



Hudson to
Housatonic

Community & Conservation Connections Forum

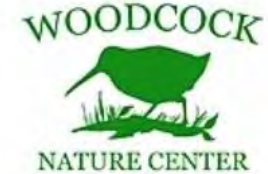
Welcome!







- 1 - 12 Rivers Conservation Initiative
- 2 - Belknap Range Conservation Coalition
- 3 - Berkshire-Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership
- 4 - Berkshire Wildlife Linkage Partnership
- 5 - Blackstone Watershed Collaborative
- 6 - Blue Ridge Conservation Alliance
- 7 - Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership (CVCP)
- 8 - Chateauguay No Town Conservation Project
- 9 - Chittenden County Uplands Conservation Project
- 10 - Cold Hollow to Canada Forest Link Project
- 11 - Downeast Conservation Network
- 12 - Forever Farmland Initiative
- 13 - Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
- 14 - Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership
- 15 - Greater Portland Conservation and Trail Initiative
- 16 - Heart of Maryland Conservation Alliance
- 17 - High Peaks Initiative
- 18 - Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership
- 19 - Kennebec Woodland Partnership
- 20 - Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative
- 21 - Lower CT River and Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange
- 22 - Maine Mountain Collaborative
- 23 - Maine West
- 24 - Mass-Conn Sustainable Forest Partnership
- 25 - Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens Partnership
- 26 - Merrimack Conservation Partnership
- 27 - Metrowest Conservation Alliance
- 28 - Mid Champlain Valley RCP (MCV RCP)
- 29 - Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative
- 30 - Newfoundland Conservation Partnership
- 31 - North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership
- 32 - Orange County Headwaters Project
- 33 - Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership
- 34 - Quiet Corner Initiative
- 35 - Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership
- 36 - Rappahannock River Roundtable
- 37 - Resilient Taunton Watershed Network
- 38 - Rhode Island Woodland Partnership
- 39 - River-Link
- 40 - Saco Headwaters Alliance
- 41 - Saco Watershed Collaborative
- 42 - Safe Water Conservation Collaborative
- 43 - Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative
- 44 - Sebago Clean Waters
- 45 - Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor Project
- 46 - South Central Regional Land Conservation Alliance
- 47 - South Mountain Partnership
- 48 - Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance
- 49 - Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership
- 50 - Staying Connected Initiative
- 51 - Taylor Valley Conservation Project
- 52 - Thames River Basin Partnership
- 53 - Western Maine Partners



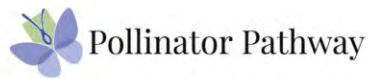


VISION:

A landscape mosaic abundant in forests, farms, wildlands, and waterways of the Hudson to Housatonic Region enriches the quality of life for all who live, work and play here.

MISSION:

The H2H partner network advances the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship from the Hudson to the Housatonic by collaborating across boundaries to enhance the connection between people and nature.



Pollinator Pathway

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Inspiring, Educating
And Supporting
Diverse
Communities
Working Together
To Restore And
Connect Habitat For
Pollinators



