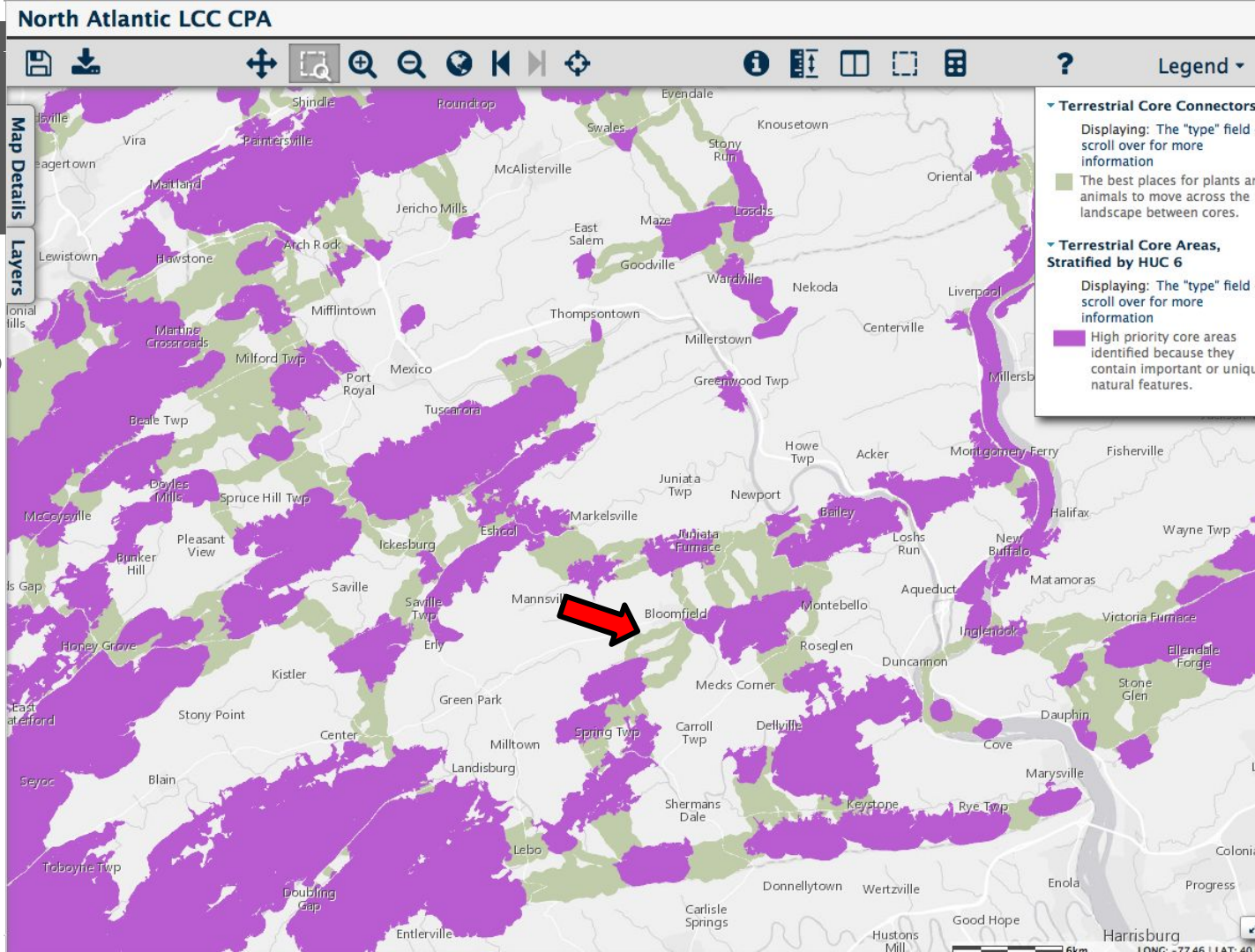
- bear
- moose
- grouse
- woodcock



# What maps are available?

## Connectors

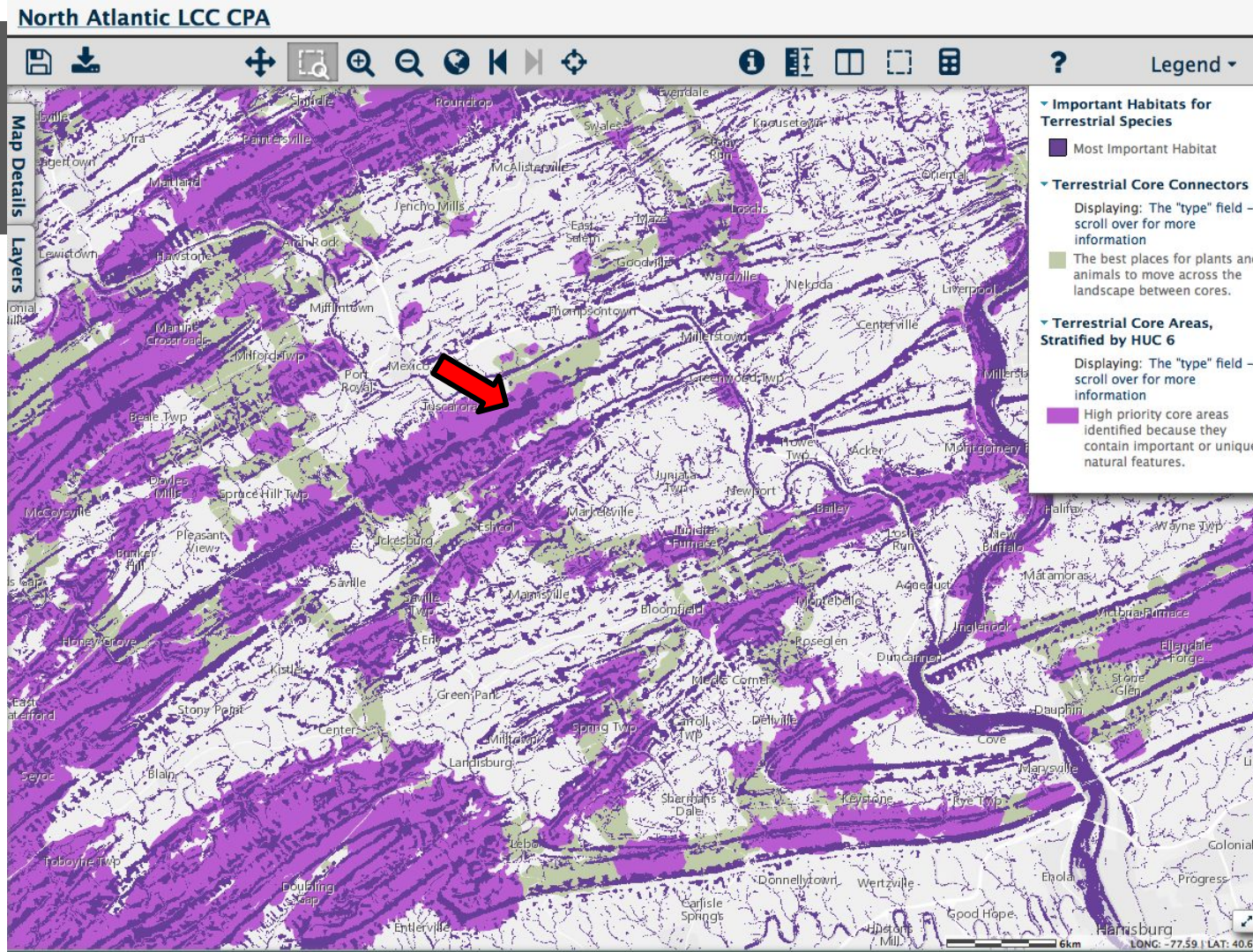
→ All species



