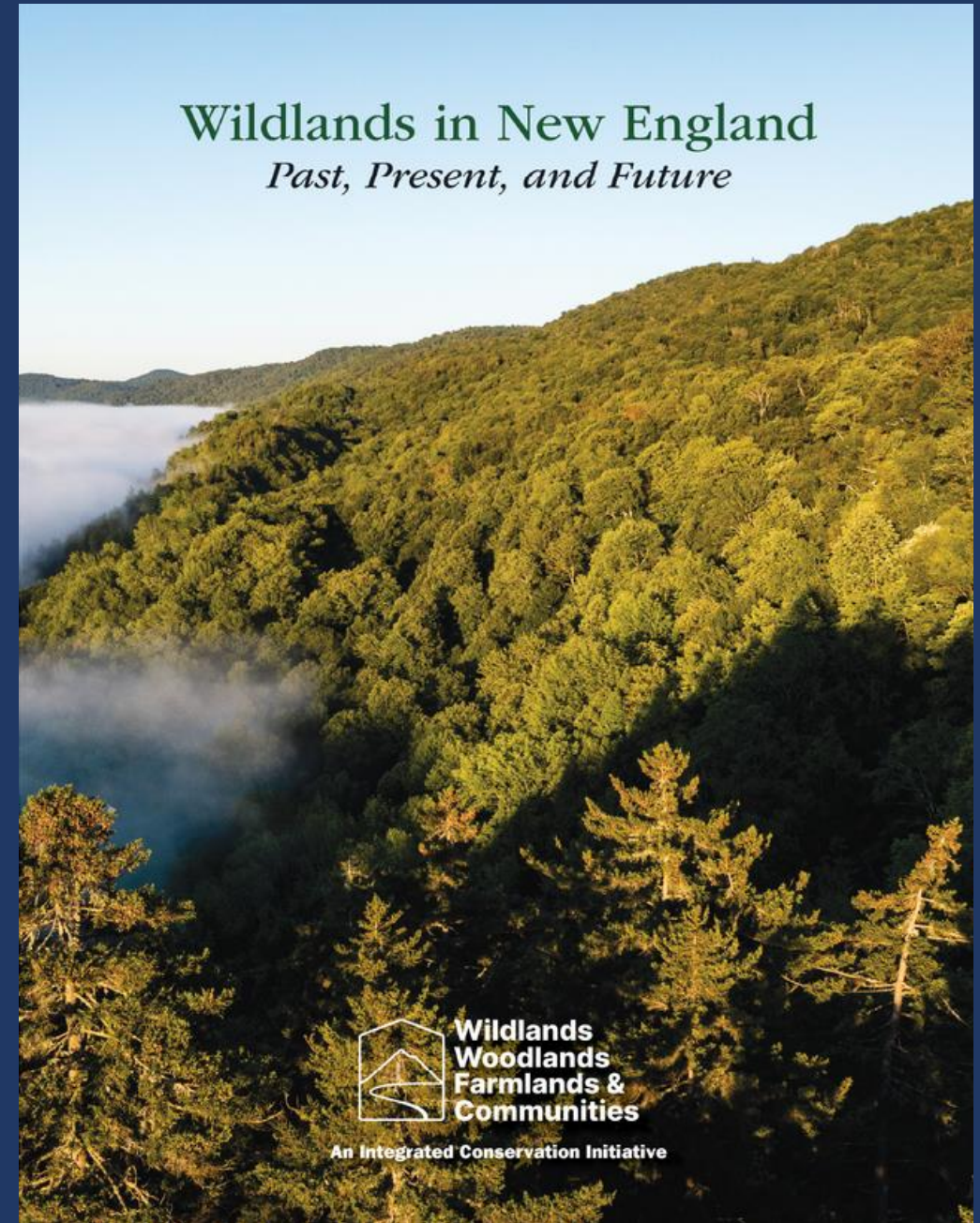
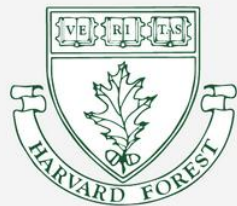
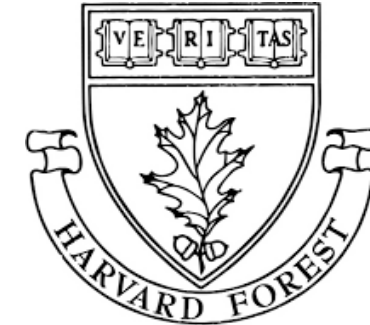


Wildlands in New England

Liz Thompson

*Wildlands, Woodlands,
Farmlands, and Communities*





Why we need Wildlands

Intrinsic value

Biodiversity

Carbon storage

Ecological resiliency

Quiet reflection

Baselines

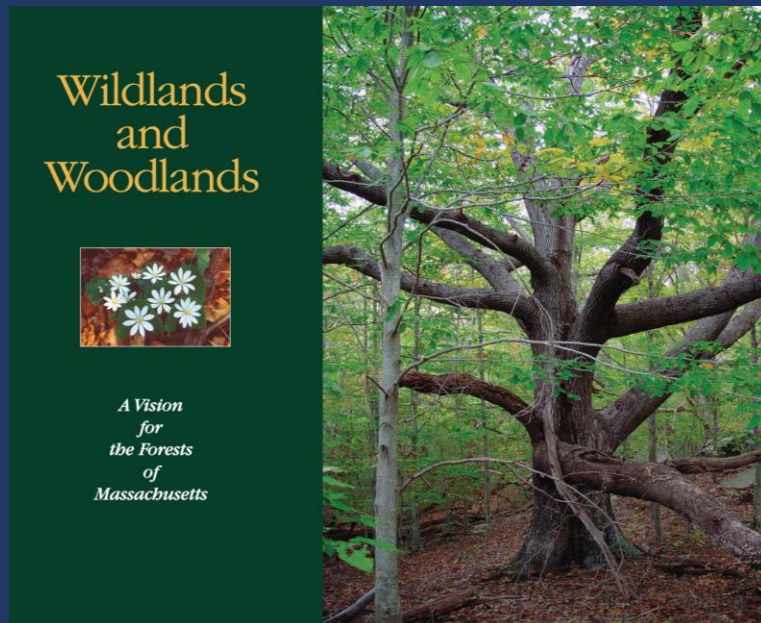
Global, Regional, Statewide
Statewide Conservation Goals
Goals



Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve in Vermont

Photo credit: Jerry Monkman

The genesis for this study



Early Conversations (2005)

Region's history of deforestation, farming, logging, farm abandonment, and reforestation led to a focus on Wildlands and Woodlands.



Increasing Pressures

Global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and human welfare have continued to mount creating an urgent need to achieve the ambitious goals of WWF&C for a thriving Wildland network.



A Knowledge Gap

New England is uniquely positioned to help. But we lacked the data and information to support policy change and funding for Wildlands as part of an integrated strategy for conservation. Until now...

Who is behind the study



Author

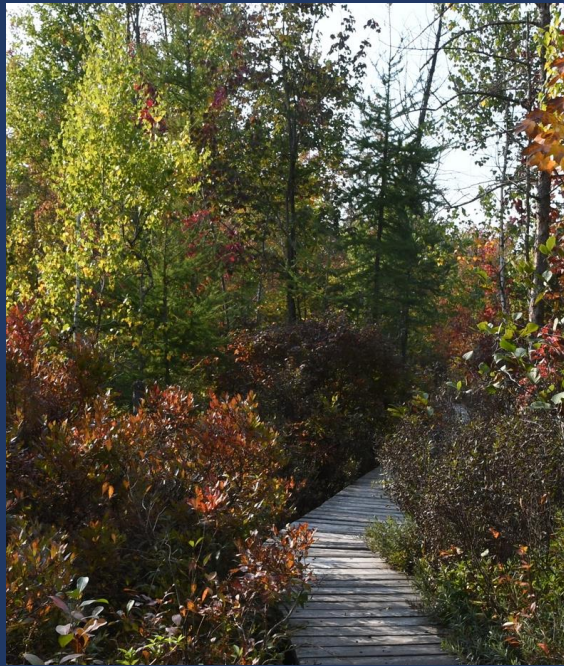
David Foster
Emily E. Johnson
Brian R. Hall
Jonathan Leibowitz
Elizabeth H. Thompson
Brian Donahue
Edward K. Faison
Jamie Sayen
David Publicover
Nancy Sferra
Lloyd C. Irland
Jonathan R. Thompson
Robert Perschel
David A. Orwig
William S. Keeton
Malcolm L. Hunter Jr.
Susan A. Masino
Lillian Howell

Primary Affiliation

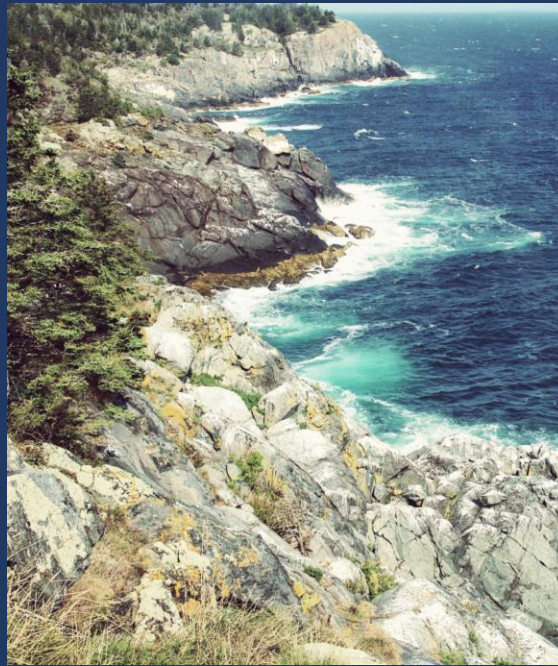
Harvard Forest, Harvard University
Harvard Forest, Harvard University
Harvard Forest, Harvard University
Northeast Wilderness Trust
Ecologist
Brandeis University
Highstead Foundation
Author -- Children of the Northern Forest
Appalachian Mountain Club
The Nature Conservancy in Maine
The Irland Group
Harvard Forest, Harvard University
New England Forestry Foundation
Harvard Forest, Harvard University
University of Vermont
University of Maine
Trinity College
Northeast Wilderness Trust

What are Wildlands?