The Green Corridor Initiative

Helping Improve Local Biodiversity

www.AspetuckLandTrust.org

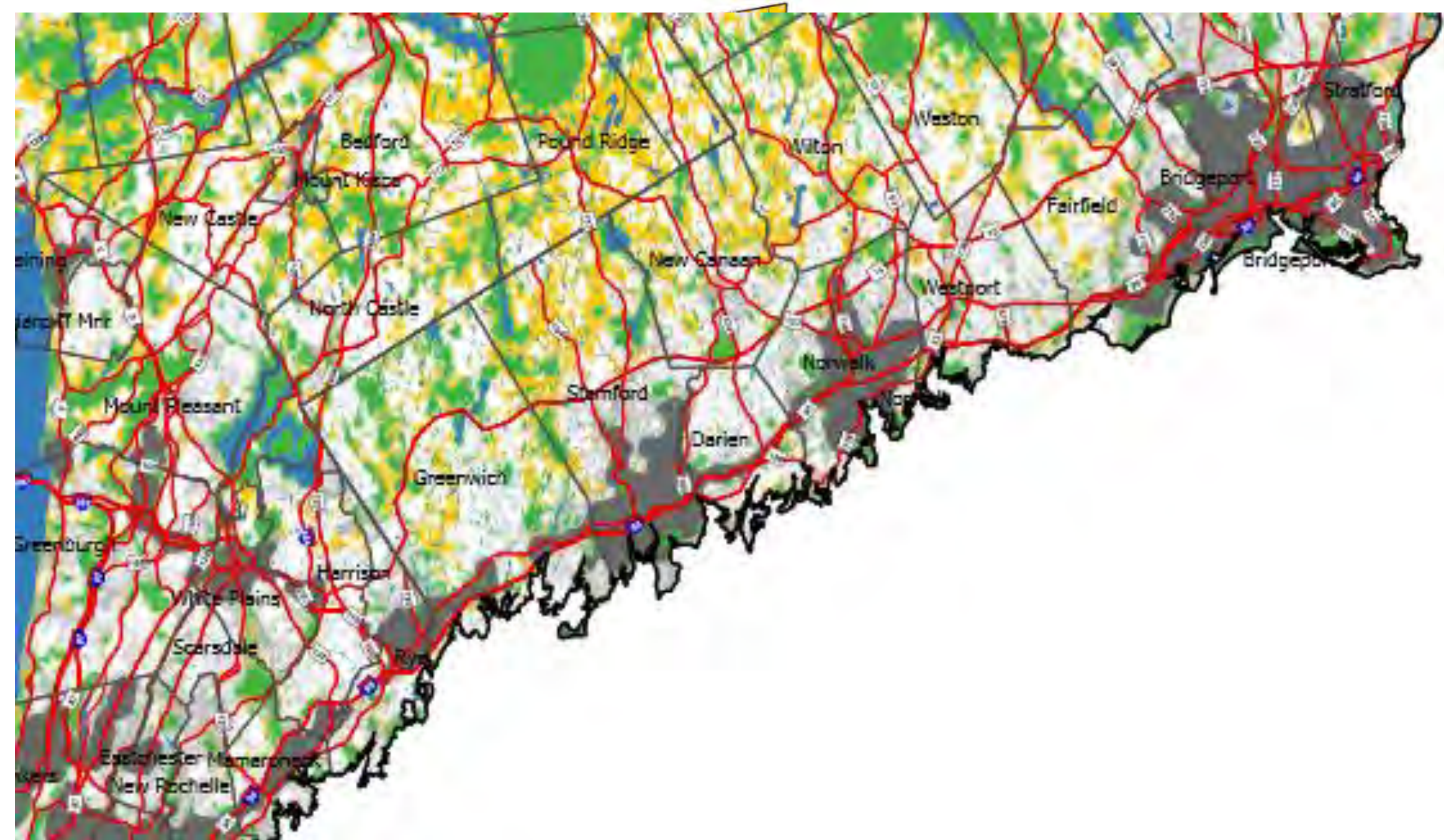


Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership

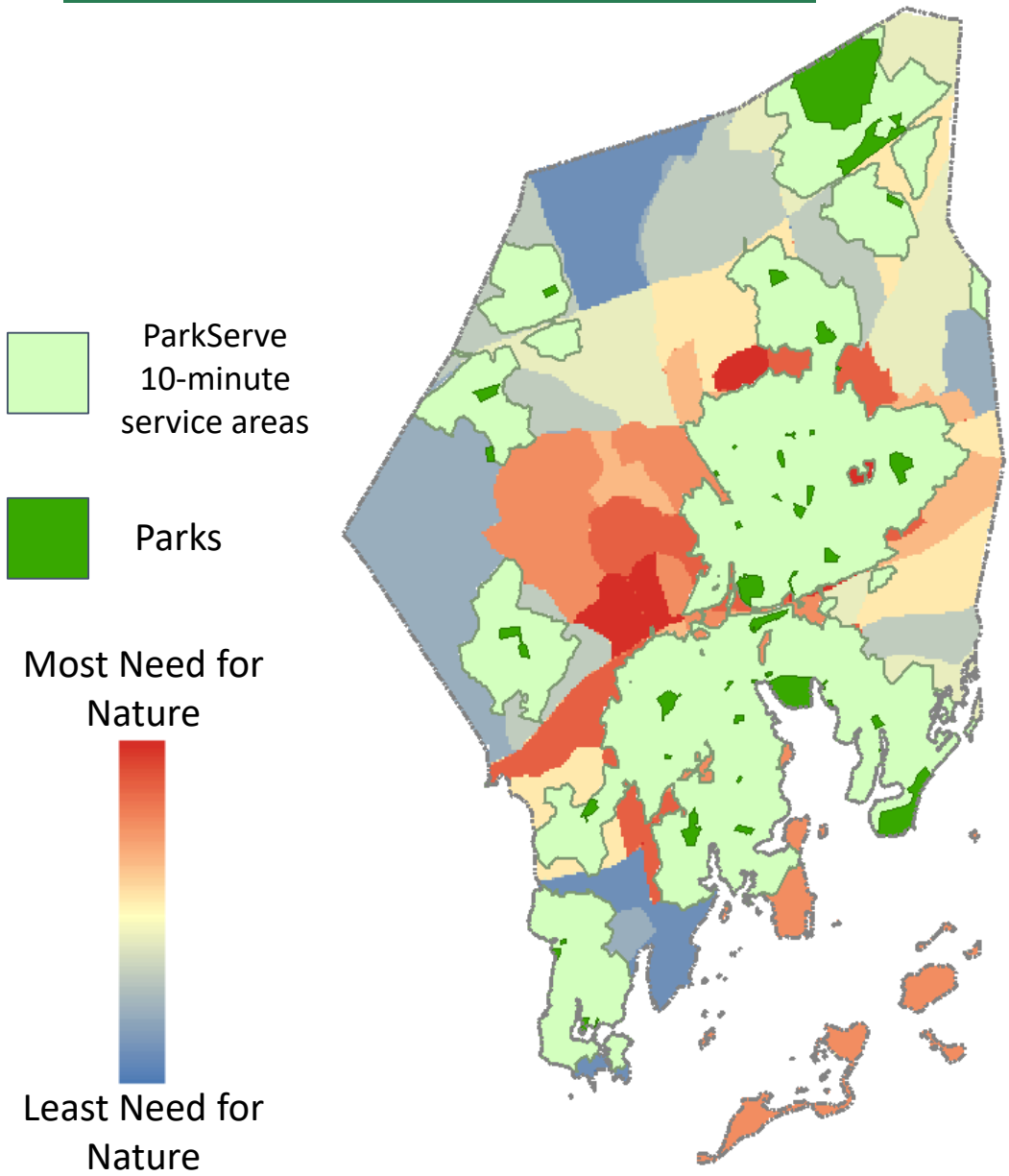
CONSERVATION STRATEGY

h2hrcp.org
April 28, 2022

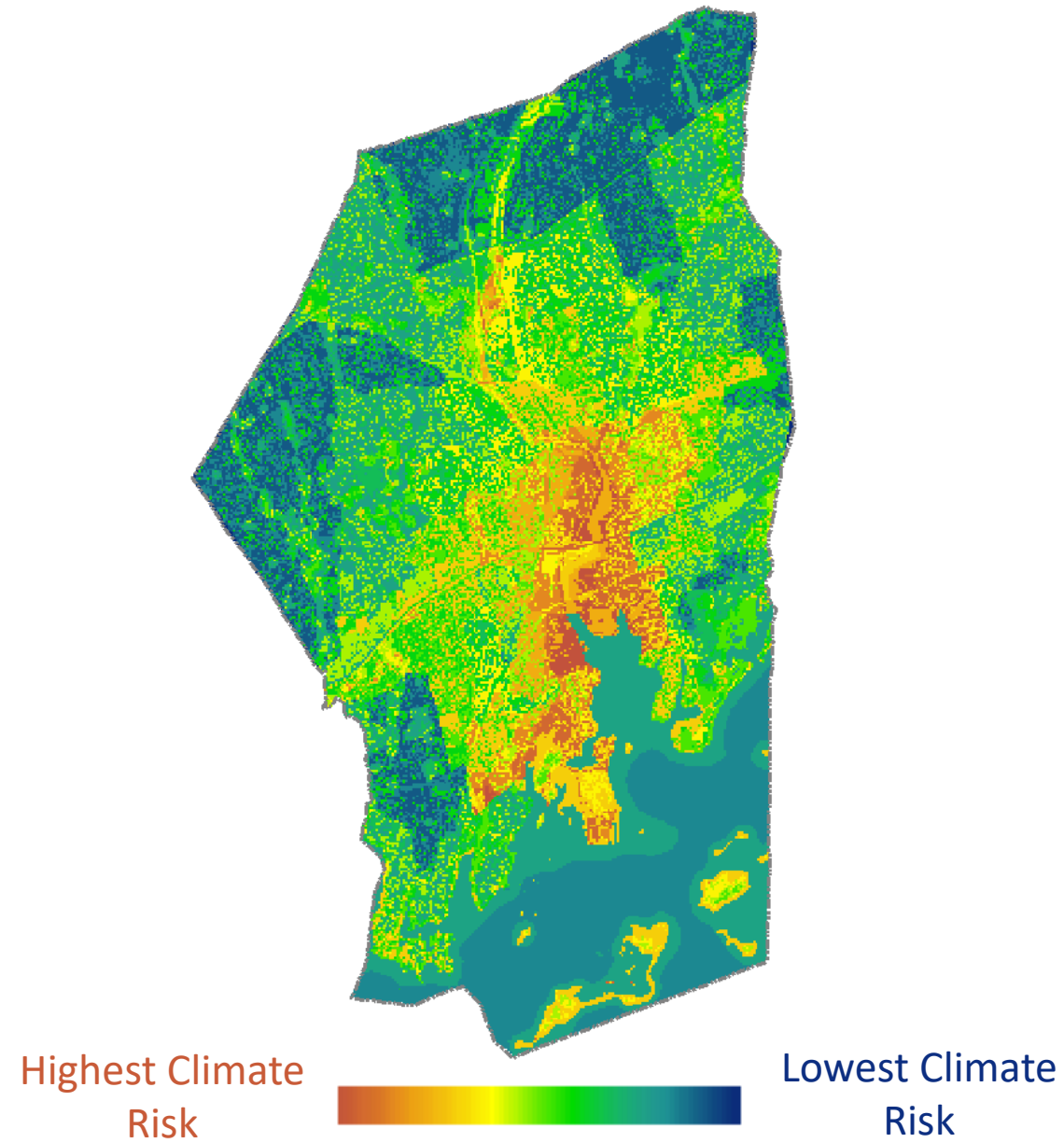


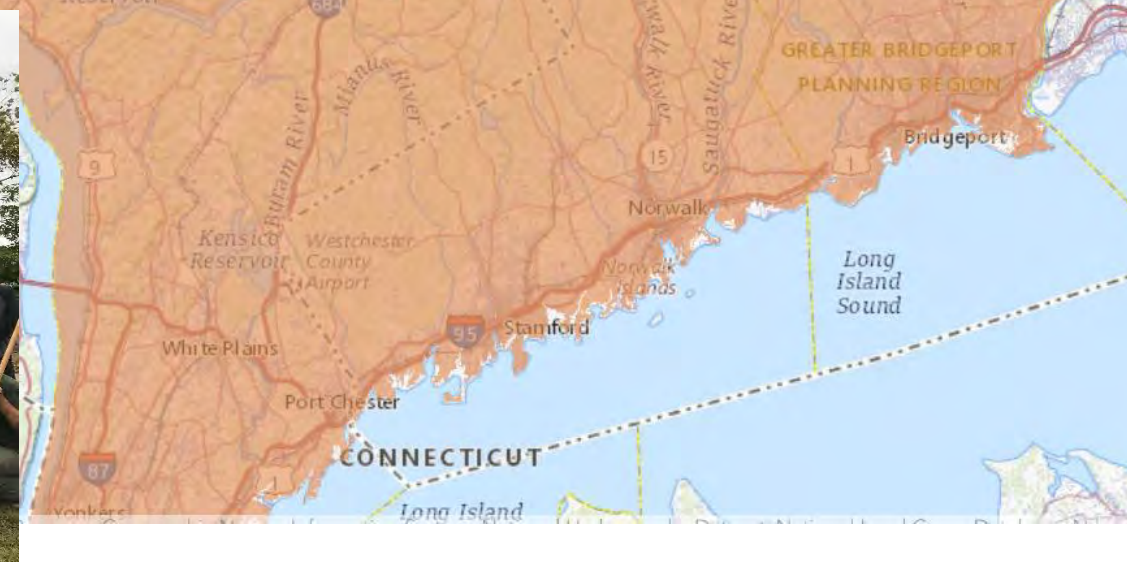
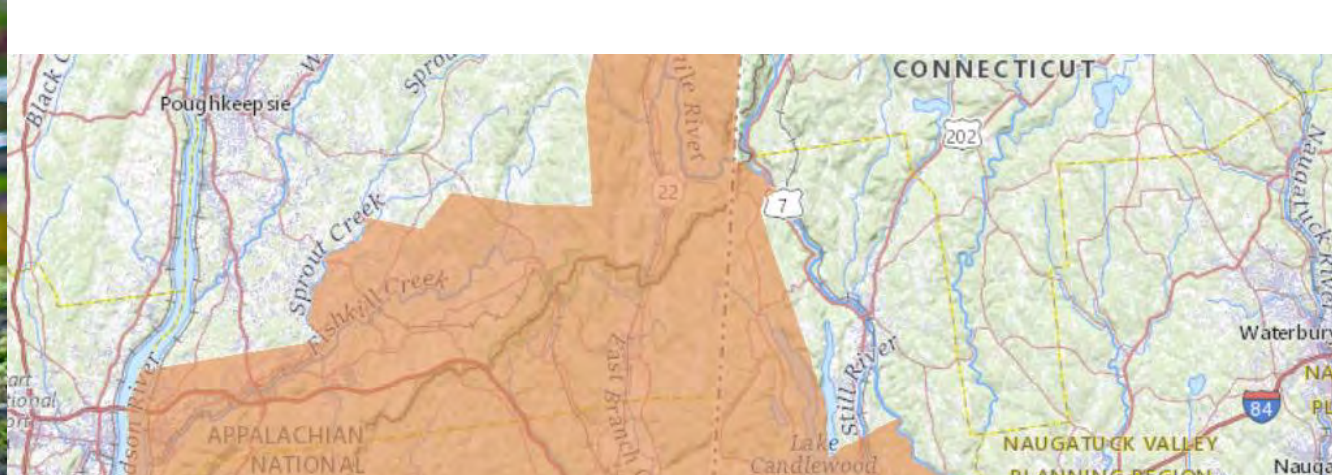