# What maps are available?

## Important Habitats

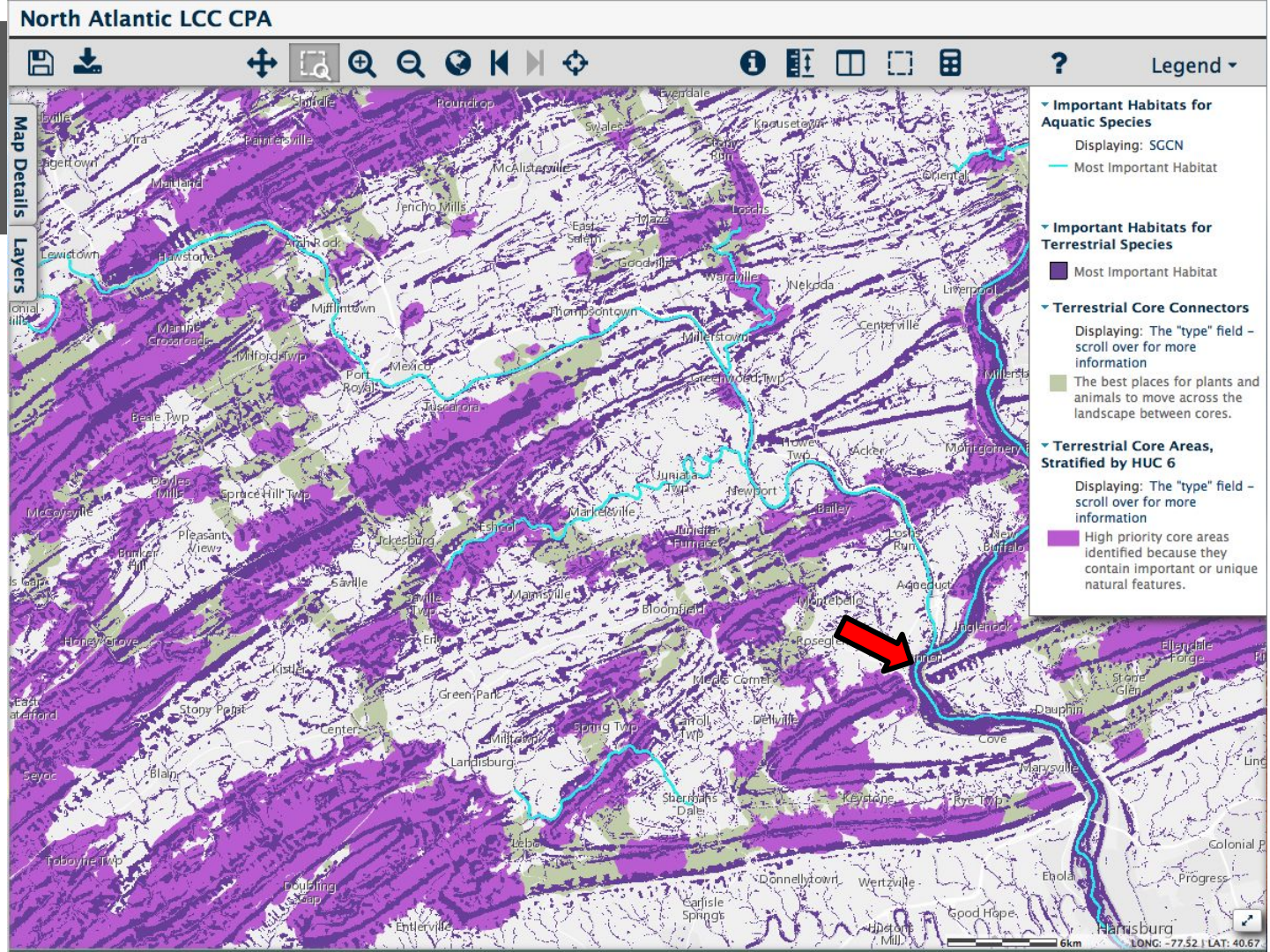
→ All species
- riparian
- SGCN



# What maps are available?

## Important Aquatic Features

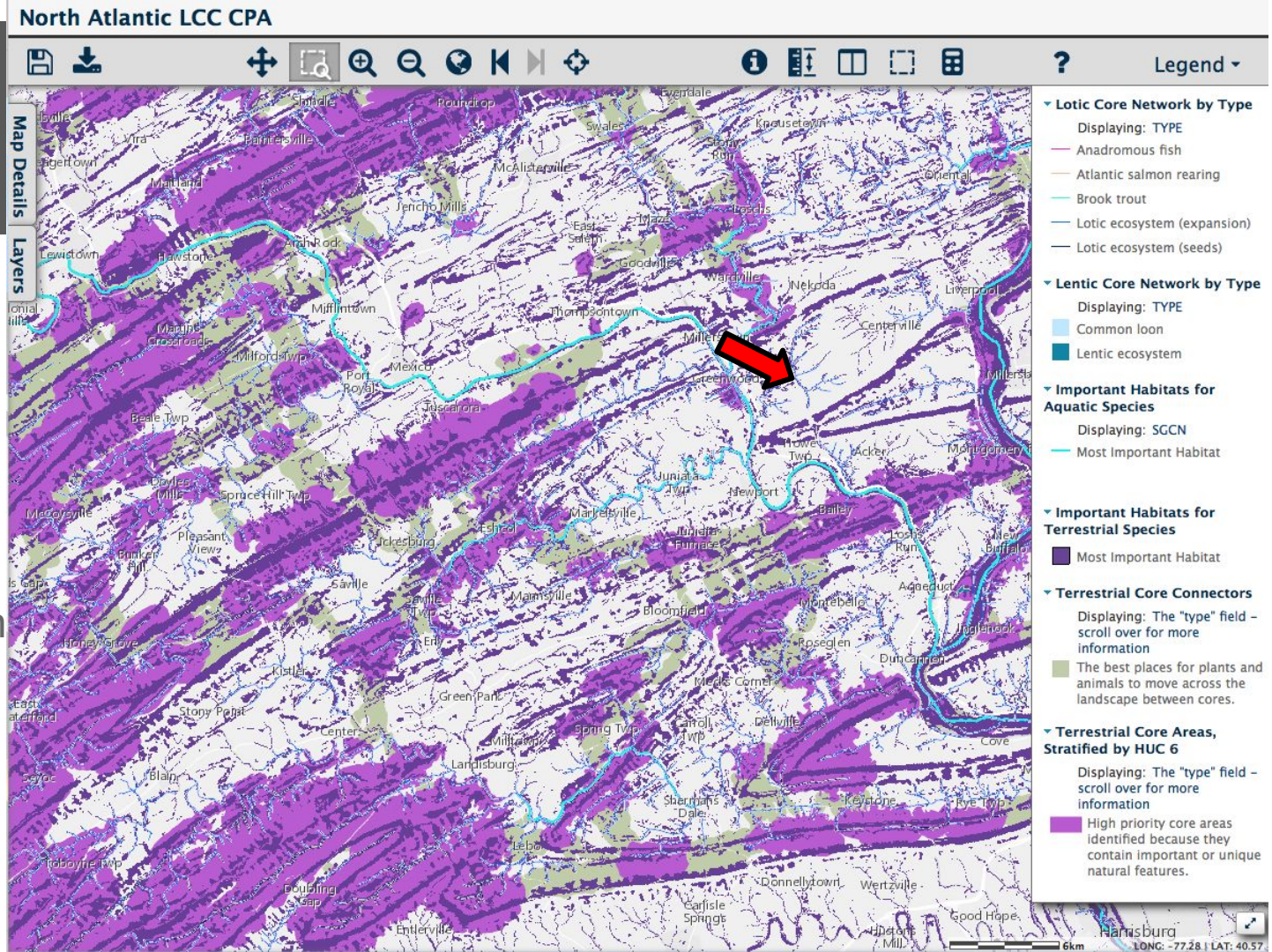
→ SGCN



# What maps are available?

## Aquatic Networks

- ➔ anadromous fish
- ➔ Atlantic salmon
- ➔ brook trout



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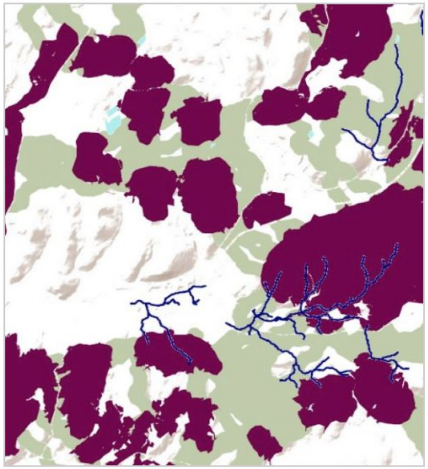