Wildlands are tracts of any size and current condition, permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.



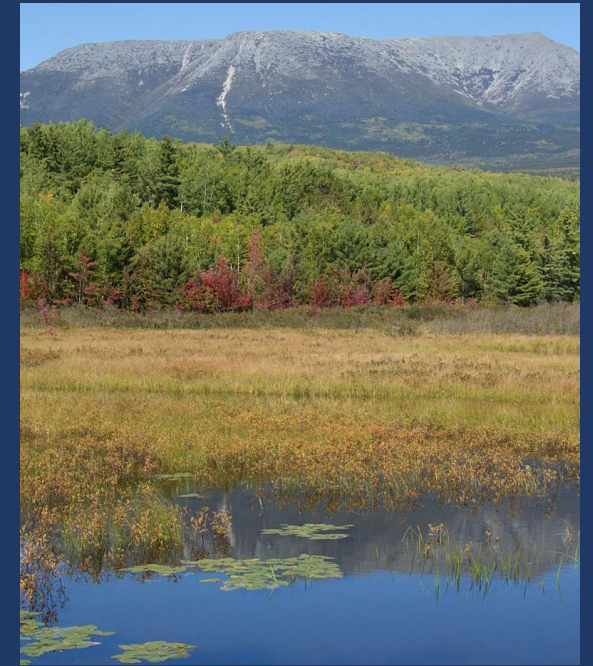
Colchester Bog, Vermont



Monhegan Island, Maine



Muddy Pond, Massachusetts



Baxter State Park, Maine

Wildlands Criteria

- Wildland Intent
- Management for an Untrammelled Condition
- Permanent Protection



Methodology

Four iterative phases

1. Scope and approach for identifying Wildlands
2. Outreach to public agencies and conservation organizations for Wildlands inventory and information
3. Systematic review of properties based on following criteria:
 - Wildland intent
 - Management for an untrammelled condition
 - Permanent protection
4. Analysis, interpretation, and product development

Wildlands in New England

Past, Present, and Future



Wildlands
Woodlands
Farmlands &
Communities

An Integrated Conservation Initiative

Wildlands in New England is the first U.S. study to map and characterize all permanently conserved lands in one region that are managed to be forever wild.

The study provides a baseline and path forward to secure more land as Wildlands.



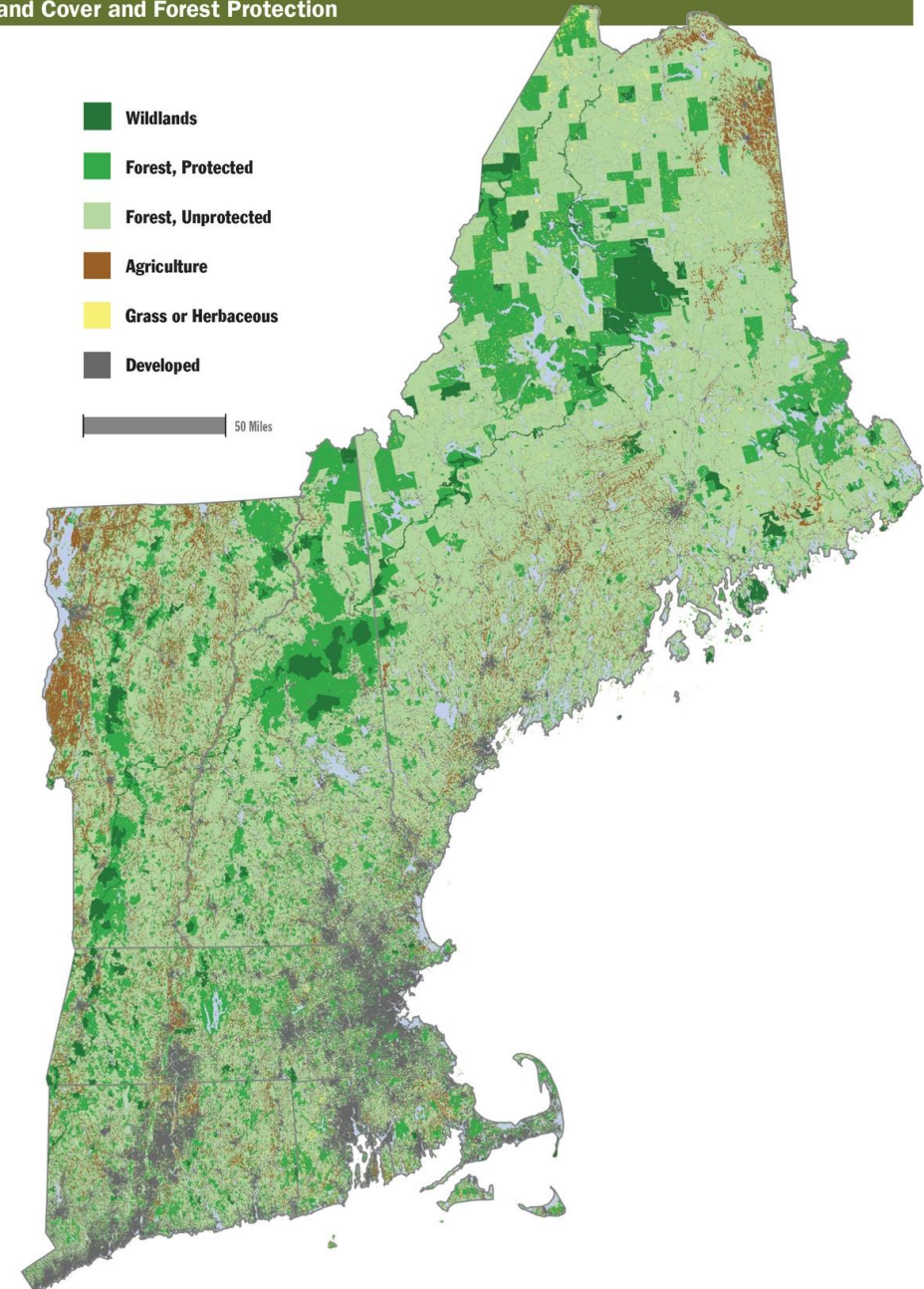
Wildlands in New England

What We Learned

Questions answered by this study

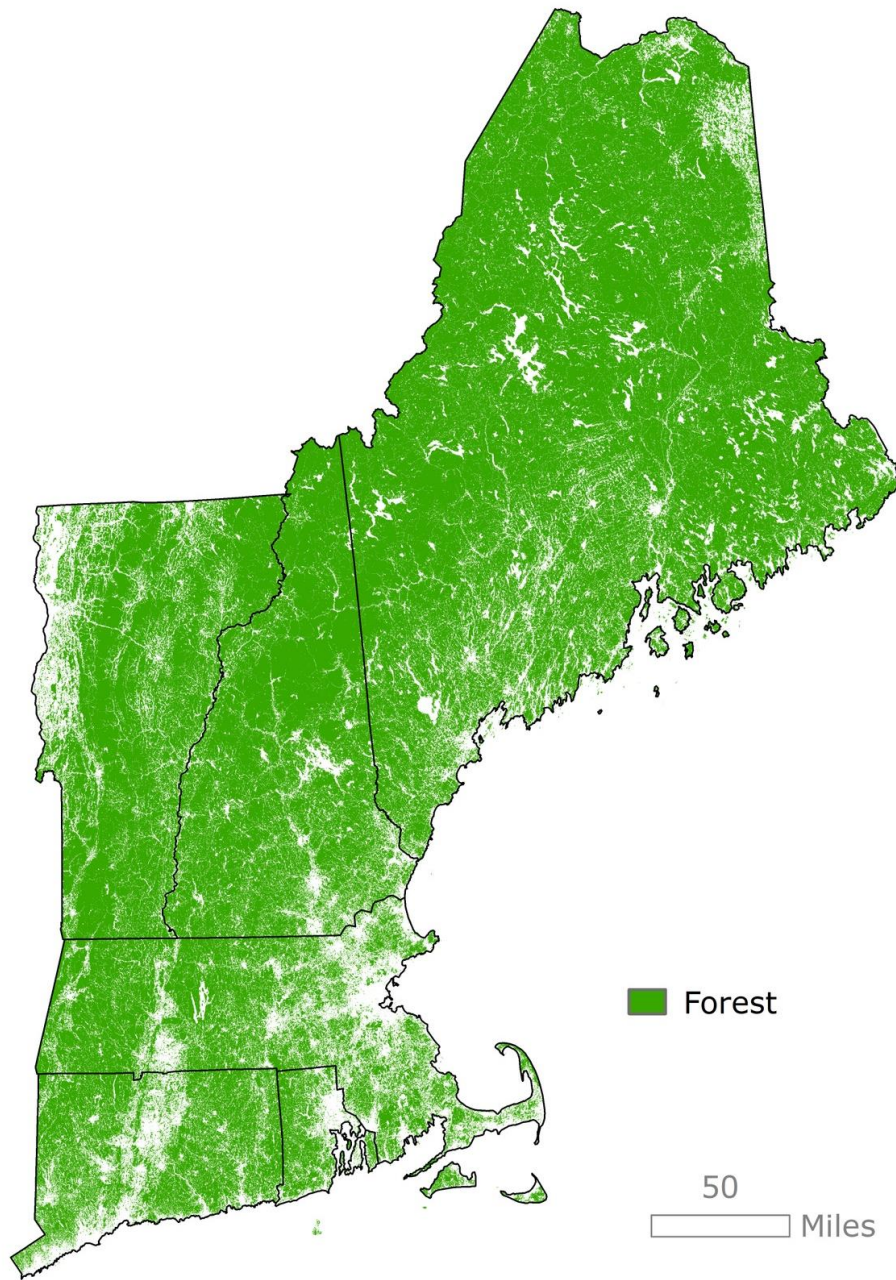
1. How much Wildland currently exists in New England?
2. Where are Wildlands located in New England?
3. What are the characteristics of the Wildlands?
4. What is their current protection status?