Equitable access to nature



Climate Change Risk areas





Forum Outcomes:

- Learn who in the H2H region are helping to make connections between people and nature
- Gain new perspectives on work happening between communities and conservation groups to meet complex needs
- Build new and deepen existing relationships with one another through networking and discussion opportunities
- Provide input as to what will support their work of this kind in the region and with local communities
- Identify opportunities to work together on shared conservation and community goals

Time	Session
4:00 pm	Networking, Refreshments, and Visit Partner Tables
4:45 pm	Welcome: Katie Blake, Coordinator, H2H RCP; Conservationist, Highstead
5:00 pm	<p>Panel: Community and Conservation Connections</p> <p>Connecting the community in urban habitat restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louise Washer, President, Norwalk River Watershed Association; Board member for the Pollinator Pathway Network; Steering committee member H2H RCP • Lisa Shanahan, Common Council Member, City of Norwalk; President, Norwalk Land Trust; Steering committee member, H2H RCP <p>Conservation organizations connecting with communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reggy St. Fortcolin, Conservation Outreach Manager, Aspetuck Land Trust <p>Native plants connecting agriculture and ecological restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam Choper, Farm Director, Hilltop Hanover Farm, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation • Jessica Schuler, Program Coordinator for Natural Resources, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation; Steering committee member, H2H RCP <p>Connecting wildlife corridors in partnership with municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Nagy, Director of Research and Education, Mianus River Gorge <p><i>Moderator: Katie Blake – H2H/Highstead</i></p>
6:00 pm	Audience Engagement: Q & A
6:30 pm	Networking and Connecting
7:00 pm	Farewell and Thanks for Attending!

Our Speakers:

Connecting the community in urban habitat restoration

- **Louise Washer**, President, Norwalk River Watershed Association; Board member for the Pollinator Pathway Network; Steering committee member H2H RCP
- **Lisa Shanahan**, Common Council Member, City of Norwalk; President, Norwalk Land Trust; Steering committee member, H2H RCP

Conservation organizations connecting with communities

- **Reggy St. Fortcolin**, Conservation Outreach Manager, Aspetuck Land Trust

Native plants connecting agriculture and ecological restoration

- **Adam Choper**, Farm Director, Hilltop Hanover Farm, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation
- **Jessica Schuler**, Program Coordinator for Natural Resources, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation; Steering committee member, H2H RCP