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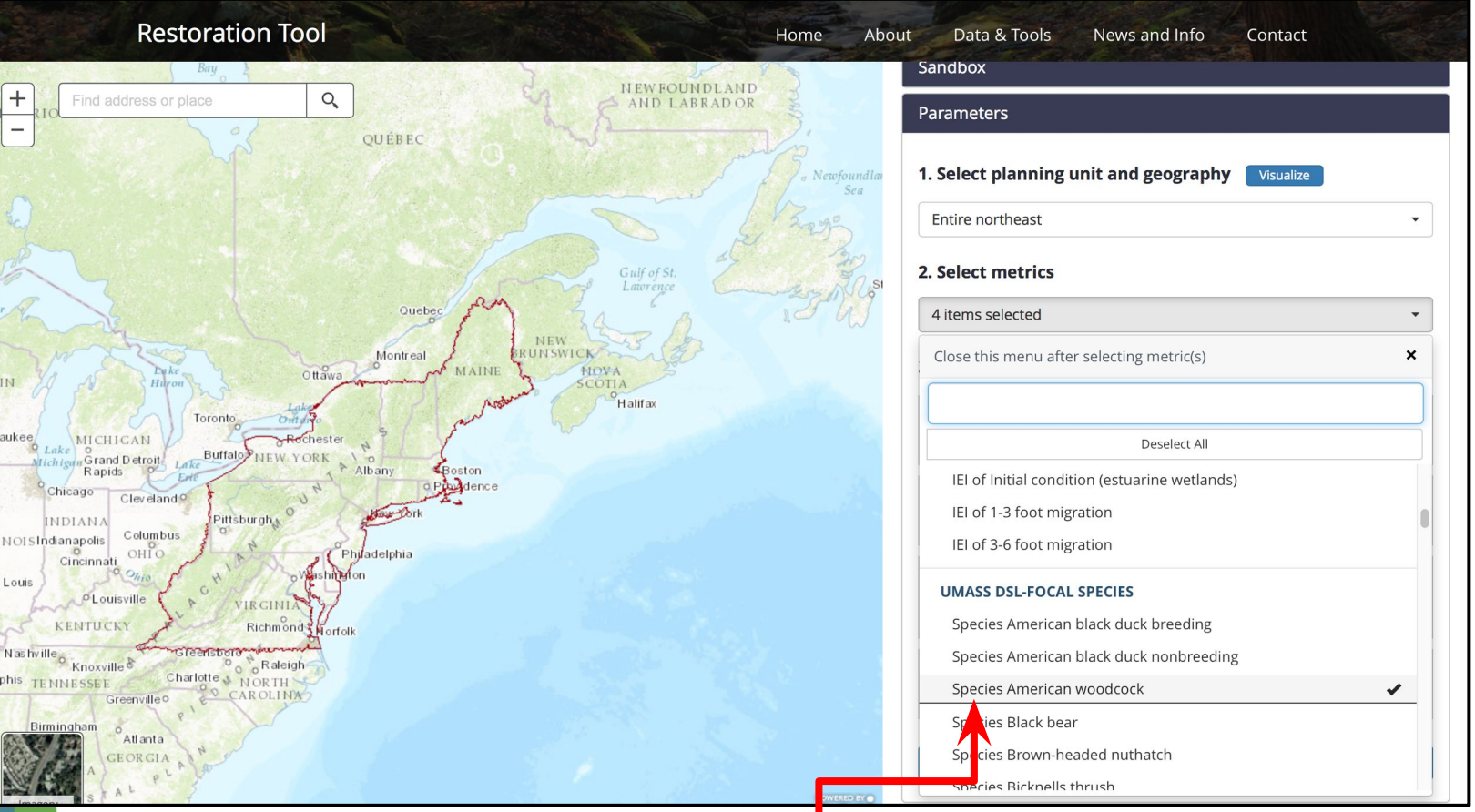