Land Cover and Forest Protection

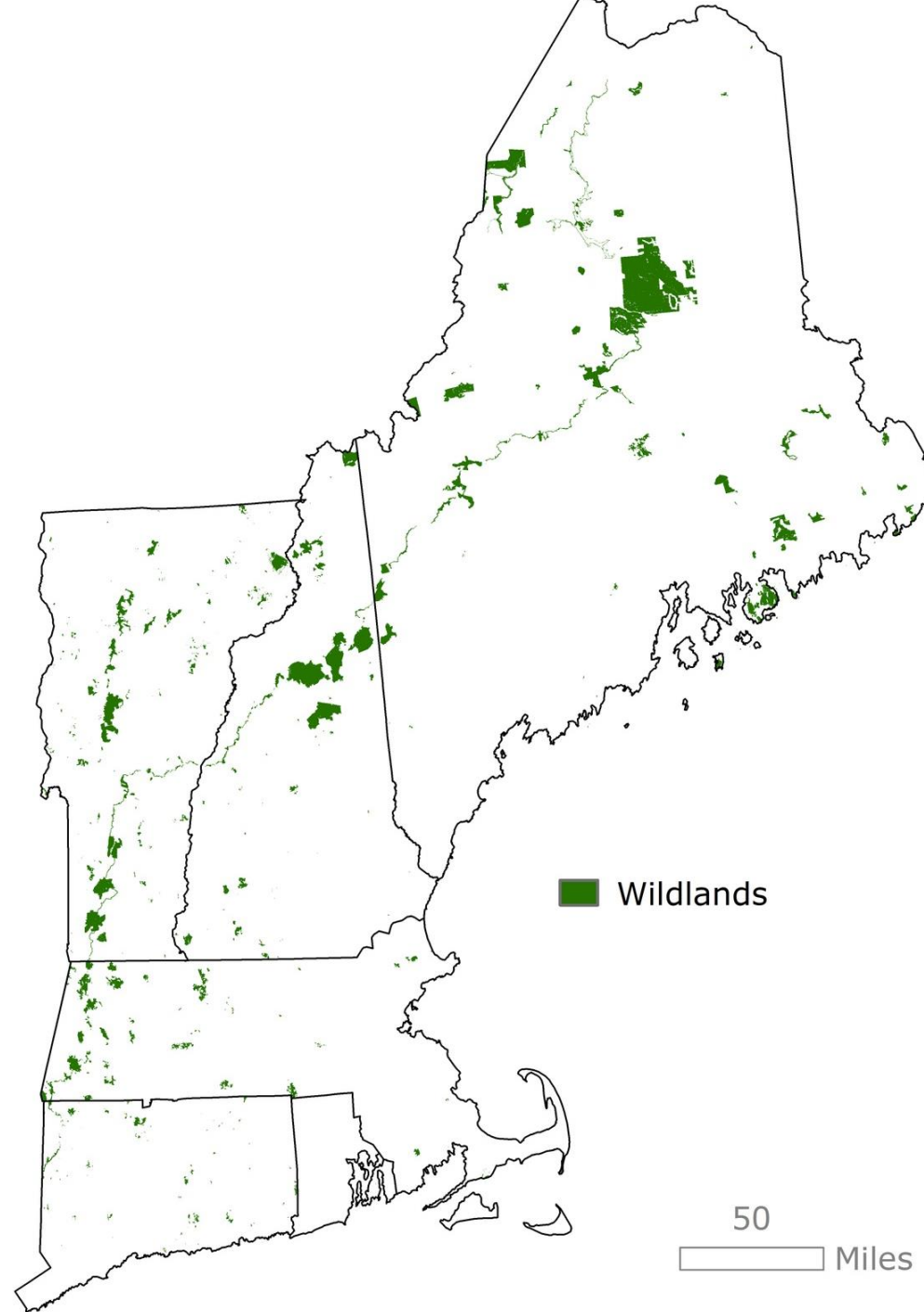


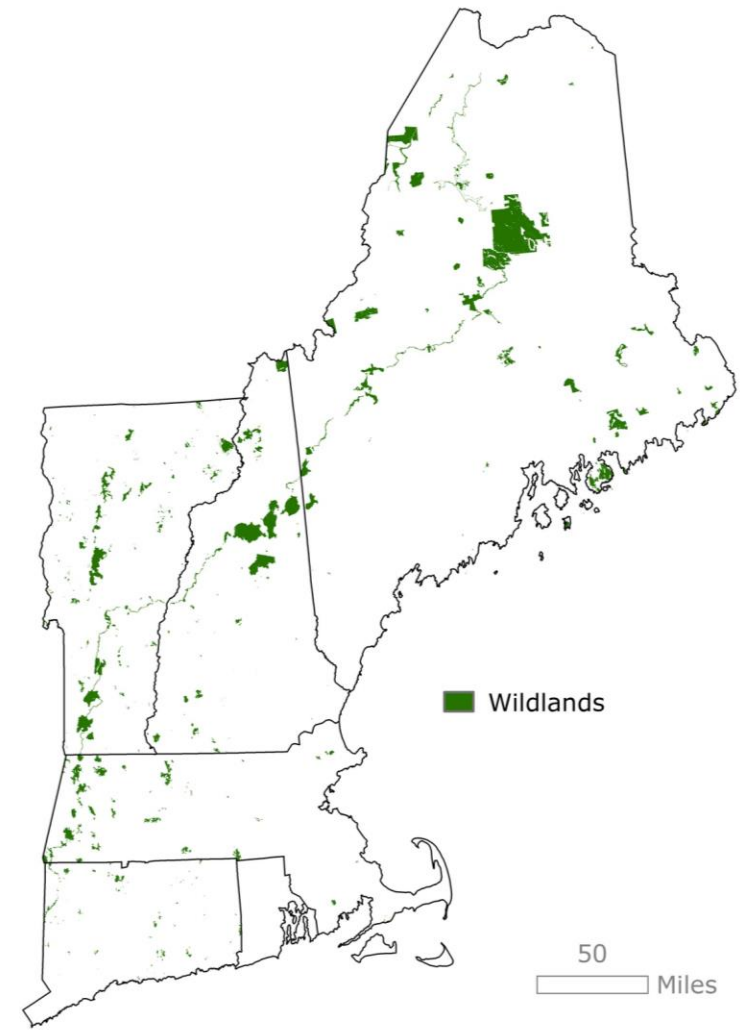
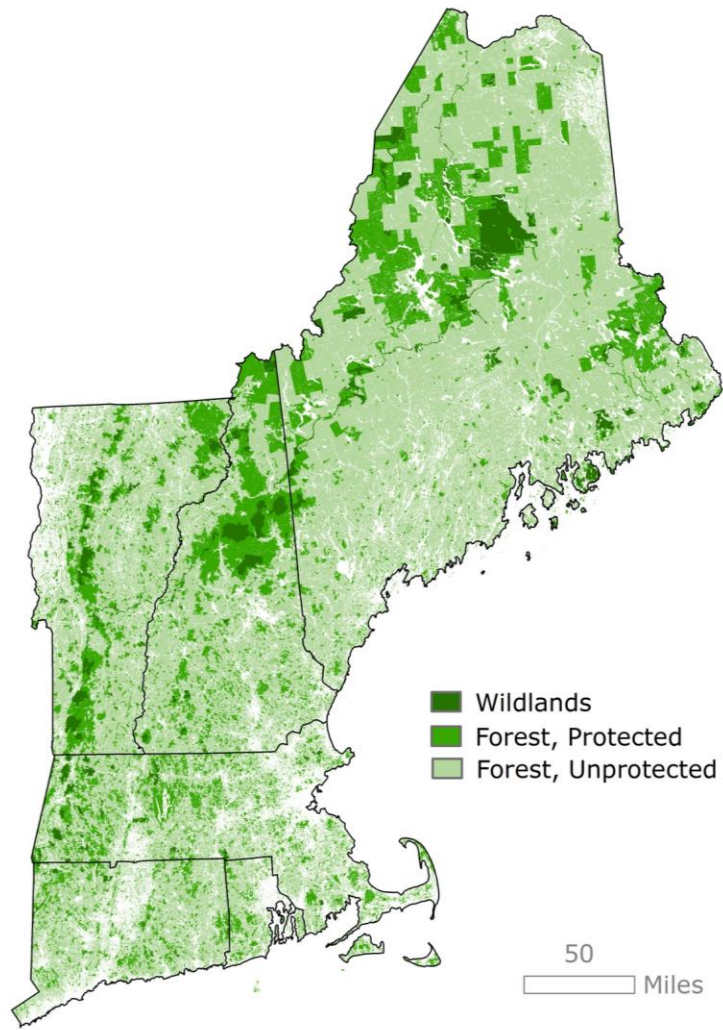
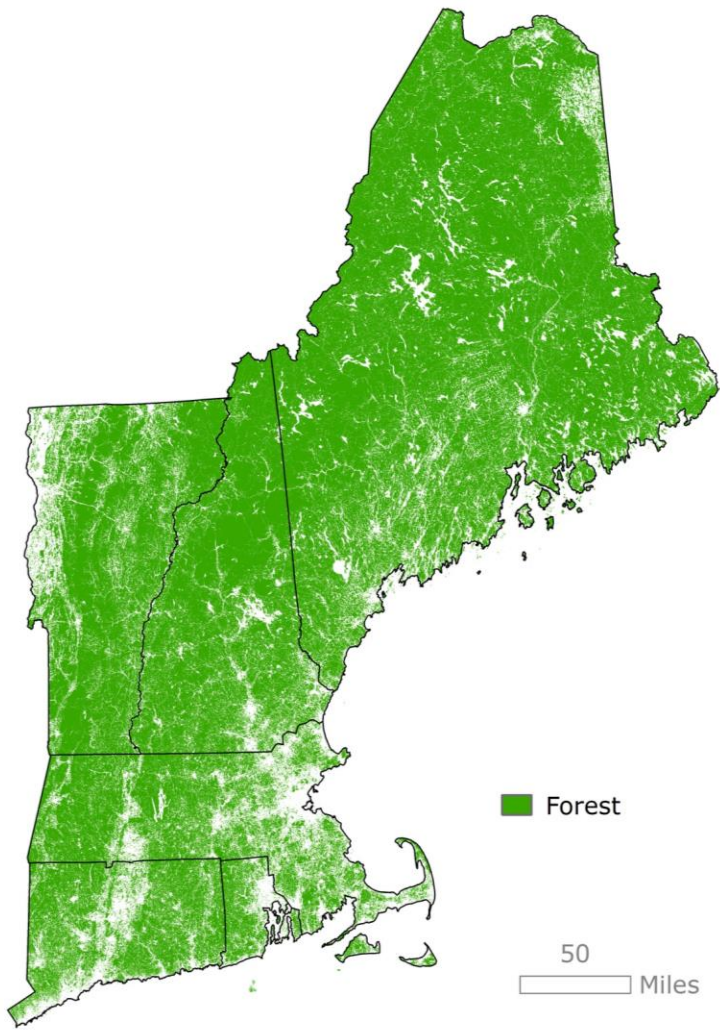
81%