Connecting wildlife corridors in partnership with municipalities

- **Chris Nagy**, Director of Research and Education, Mianus River Gorge

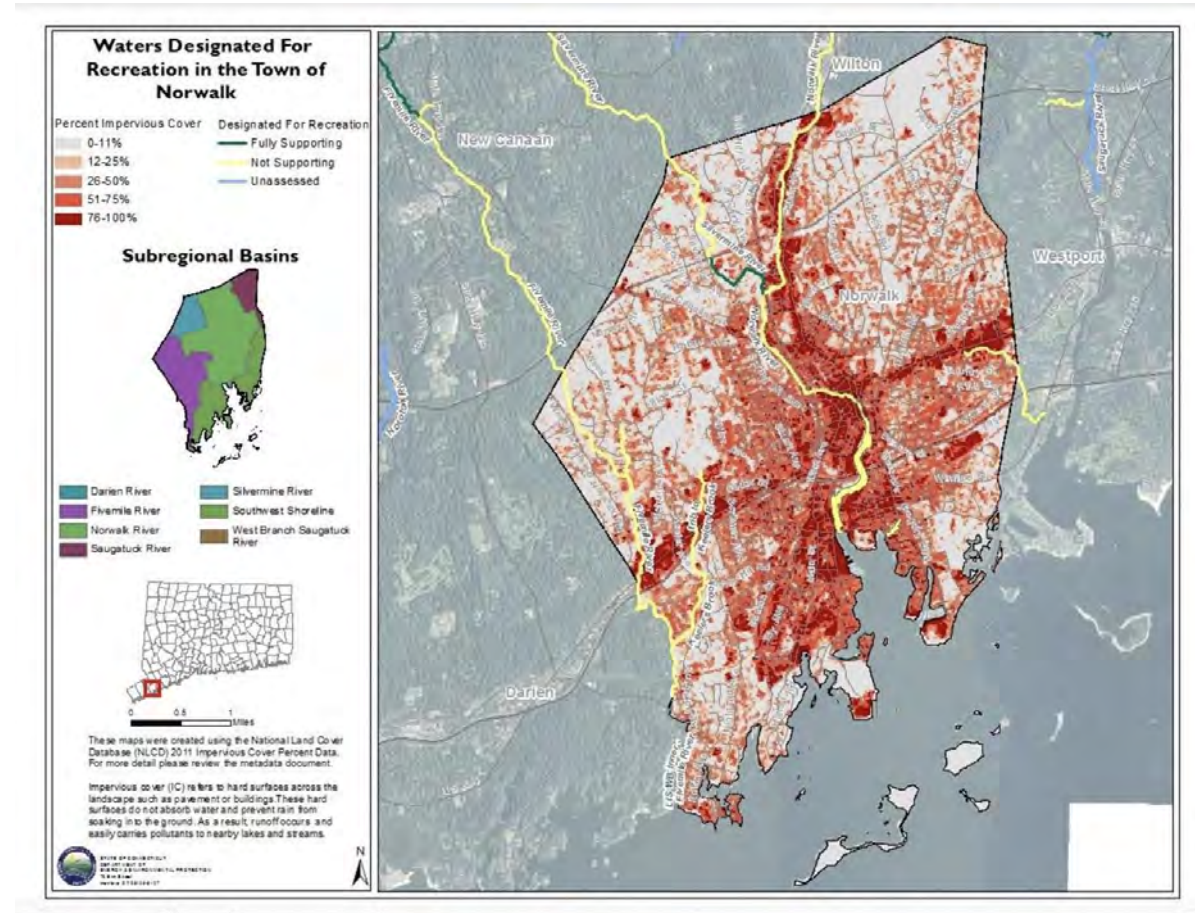
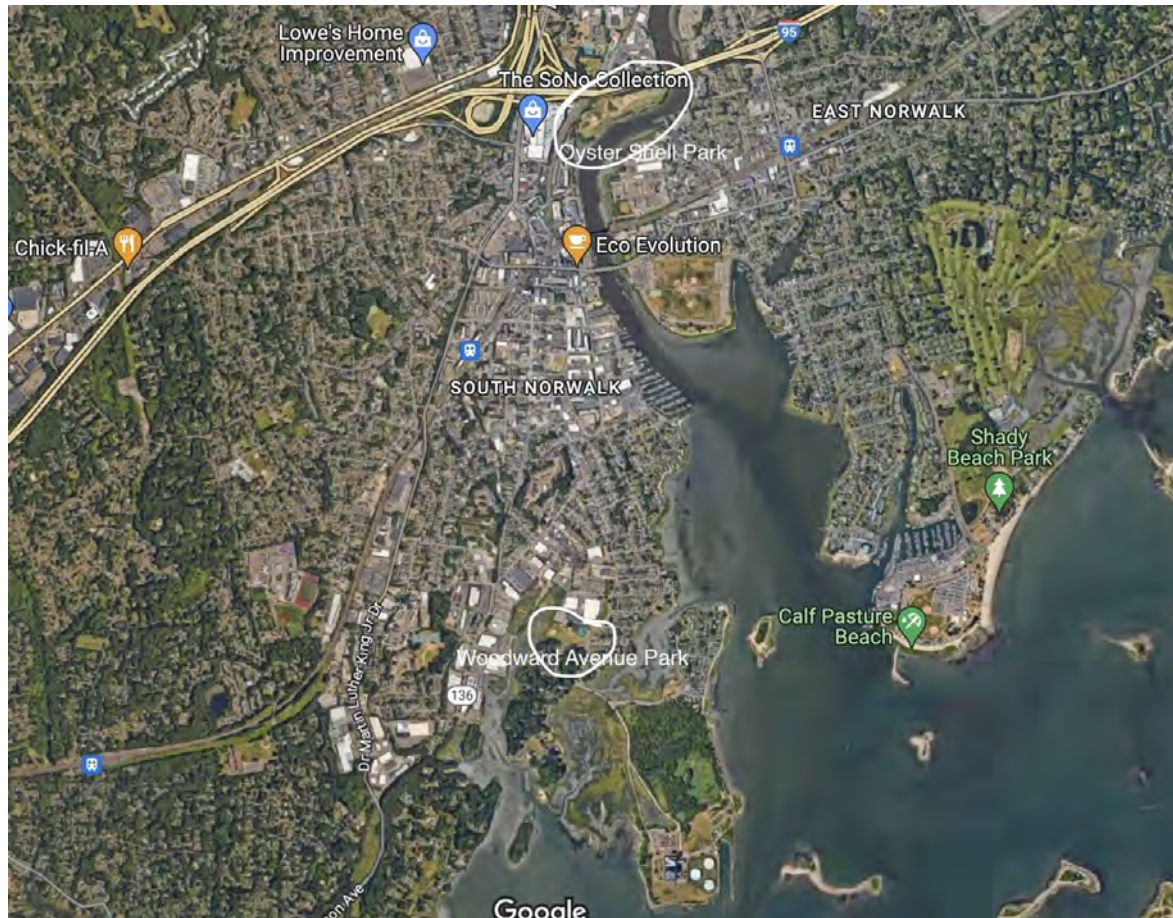
Connecting the community in urban habitat restoration

- **Louise Washer**, President, Norwalk River Watershed Association; Board member for the Pollinator Pathway Network; Steering committee member H2H RCP
- **Lisa Shanahan**, Common Council Member, City of Norwalk; President, Norwalk Land Trust; Steering committee member, H2H RCP

Connecting the Community in Urban Habitat Restoration



Our Project: Planting Trees in Two Parks and Connecting Them With Street Trees



Tree Planting Leads to New Partnerships

Core Volunteers

Meet twice a week at Oyster Shell

Meet as needed at Woodward

- Recruit new volunteers from park visitors
- Homeowners Associations
- Social media for younger local people
- Master Gardener intern program
- Norwalk Community College connection
- Student groups/scouts



New Volunteers/Partners

- Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge staff and interns
- Norwalk Tree Alliance and Tree Advisory Committee
- Corporate Teams
- Elementary School Pollinator Pathway curriculum
- Neighbors met through door knocking to offer free trees



Street Tree Project Leads to Tree Summit and New Municipal Action

- Attended Tree Alliance, Tree Advisory Committee meetings to urge the use of native trees and an increase in canopy coverage and get to know them
- Invited Tree Alliance into the NFWF grant
- Grant funding opened the door to planting trees in backyards (the city will only plant street-side trees)
- Organized a Tree Summit to discuss the problems with Norwalk's tree canopy management
- The summit led to a tree ordinance, plans for a tree inventory, etc
- Took Common Council out on an Oyster Boat ride to talk about water quality, stream buffers, and shellfish industry