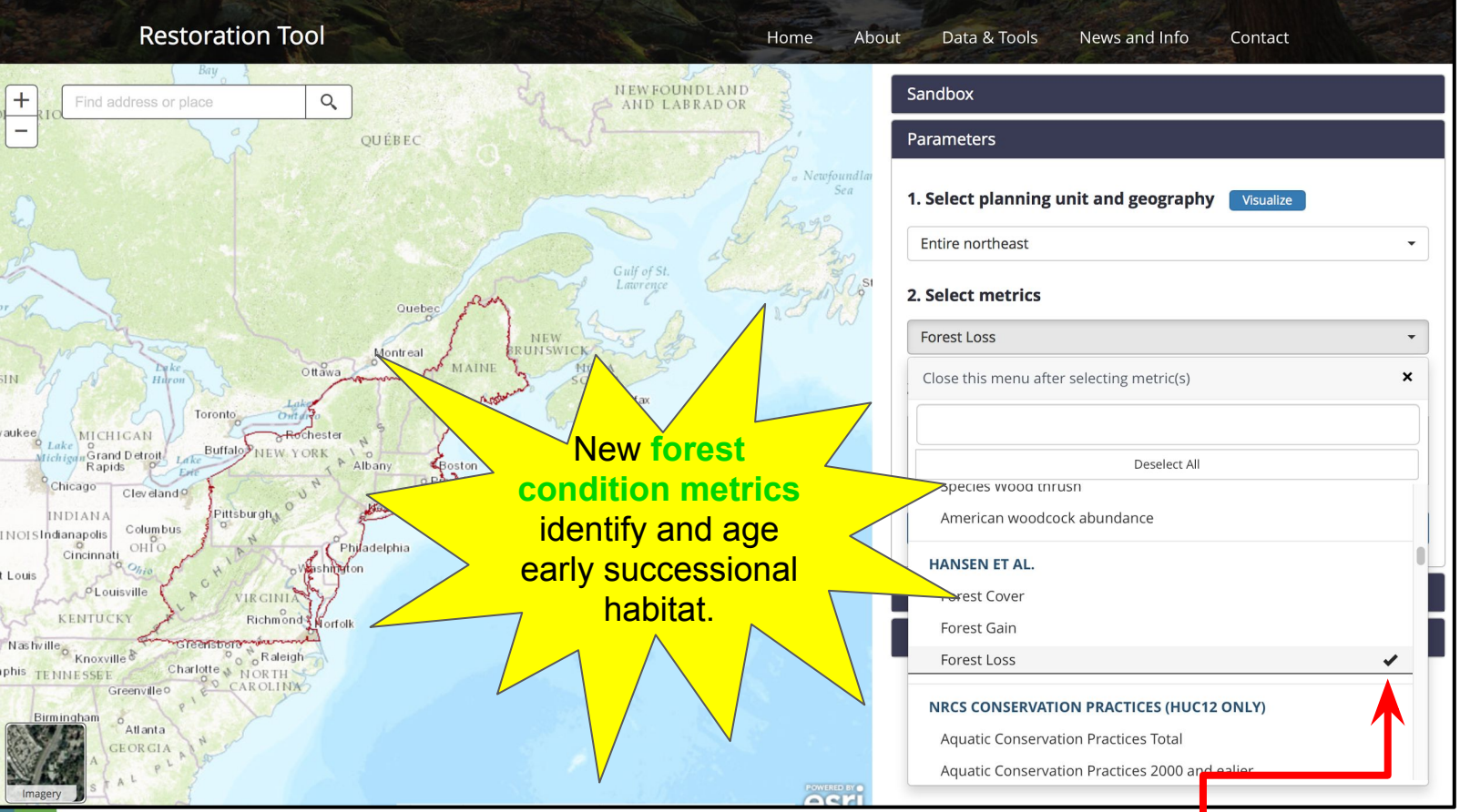
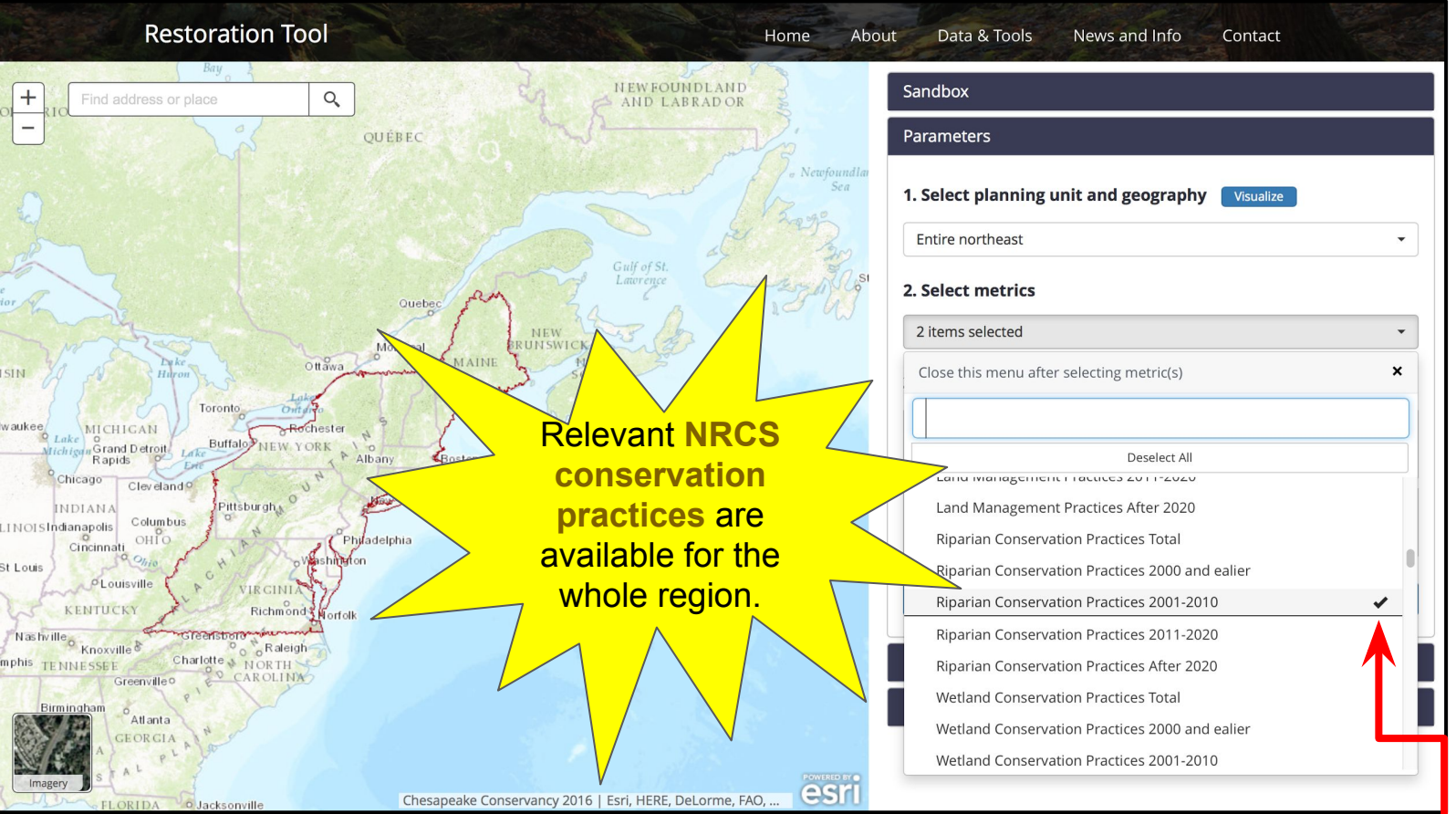