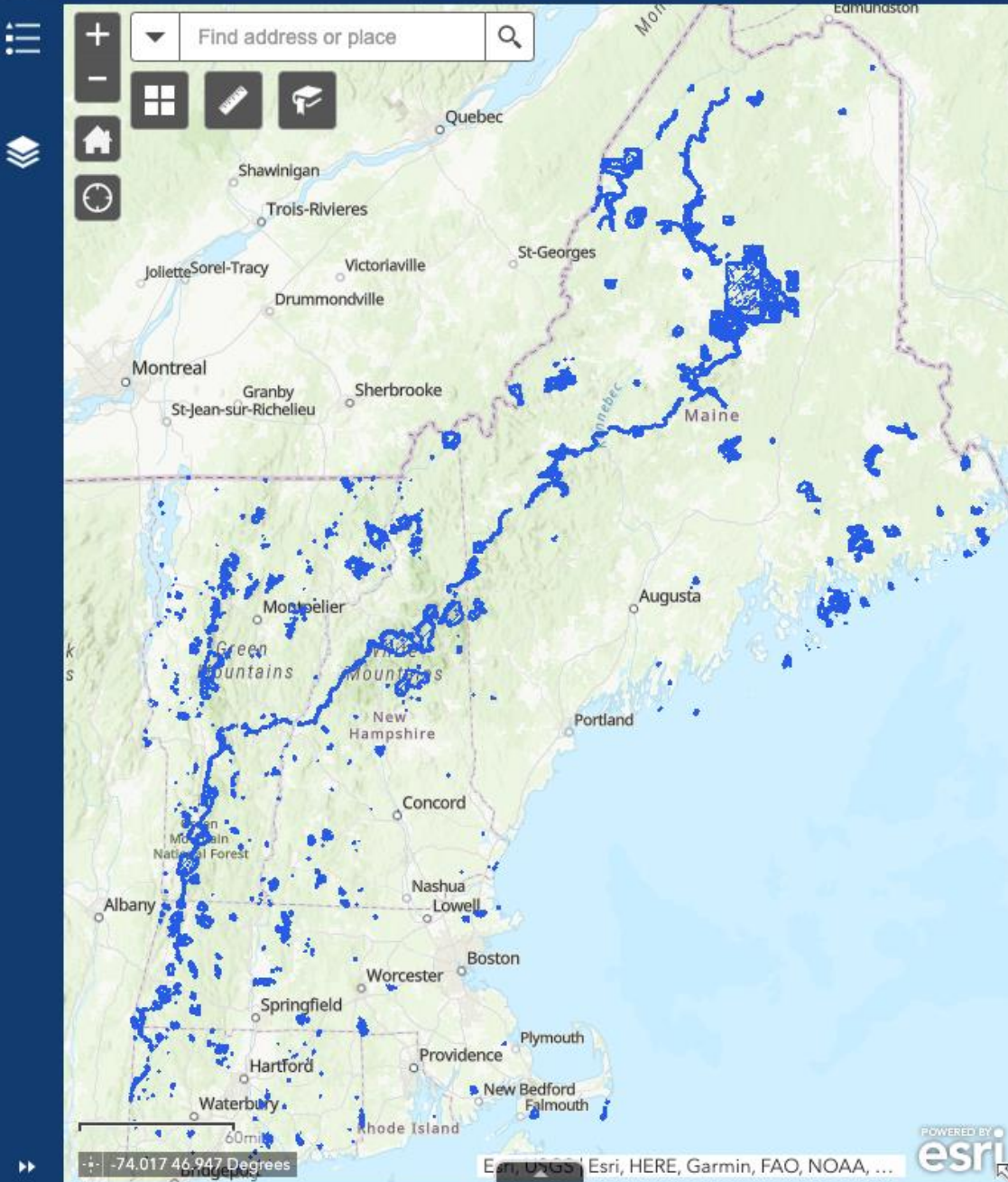
of New England is forest.



3.3%
is Wildlands.

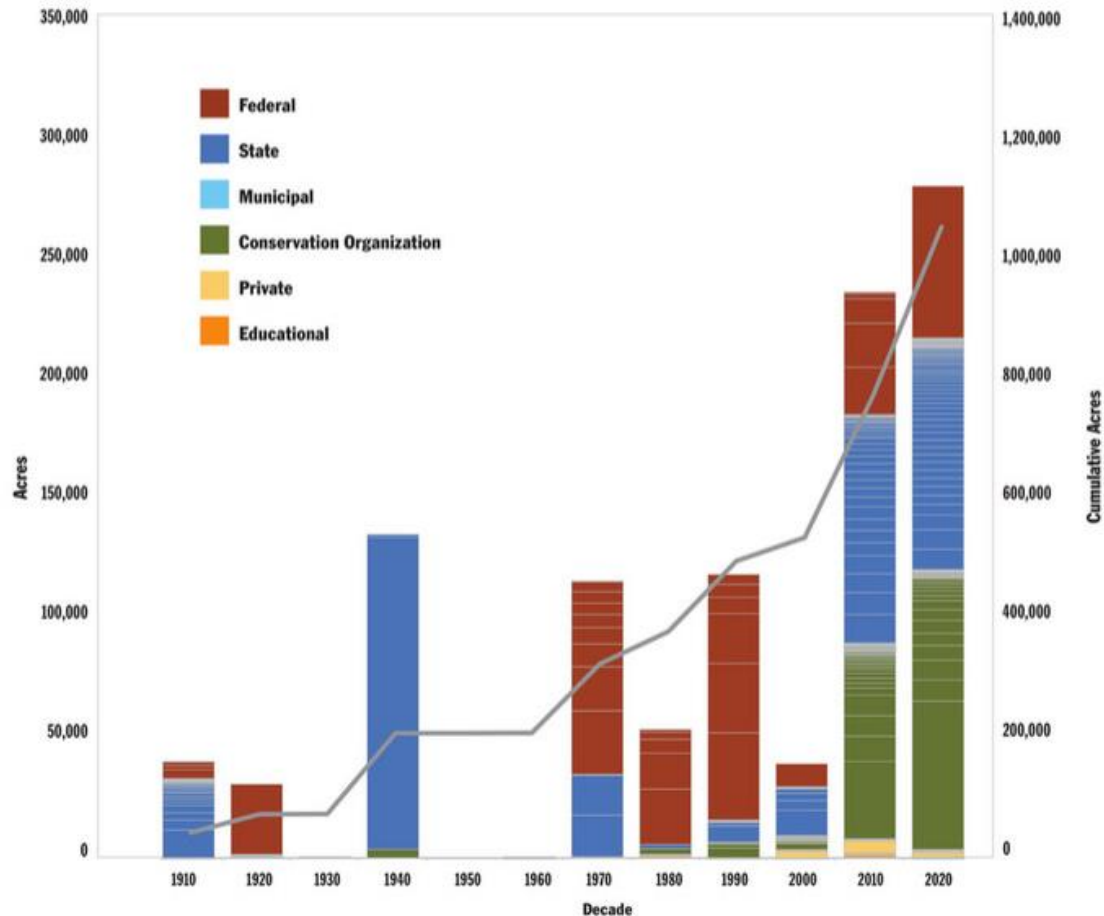






Where are the Wildlands?