What We Learned About the Conservation Values of the South Norwalk Community



- Our municipal departments are siloed when it comes to trees and environmental challenges. The GIS conservation map with H2H brought them all together to discuss and share views.
- The community really cares about having trees in the parks and shady sidewalks and local industrial complexes and many landlords do NOT care and will not add trees
- Everything we learned, we learned by having a constant presence in the parks and the neighborhood
 - You hear concerns—they need picnic tables and shade
 - You hear positive feedback about the plants, birds, its a chance to talk about why native trees matter
 - We saw an increase in use of Woodward park—soccer camp etc.—once it was planted
 - Giving away trees has been a great way to connect to some landlords and renters and it also provides a chance to explain why trees matter

Questions for the Audience

- What are you doing around DEI in your communities?
- What street tree projects do you know about? Where are they happening in the region?



Conservation organizations connecting with communities

- **Reggy St. Fortcolin**, Conservation Outreach Manager, Aspetuck Land Trust

Aspetuck Land Trust



Established 1966



Founded in 1966, Aspetuck Land Trust is a non-profit membership organization whose mission is the preservation and conservation of open space, including farm and forest land, and the natural resources for the benefit and education of the public. Located primarily in the towns of Easton, Weston, Fairfield, Westport, Monroe, and Bridgeport Aspetuck Land Trust has preserved over 2,200 acres of land that will be maintained in a natural state in perpetuity. Membership donations from the general public help us maintain and preserve these lands. We invite you to join the more than 1,700 member supporters of Aspetuck Land Trust.

Fairfield County

- Located in the southwestern part of the Connecticut and is widely regarded as one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. It's known for its high median incomes, upscale communities, and affluent lifestyle. Many of the county's residents work in finance, law, and other high-paying industries in nearby New York City. According to the United States Census Bureau data from 2019, the median household income in Fairfield County was \$96,369, which is significantly higher than the \$70,784 national median income.
- With a population of over 940,000 (2020) Fairfield County is the most populous county in the state. Fairfield County has a significant White population, but it also has a growing population of people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 estimates, the county had the following racial composition: White (non-Hispanic) - 68.6%, Black or African American - 10.5%, Asian - 6.9%, and Hispanic or Latino (of any race) - 13.8%.
- Fairfield County is known for its vibrant economy, which is heavily influenced by its proximity to New York City. Many residents of Fairfield County commute to work in the financial, legal, and professional sectors in New York City, contributing to the county's reputation as a hub for high-income earners. The county is also home to numerous corporate headquarters, particularly in the finance and insurance industries.



Life expectancy in Fairfield County is high, but often differs by several years between adjacent neighborhoods

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY IN YEARS, 2010-2015

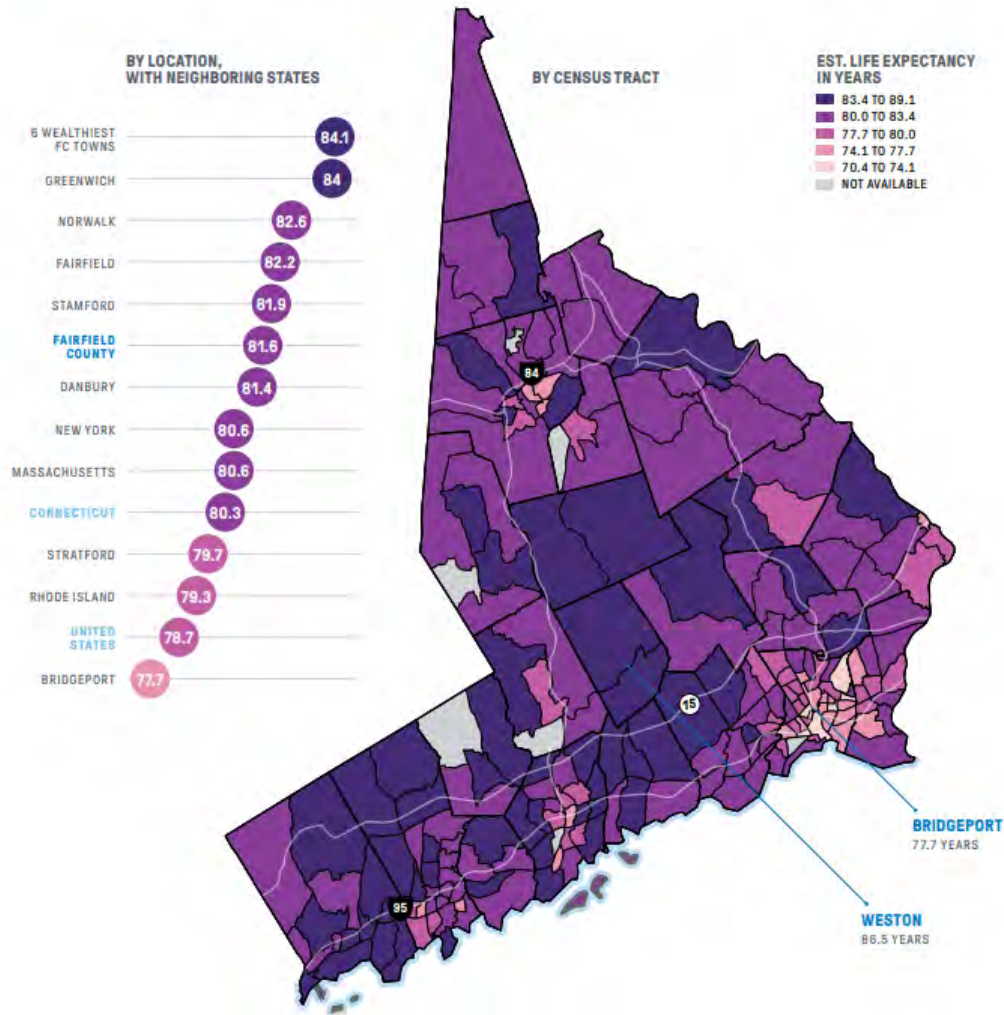


TABLE 1

The Most and Least Unequal U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2015 and 1980