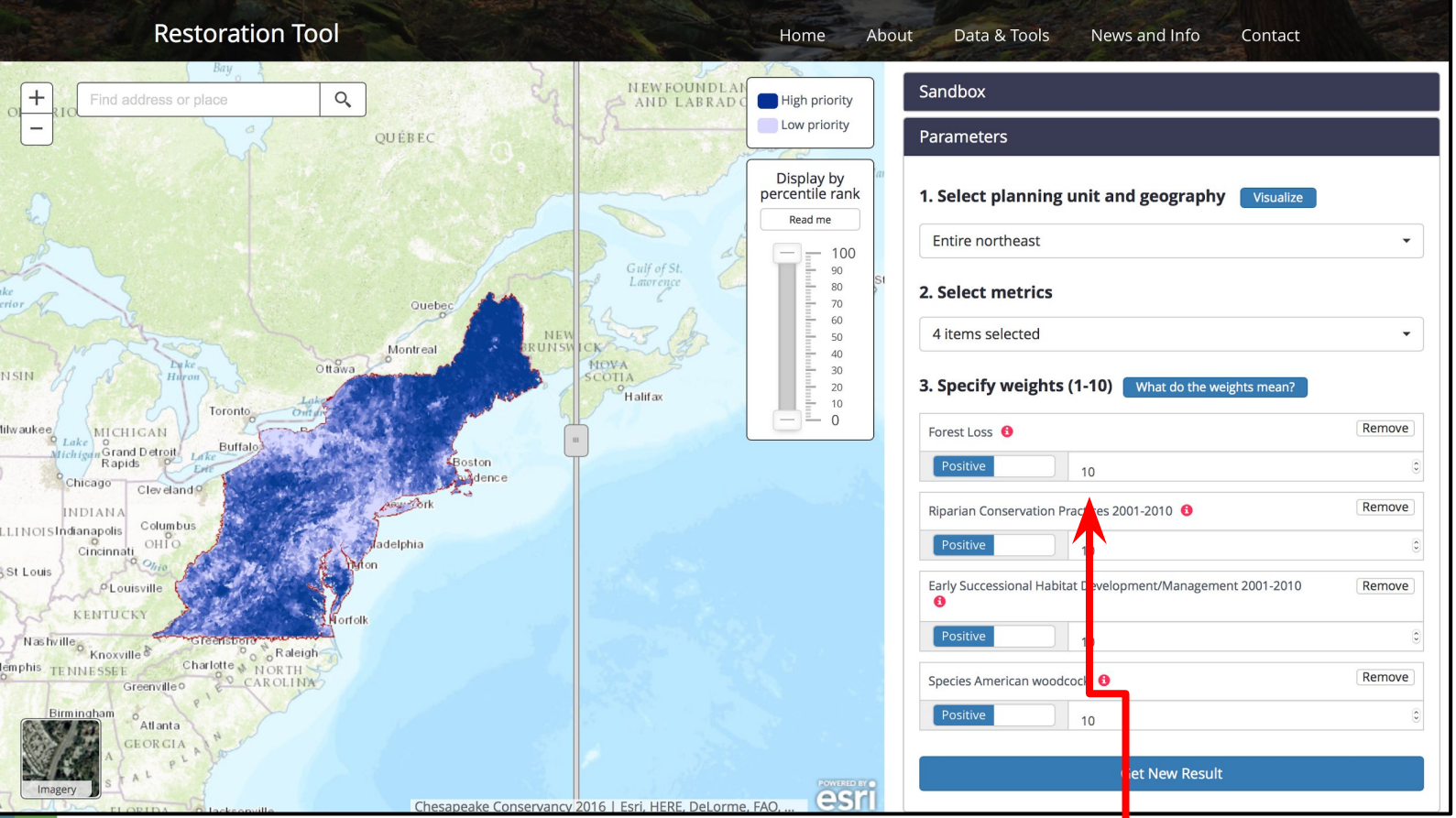

1. Select a target species or habitat.



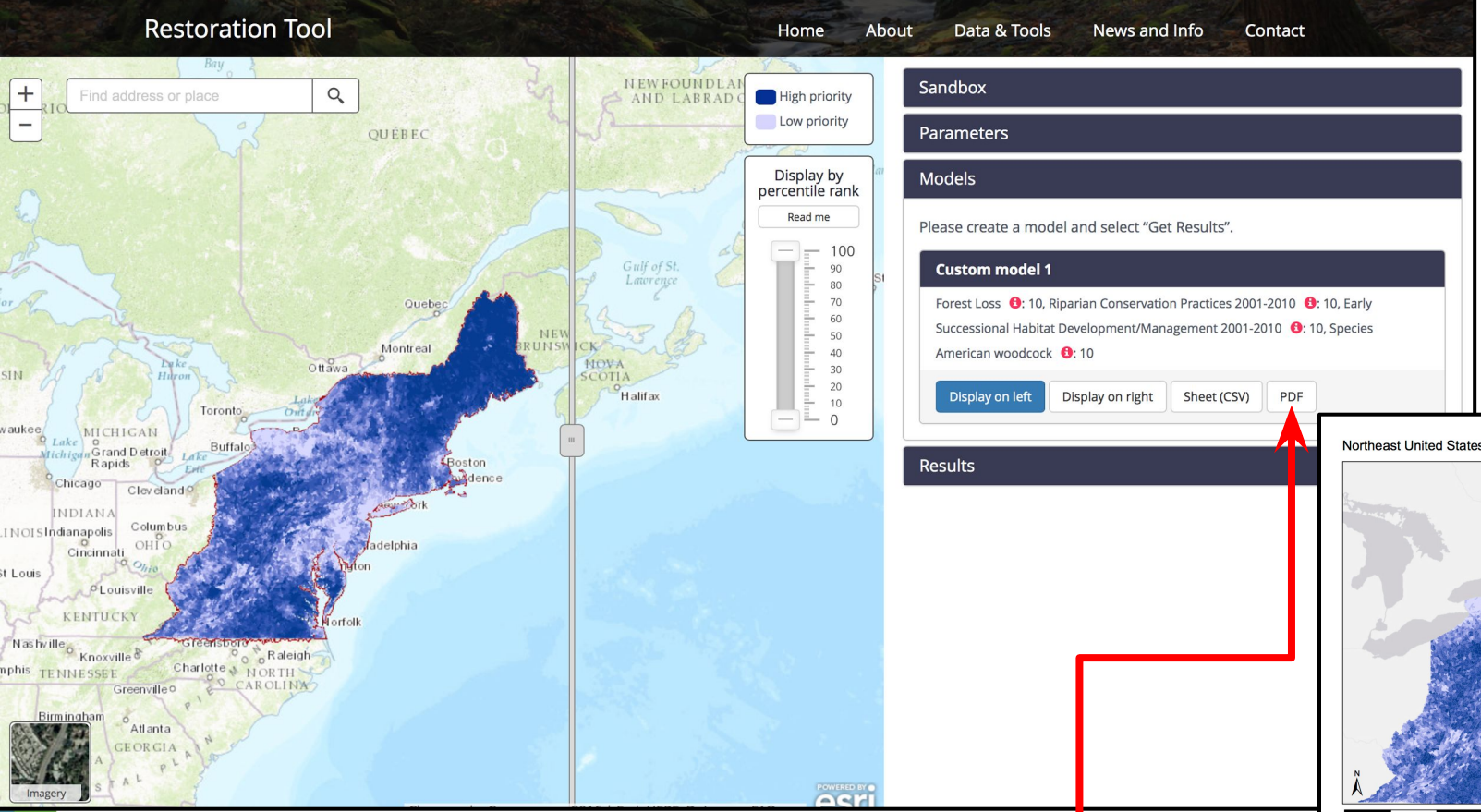

2. Select important forest metrics for prioritizing work.

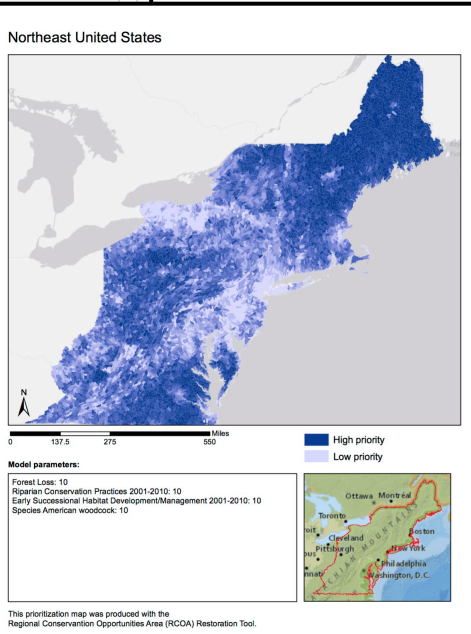



3. Select NRCS conservation practices to identify areas that might have willing landowners, or areas that need more effort.




4. Assign weights for the metrics and get a result.

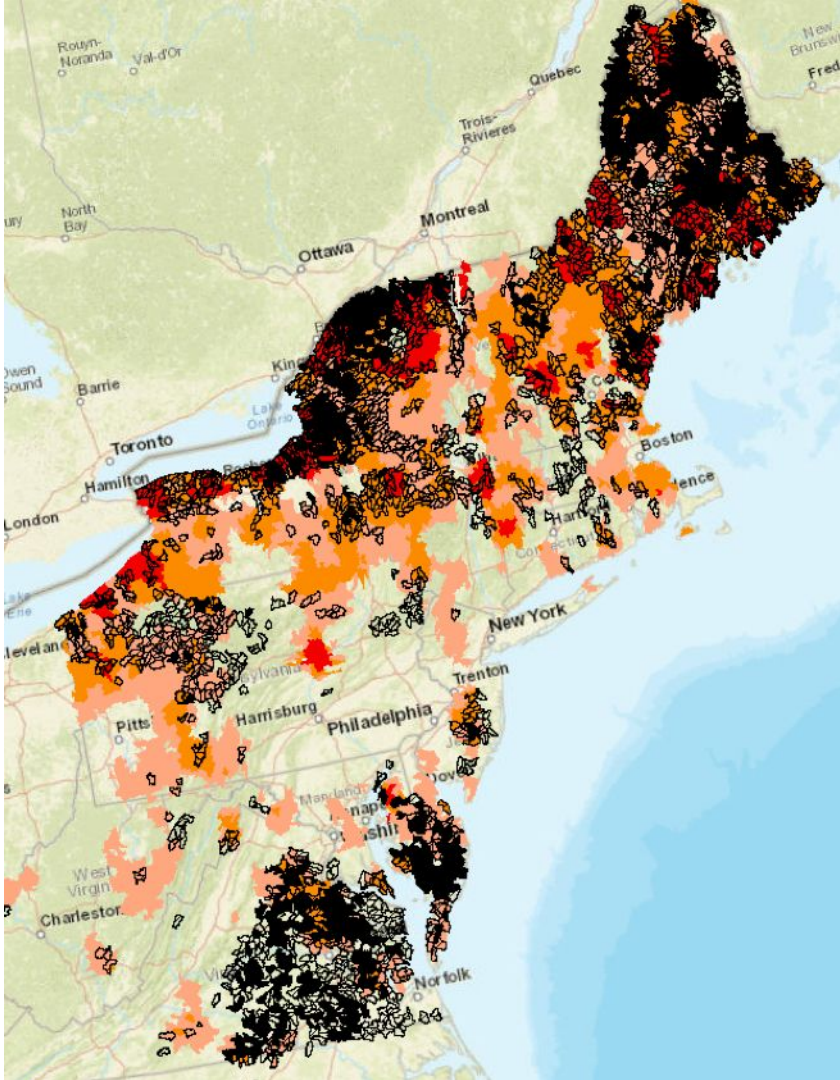



5. Download a map and report to your computer.

## Demonstration of potential results

- Solid black shows woodcock focus areas where NRCS has been highly active;
- Black outline shows woodcock focus areas where NRCS has been inactive;
- Red and orange is woodcock abundance (Throgmarten)



# Next Steps

# Outreach

- **Beginning in November, we will begin a broad outreach effort to inform the conservation community about RCOAs.**

# Version 2.0

- **During 2017, based on your input and expected data updates, we will begin Version 2.0.**

# Discussion

# Discussion Guide

1. How should we organize to address joint conservation priorities?

2. Where should we pool efforts to influence conservation priorities within the NALCC geography?
3. How could your agency use the new tools to achieve your conservation priorities?

4. What are the challenges facing your organization in terms of using the tools - technical, training needs, etc.?

5. How do you see your organization working collaboratively with other organizations to use the tools?

# Links

Website for RCOA Version 1.0:
http://rcoa.cicapps.org

Webinar series summary and archive:
http://rcoa.cicapps.org/news-and-info/