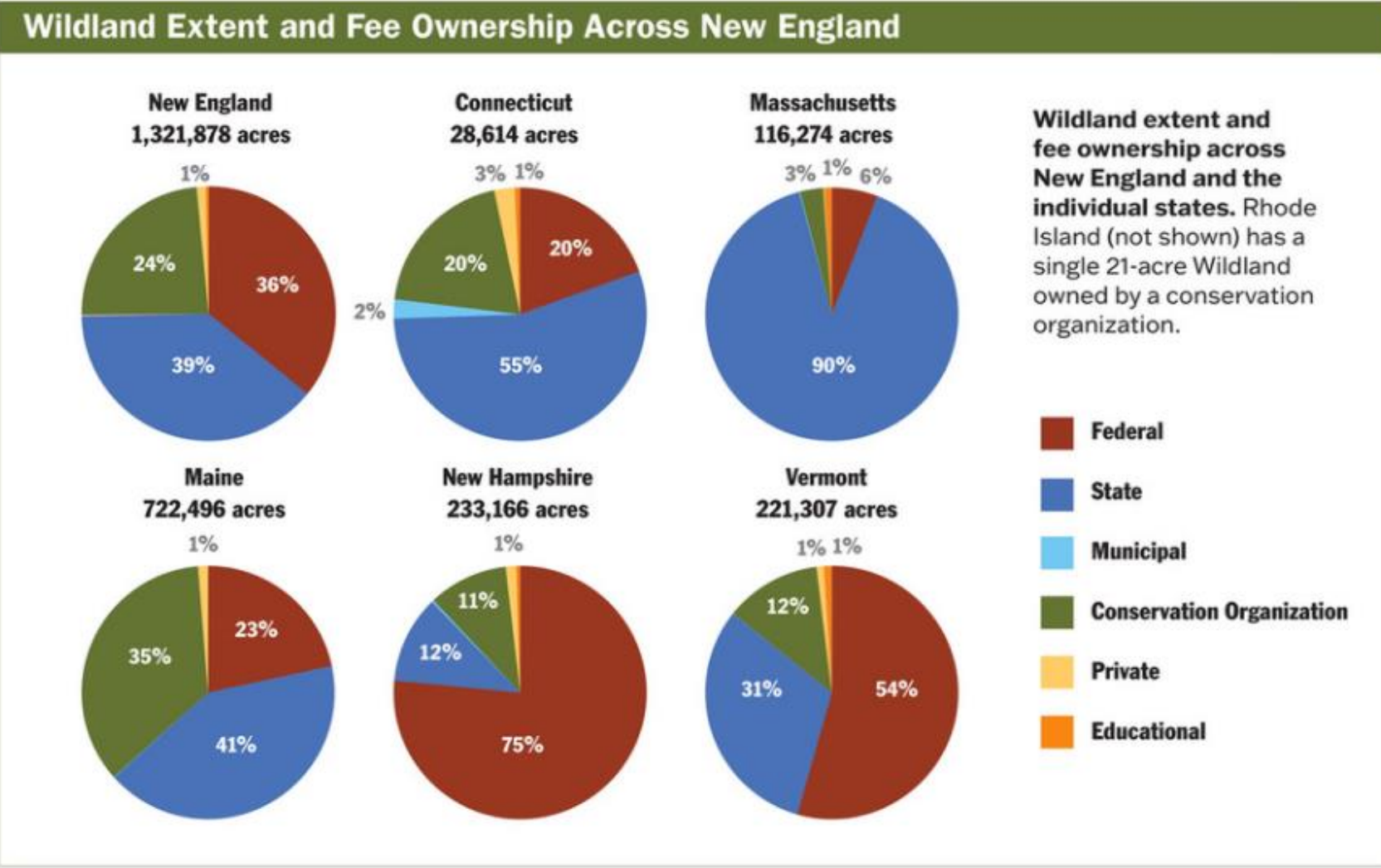
Timeline of Wildland Establishment in New England



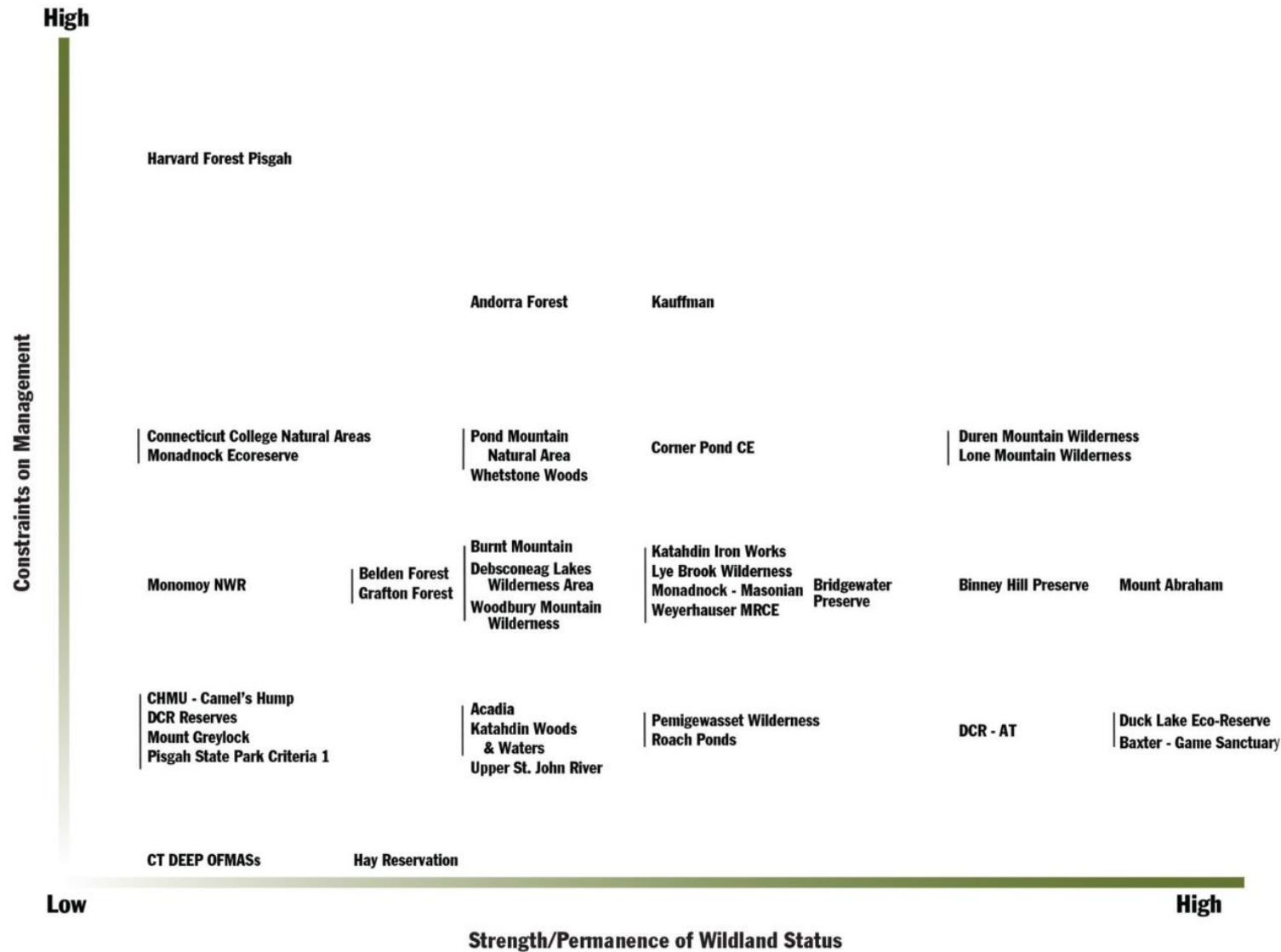
Timeline of Wildland establishment in New England since 1900. Cumulative totals are represented by the gray line. Both the number and total acres of Wildlands established display a large increase in the past two decades.

What is the historic and current protection status of Wildlands?

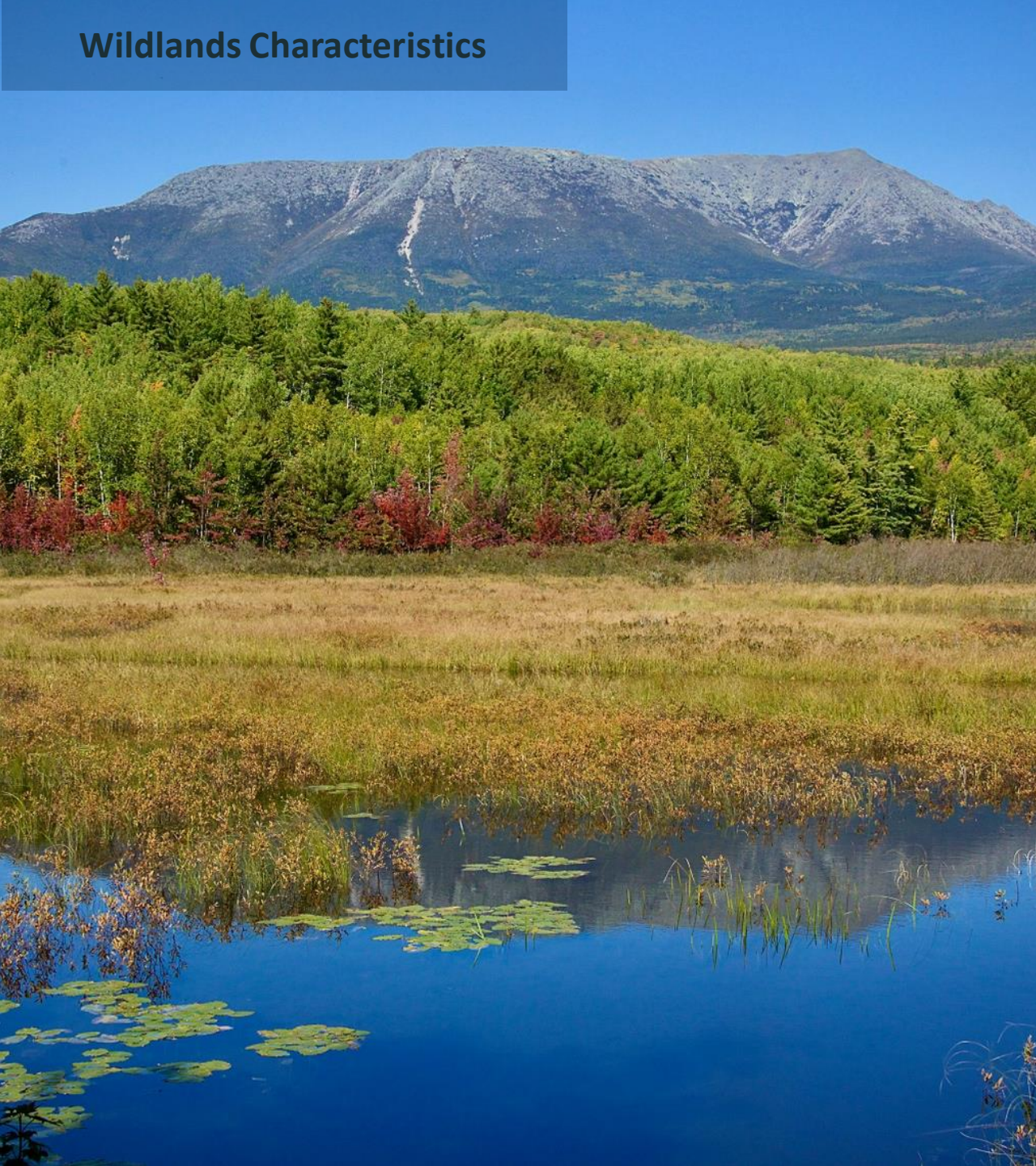
What is their protection status by state?