	90/10 Ratio in 2015		90/10 Ratio in 1980
Top 15			
Fairfield, CT	8.7	Fairfield, CT	5.6
San Jose, CA	7.9	Anchorage, AK	5.4
Trenton, NJ	7.4	Gadsden, AL	5.0
Bakersfield, CA	7.1	Pueblo, Co	5.0
Houston, TX	7.1	Lafayette, LA	4.9
Santa Cruz, CA	7.1	Huntsville, AL	4.8
New York, NY	7.0	Palm Bay, FL	4.8
San Francisco, CA	7.0	Santa Maria-Santa Barbara, CA	4.8
Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	6.9	New Orleans, LA	4.7
Tyler, TX	6.9	Santa Cruz, CA	4.7
Odessa, TX	6.9	Orlando, FL	4.6
Los Angeles, CA	6.9	Bakersfield, CA	4.6
Washington, DC	6.6	Baton Rouge, LA	4.6
Ann Arbor, MI	6.6	Jackson, MS	4.5
San Diego, CA	6.5	Champaign-Urbana, IL	4.5



Building Bridges

Creating agricultural equity in urban spaces involves addressing the disparities and limitations that exist in **accessing** and **benefiting** from agricultural resources and opportunities.



Meeting people
where they are at

Understand and accept individuals as they are, acknowledging their current circumstances, experiences, beliefs, and needs without judgment or assumptions. It involves engaging with people on their own terms and taking into consideration their unique perspectives, abilities, and limitations.

Connecting people with nature



By experiencing nature firsthand, individuals develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the environment. They learn about different ecosystems, plants, animals, and their interdependencies. This early exposure fosters a sense of environmental responsibility, encouraging children to become future stewards of the Earth.

1. **Creativity and Imagination:** Nature stimulates imagination and creativity. It offers endless opportunities for exploration, discovery, and unstructured play. Natural environments provide a diverse range of sensory experiences, allowing people to observe, touch, smell, and listen to the natural world, which can spark their curiosity and imagination.
2. **Cognitive Development:** Nature provides a rich learning environment. It presents them with opportunities to observe and understand natural processes, such as weather patterns, plant growth, and animal behavior. Nature-based activities also promote problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making skills.
3. **Social Skills and Relationships:** Outdoor play in nature encourages social interaction and cooperation. It provides opportunities for group activities, teamwork, and negotiation, fostering the development of social skills, empathy, and communication. Outdoor settings also allow for multi-generational interactions, creating connections with older adults or family members.



Focus on mental health

Seventy percent of respondents to a Mental Health America Connection Survey reported wishing they had more time outdoors, ideally in nature away from their neighborhoods. Cities often have more stressors to physical and mental health, but green space (like parks and gardens) can reduce their impact. Even spending some time in your backyard (if you have one) can produce positive outcomes, and [feeling connected to nature helps your mood](#) even if you don't spend time outdoors.

- Children living in neighborhoods with more green space had a [reduced risk of developing depression](#), mood disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and substance use disorder.
- Even [being in the presence of indoor plants is worthwhile](#) – studies have found this to improve focus, memory, and stress tolerance.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>





Providing physical resources

- Working with schools in Bridgeport to create forests on underutilized land. Miyawaki, or Microforests, are a unique forestry Climate-Smart practice that was created over 40 years ago. The Miyawaki Forests are dense, biodiverse pocket forests that aim to recreate the relationships and succession of a natural forest. By densely planting a biodiverse array of native species, these forests encourage collaboration between the plants' fungal and microbial life in the soil, resulting in fast-growing forests with high survival rates. After the first initial years the mini forests become self-sustaining ecosystems, a particularly important characteristic for these urban sites. These mini forests boost biodiversity, support pollinators and other insects and animals, sequester carbon, filter air pollution, increase water absorption, buffer against flooding and erosion, and cool the surrounding areas. Miyawaki Forests can be created in areas as small as 100 sq ft which makes them particularly well suited to urban areas like Bridgeport, where space is limited.

Native plants connecting agriculture and ecological restoration

- **Adam Choper**, Farm Director, Hilltop Hanover Farm, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation
- **Jessica Schuler**, Program Coordinator for Natural Resources, Westchester County Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation; Steering committee member, H2H RCP

Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center

Yorktown Heights, NY

Jessica Schuler - Program Coordinator for Natural Resources, Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation

Adam Choper - Farm Director, Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center, Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation



Farming for food, conservation, and community

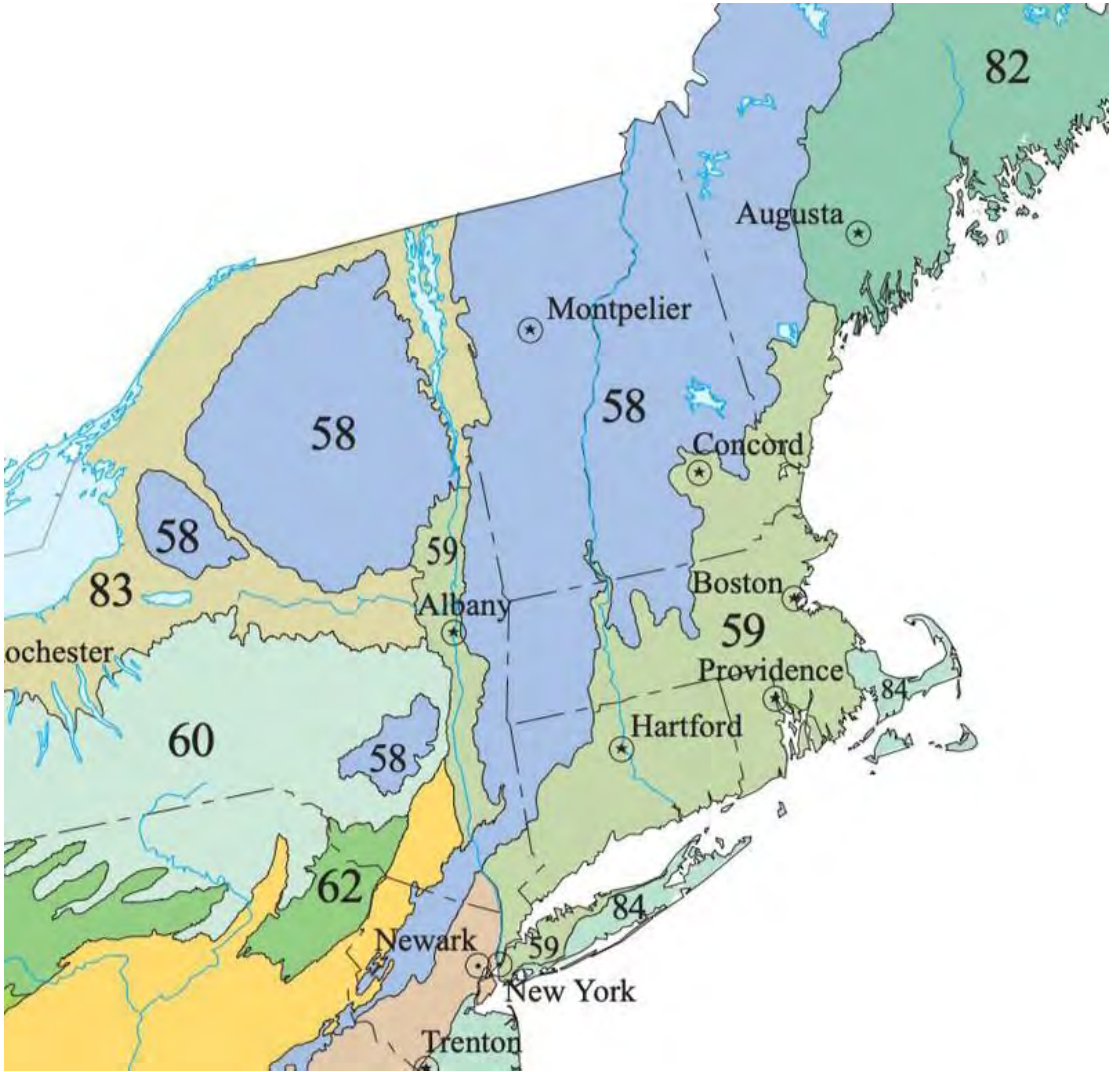
- We are Westchester County's farm. Hilltop's situation is unique in that it is a 300 year old farm that is now Westchester County-owned and operated.
- Small organic vegetable farm with over 170 acres of surrounding open space. We are 60 acres total and have 6 acres under active cultivation currently. We donate a minimum 10% of the food we grow to local food pantries and soup kitchens.
- Home to a growing number of hyper-local native species founder plots where we are producing seed.



Native plants connect agriculture and ecological



- 1. Gather
- 2. Farm
- 3. Harvest
- 4. Grow
- 5. Plant



Natural Next Steps: a Hyper-Local Network

Lack of quality ecotypic plant materials and regionally adapted seed was the impetus to form a hyper-local county-based plant materials network within the greater Northeast Seed Network (hosted by the Native Plant Trust)

Need a hyper-local network for

- (1) Coordinate plant needs, timing, collections.
- (2) Speak as one voice to policy makers.
- (3) Natural next step, we were already communicating with many partners.



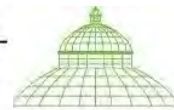
Wild Woods Restoration Project



Pound Ridge
Land Conservancy



ECOLOGICAL
HEALTH
NETWORK



NEW YORK
BOTANICAL GARDEN
EST 1891



Highstead



THE
NATIVE
PLANT CENTER



Westchester and Fairfield Counties Native Plant Supply Chain



Founder Plots

In Production

Aquilegia canadensis - Eastern Red Columbine
Asclepias incarnata - Swamp Milkweed
Asclepias tuberosa - Butterfly Weed
Dollingeria umbellata - Flat-topped White Aster
Erigeron pulchellus - Robin's Plantain
Eutrochium dubium - Joe Pye
Iris versicolor - Blue Flag Iris
Lobelia cardinalis - Cardinal Flower
Lobelia siphilitica - Great Blue Lobelia
Mimulus ringens - Allegheny Monkey Flower
Mondarda fistulosa - Wild Bergamot
Penstemon digitalis - Foxglove Beardtongue
Pycnanthemum muticum - Short Toothed Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum tenuifolium - Narrowleaf Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum virginianum - Virginia Mountain Mint
Rudbeckia hirta - Black-Eyed Susan
Solidago bicolor - White Goldenrod
Solidago speciosa - Showy Goldenrod
Sorghastrum nutans - Indiangrass
Symphyotrichum laeve - Smooth Aster
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae - New England Aster
Verbena hastata - Blue Vervain
Vernonia noveboracensis - NY Ironweed
Zizia aurea - Golden Alexander



Going in Fall 2023

Andropogon gerardii - Big Bluestem
Carex stipata - Awl-fruited Sedge
Clematis virginiana - Virgins Bower
Elymus virginicus - Common eastern wild rye
Eragrostis spectabilis - Purple love grass
Geranium maculatum - Wild Geranium
Helenium autumnale - Common Sneezeweed
Helianthus divarcticus - Woodland Sunflower
Ionactis linariifolia - Stiff aster
Packera aurea - Golden groundsel
Panicum virgatum - Switchgrass
Solidago sempervirens - Seaside goldenrod
Trichostema dichotomum - Blue curls





Thank you!



NATIONALLY ACCREDITED

P  **RKS**

WESTCHESTER COUNTY



Community & Conservation Connections Forum

*Thank you for attending &
Stay in touch!*