

Massachusetts Partnership Creates Conservation Synergy

Multiple Landowner Approach Achieves Landscape-Scale Results

The Challenge

Massachusetts is the third most densely populated State, yet it ranks eighth in the Nation in forest cover. Ownerships in the Bay State's rural areas are getting smaller and becoming increasingly fragmented by residential development, reducing the opportunities for forest management. As a result, forest-based industries that rely on local forest management activities are also threatened.

Up until now, north-central Massachusetts has retained a high percentage of adjoining, public and privately owned forest land, though this is not expected to last. The window of opportunity to protect these relatively intact natural and cultural resources and traditions is gradually closing. The business-as-usual approach of funding one parcel at a time for conservation will not be enough to secure a viable forest land base that is both diverse and supports future generations.

The Solution

The U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program (FLP), administered in the Northeast by Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, works with States and private landowners to identify and conserve environmentally important forests that are threatened with conversion to nonforest uses. Bringing together multiple owners in land protection projects conserves significant forest blocks and high-quality watersheds at a landscape scale in the shortest amount of time. The pioneering Quabbin Corridor Connection (QCC) project was a multitract effort that involved a large number of landowners in a single FLP project.

The QCC project was modeled after the Tully Valley Private Forest Lands Initiative, a Massachusetts public-private partnership that protected 9,000 acres with 104 different ownerships during a 2-year period. In Massachusetts, projects involving multiple landowners are also being used to achieve the goals of the two-state Quabbin to Cardigan Initiative, a landscape-scale collaboration based in New Hampshire.

Resulting Benefits

- The Quabbin Corridor Connection Forest Legacy project collectively conserves 18 parcels with different ownerships ranging from 7 to 700 acres and totaling 1,689 acres.
- All but one of the 18 parcels adjoin either another parcel



This forest and wetland are part of the Quabbin Corridor Connection Forest Legacy project. Photo by Nicholas Holland

or already protected land in a variety of Federal, State, municipal, and nonprofit conservation areas across a 9-mile landscape.

- Landowners with parcels that might not have competed successfully for funding on their own were able to protect their family forest land and help continue longstanding forest stewardship practices.

Sharing Success

Successful completion of the QCC project was made possible because of the partnership and collaboration among a number of players, including the Massachusetts Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Fish & Game, and Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs; the towns of Petersham, Barre, and Phillipston; the U.S. Forest Service; and three not-for-profit organizations—Harvard Forest, Massachusetts Audubon Society, and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

The QCC project's success has prompted two additional multiple landowner Forest Legacy projects in the Bay State: the Southern Monadnock Plateau and Metacomet Monadnock Forest projects. Subsequently, a consortium of seven Massachusetts-based land trusts has combined 77 projects totaling 11,500 acres into the Wildlands & Woodlands Conservation Project – Western Massachusetts Aggregation. This project is primarily seeking private funding and further reinforcing the need for a multiple landowner approach to conservation. Other States have also successfully secured FLP funding using a multitract approach.



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