Gradient of Wildland Status in This Study



What is their protection status in strength of management and permanency of protection?



Baxter State Park

Location: Maine

Size: 157,849.79 acres

Ownership: Baxter State Park Authority (Public trust)

Established: 1931

Protection: Deed restriction; Act/statute (state); Property management plan

Characteristics: Largest Wildland in New England, but small compared to Adirondack Park

Ecology: Large elevational range, Maine's highest peak, diversity of habitats, unusual boreal species and natural communities



Muddy Pond Wilderness Preserve

Location: Massachusetts

Size: 322 acres

Ownership: Northeast Wilderness Trust

Established: 2018

Protection: Owned and managed by non-governmental organization (NEWT)

Characteristics: Suburban landscape, surrounded by development, easy public access, school groups use area

Ecology: Rare Pine Barrens and Coastal Plain Pond, many rare and endangered species



Monhegan Island Wildlands

Location: Maine

Size: 375.10 acres

Ownership: Monhegan Associates Inc. (NGO)

Established: 1954

Protection: NGO policy and management plan

Characteristics: Artists' destination; management challenges with deer and invasive species

Ecology: Coastal Headlands ecosystem, diversity of birds



Groton State Forest

Peacham Bog Natural Area

Location: Vermont

Size: 748 acres

Ownership: State of Vermont, Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

Established: 1965

Protection: Administrative designation and management plan, up for review in near future

Characteristics: State Natural Area, does not protect entire watershed. Boardwalk allows access

Ecology: One of Vermont's largest open peatlands, unusual formation history



Connecticut College Natural Areas

Location: Connecticut

Size: 200 acres

Ownership: Connecticut College

Established:

Protection: Administrative decision and management plan

Characteristics: Associated with Arboretum, easy access for study

Ecology: Salt marshes and other wetlands, wild forests



Vickie Bunnell Preserve

Location: Northern New Hampshire

Size: 10,449.59 acres

Ownership: The Nature Conservancy (NGO)

Established: 2001

Protection: Conservation Easement held by Northeast Wilderness Trust; Management Plan

Characteristics: Large, wild, third-party easement offers greater protection

Ecology: Thirteen peaks over 3000 feet, 30+ miles of stream frontage, significant subalpine spruce-fir forest

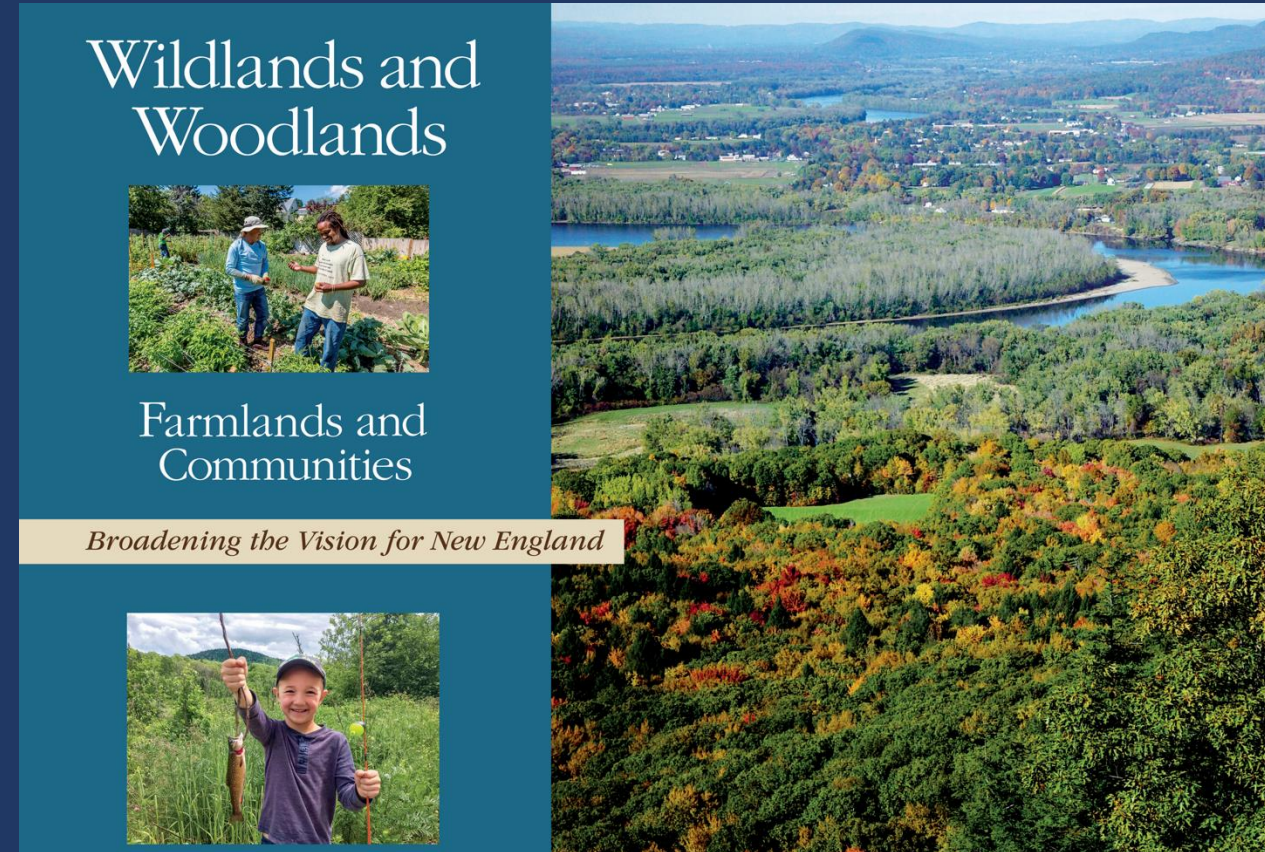
Wildlands in New England

Key Recommendations

Recommendation #1

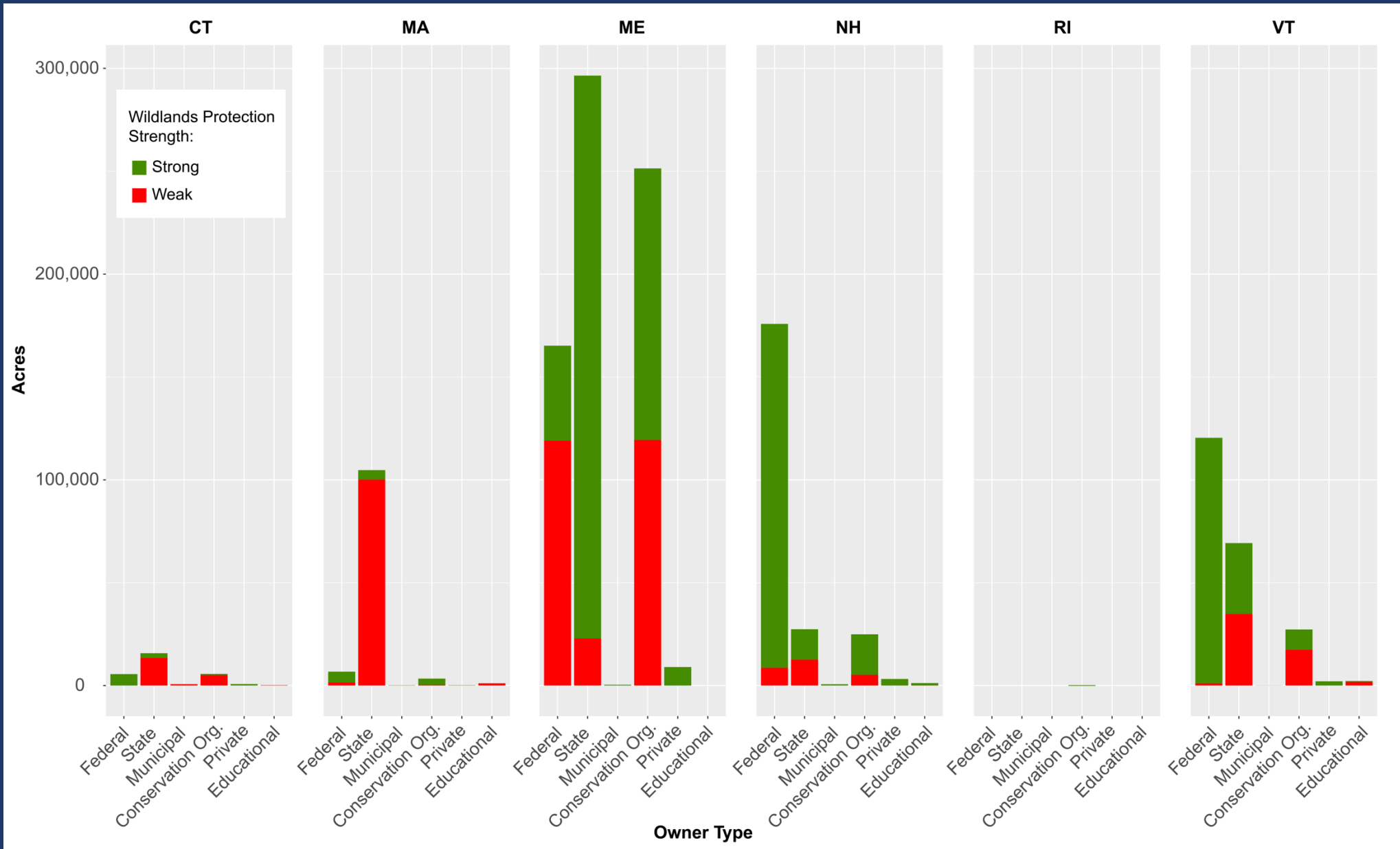
Center Wildlands in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms and sustainably designed communities supported by low carbon, demand-reduction economy.

Integrated Approach

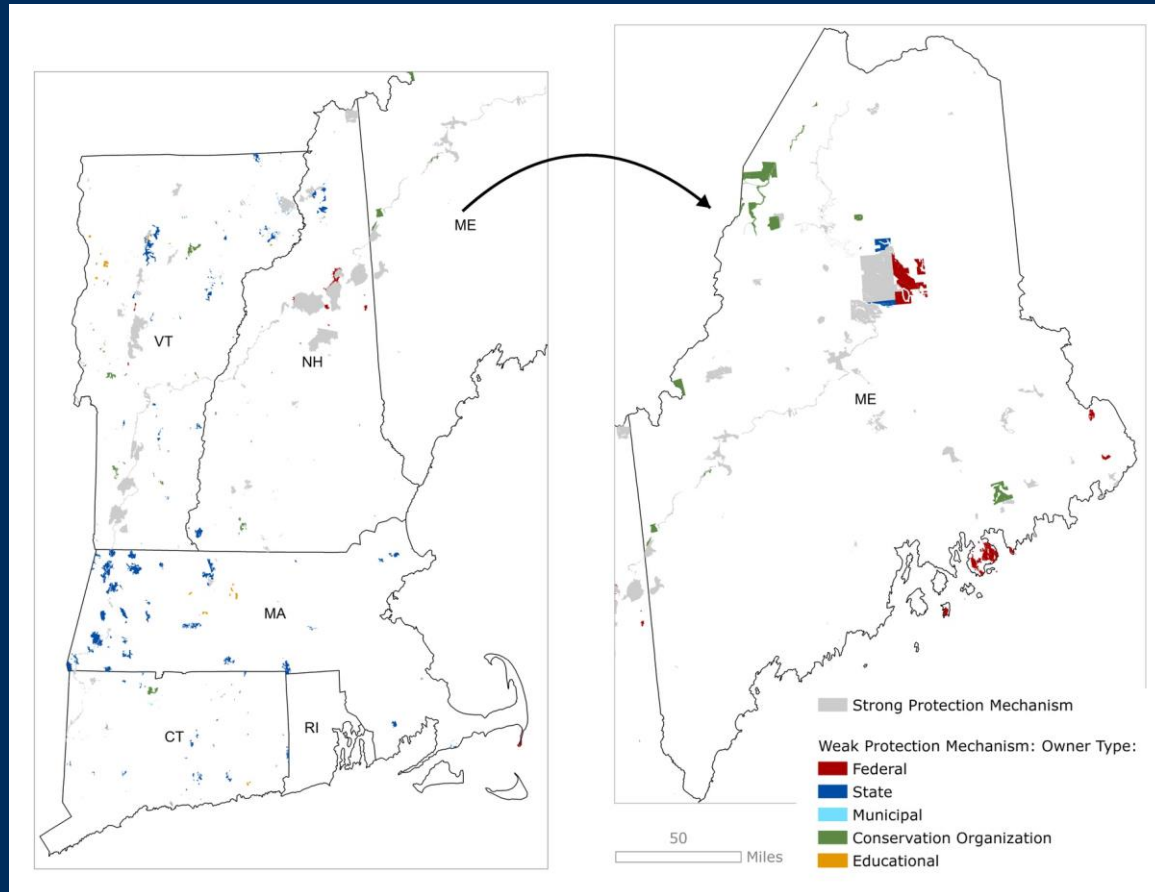


Recommendation #2

Strengthen existing Wildlands



Recommendation #2



Strengthen existing Wildlands, specifically:

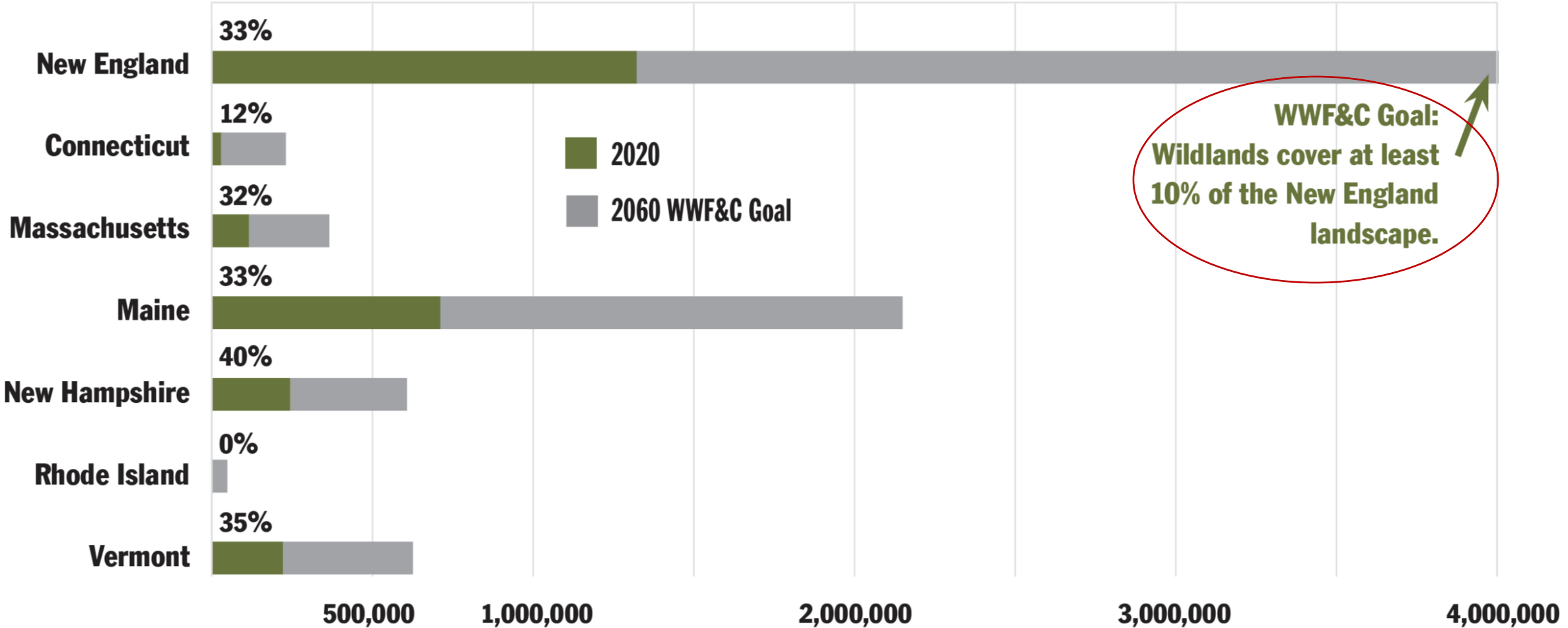
- Develop clear intent
- Reinforce the unique qualities of Wildlands management
- Increase the protection of Wildlands in perpetuity
- Enhance the landscape setting for Wildlands

Recommendation #3 Advance Wildland Conservation

Advance Wildland conservation significantly, thoughtfully, and strategically

- Recognize the region's history when establishing conservation goals
- Embrace humility in conservation
- Realize the vision for landscape-scale Wildlands
- Ensure diverse landowners and groups are included in Wildland conservation
- Advance Wildland policy at local, state, and federal levels
- Increase public and private funding for integrated approaches to land planning and conservation

Current Wildland Extent and WWF&C Goals for 2060



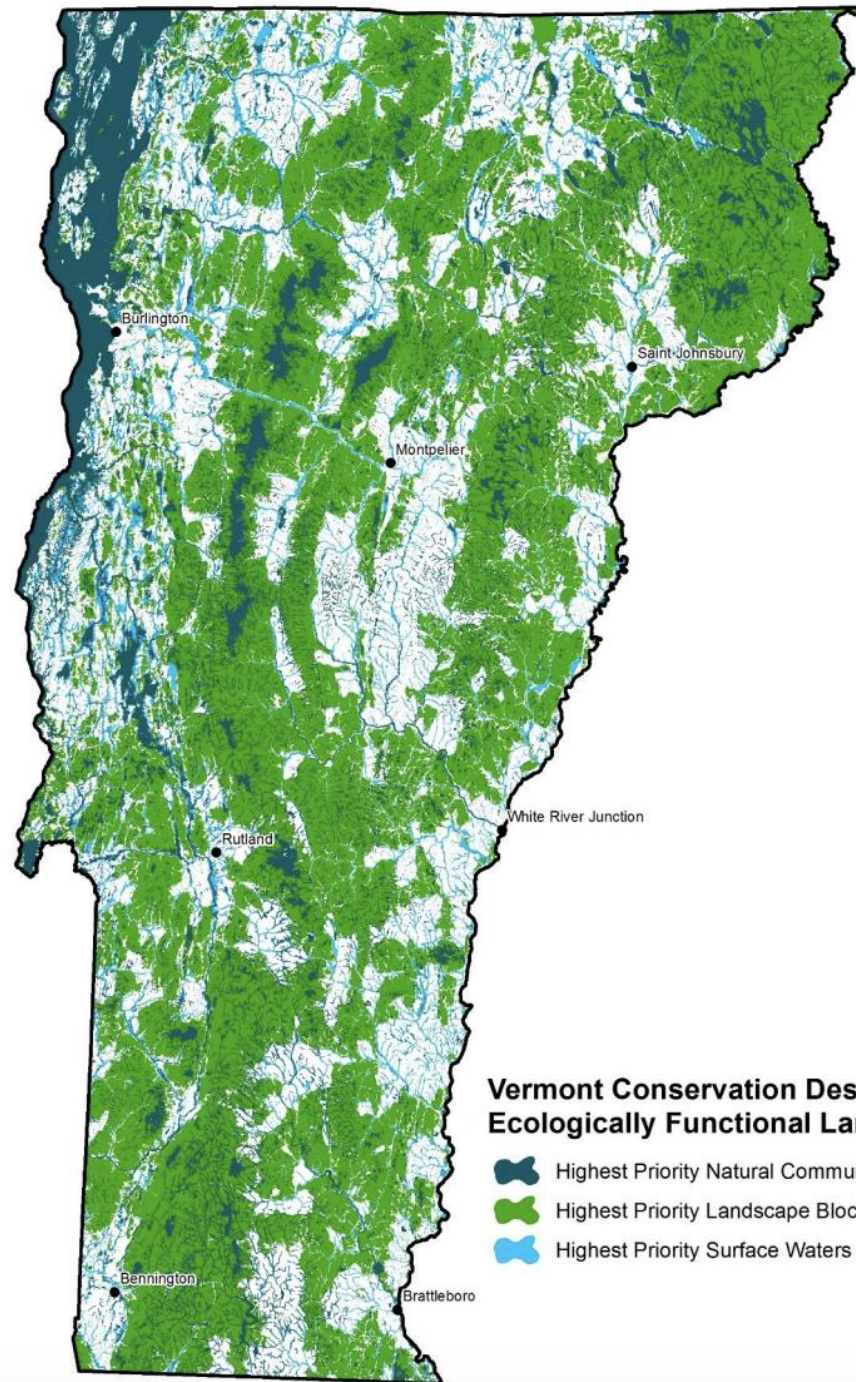
Priorities

- Size, proximity, buffering
- Old forest or potential old forest
- Sensitive sites
- Wetlands
- Riparian areas
- Rare habitats
- Lower elevations
- Underrepresented geophysical settings









Vermont Conservation Design Ecologically Functional Landscape

-  Highest Priority Natural Community & Habitat Features
-  Highest Priority Landscape Blocks
-  Highest Priority Surface Waters and Riparian Areas

A photograph of a forest floor covered in fallen leaves and a large, weathered log. The background shows several thin tree trunks. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Act 59: Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Act
June 12, 2023

Sponsor: Rep. Amy Sheldon

Three categories of conserved areas

1. Biodiversity reserves (Wildlands)
2. Ecological conservation areas (Woodlands)
3. Sustainable resource management areas (Woodlands)



***Old Forest
Vermont Use Value Appraisal
Reserve Forestland - 2022***

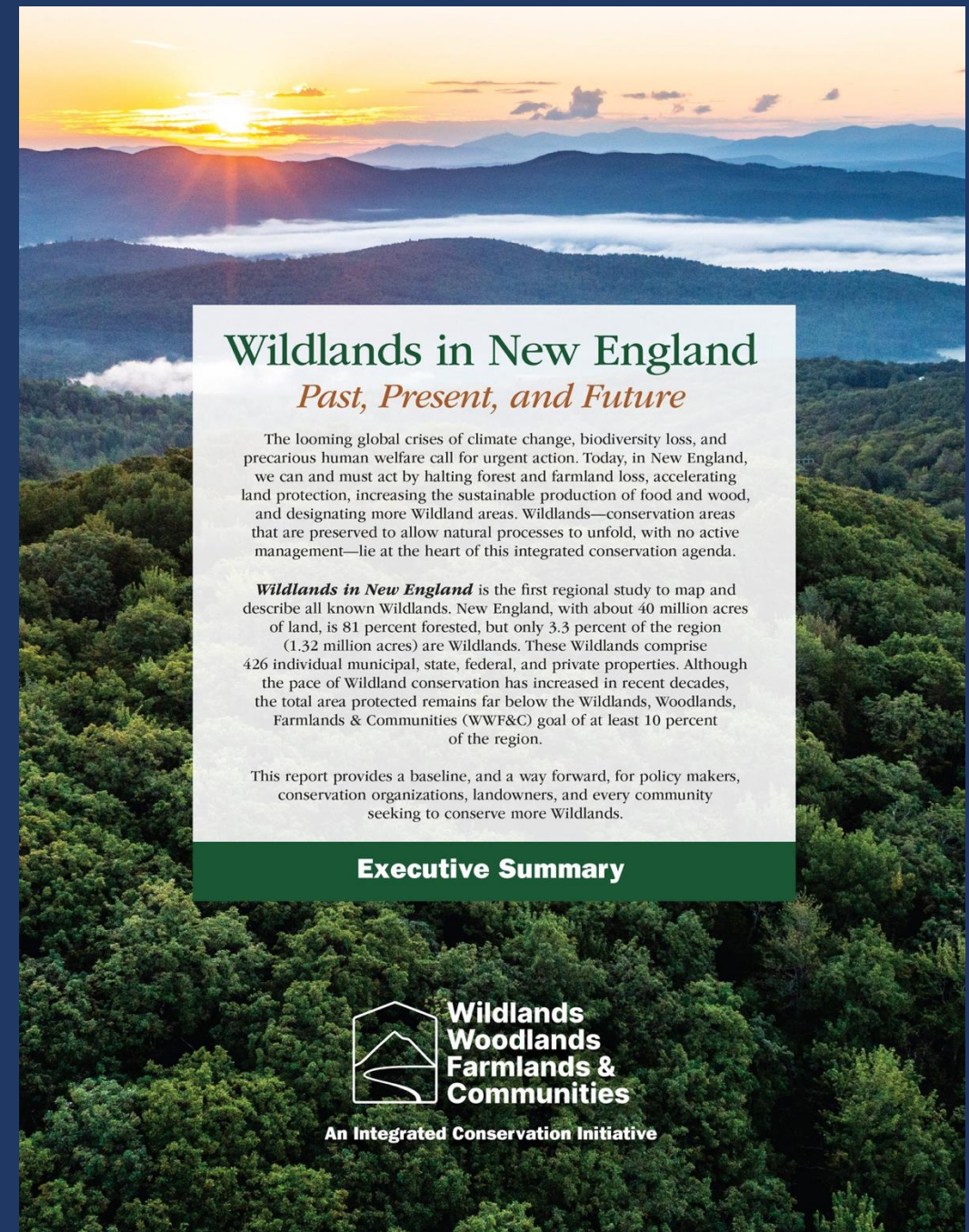
- A parcel can be enrolled if it has “significant and sensitive conditions”
 - Ecologically Significant Treatment Areas
 - Steep Slopes
 - Unproductive land
 - Special Places and Sensitive Sites

Report Products

- **Full Report** 112 pages
- **Executive Summary** 12 pages
- **State Summaries** one for each state
- **Figures**, graphs, tables and illustrations

WWF&C Ongoing Activities

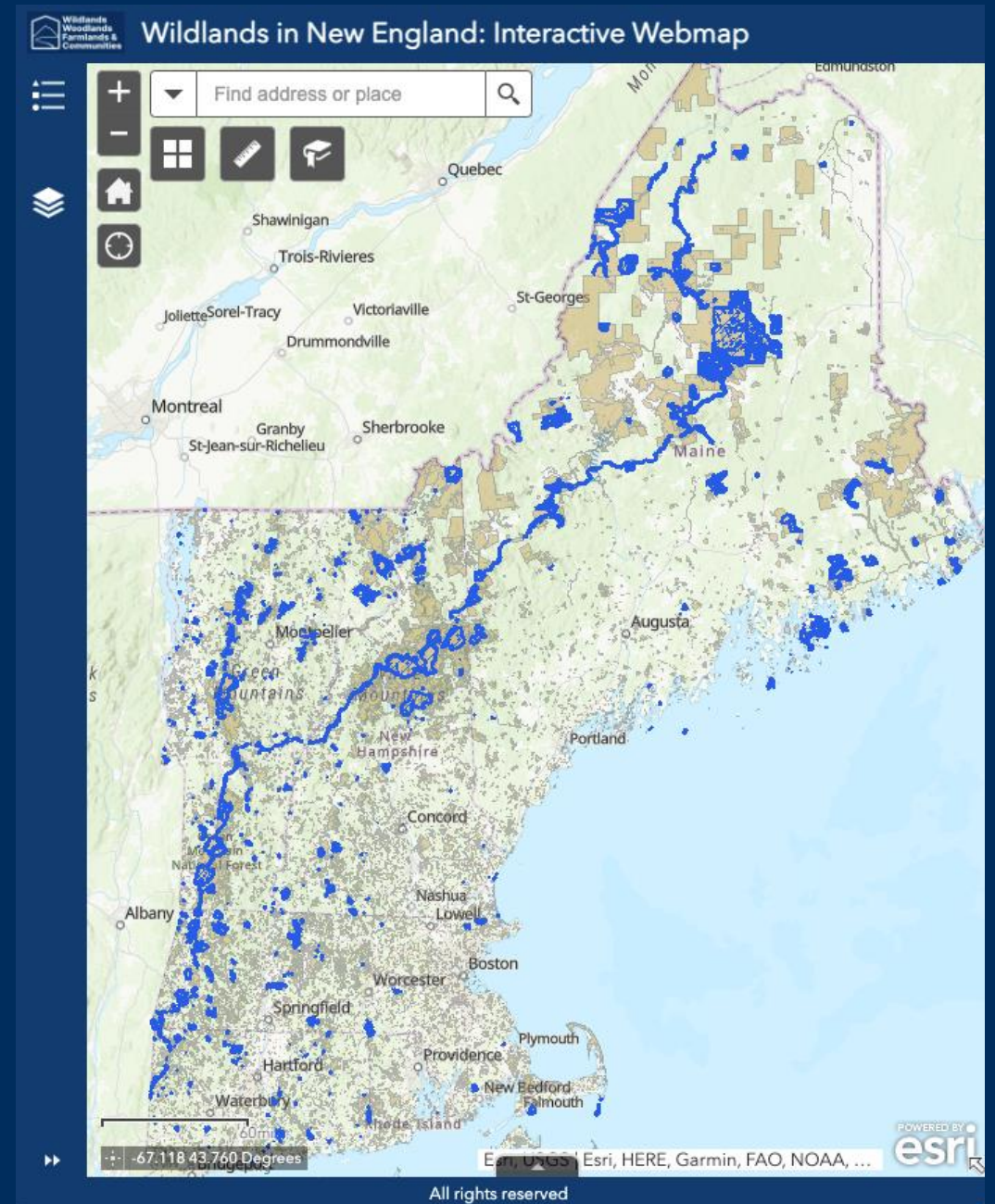
1. **Advance** research, outreach and **policy**
2. **Expand** the New England Protected Open Space database and Interactive Wildlands Webmap
3. **Evaluate** the goal for Wildlands to 20 percent or more
4. **Integrate** Wildland conservation, local food and resource production, and community development



Report Products

Interactive Webmap

wildlandsandwoodlands.org/wildlands-webmap



From the Ground Up

Conversations about conservation, climate, and communities in New England.





Questions?