

AMENDMENT
FOREST LEGACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
MASSACHUSETTS

HERITAGE CORRIDOR FOREST LEGACY AREA



Prepared by: Jennifer Ohop (Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary & Opacum Land Trust), Katherine Blake (MassConn Sustainable Forestry Partnership), Joelle Vautour (Dept of Conservation and Recreation), Ben Wright (Kestrel Land Trust), and Cynthia Henshaw (East Quabbin Land Trust)

Date: October 2, 2012

Approved by: Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Committee

Date:

Approved by:

Date:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Objectives of the Proposed Amendment	3#
II. Background	3#
III. Eligibility Criteria	4#
IV. Designation Requirements for Forest Legacy Areas	9#
V. Proposed New Forest Legacy Area.....	10#
VI. Identification of Important Environmental and Public Values.....	16#
VII. Means to Protect Public and Environmental Values	40#
VIII. Using The Evaluation Criteria To Analyze Public Benefits	41#
IX. Public Involvement Strategy.....	45#
X. Literature Cited	47#
XI. Appendices	50#

PROPOSED AMENDMENT FOREST LEGACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT MASSACHUSETTS

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

This proposal seeks to add a new Forest Legacy Area (FLA), to be called the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA), by amending the Forest Legacy Needs Assessment – Massachusetts (Archey et al., 1993) to include a twenty six-town area in south central Massachusetts, along the Connecticut border. The creation of the HCFLA would improve the chances for significant protection of a largely forested area that is the next frontier for development as bedroom communities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. Ecosystems in this region contain public water supply watersheds; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working forests; and scenic values associated with forested and rural character.

The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program is set up with a “sponsoring” non-profit organization coordinating Forest Legacy projects within each FLA. This FLA nomination is sponsored by the MassConn Sustainable Forestry Partnership (MassConn), whose fiscal agent is Opacum Land Trust. The service area for MassConn covers the area of the proposed HCFLA. MassConn members have successfully completed multiple land conservation projects (often in partnership with other MassConn members, local communities, state agencies and other non-profits) within this area.

II. BACKGROUND

There are five key reasons why the proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area is ideally suited to be a new Forest Legacy Area:

1. The area has a forest resource of statewide significance that is increasingly threatened.
2. The area abuts thousands of acres of protected and unprotected forestland to the north in the Nashua River Greenway FLA, North Quabbin Corridor FLA, and the Connecticut Valley Western Valley FLA, adding potential for multi-regional Forest Legacy project applications within Massachusetts.
3. The area abuts several thousand acres of protected and unprotected forestland just across the state border in Connecticut. The thousands of still-unprotected forested acres in Connecticut are within the state of Connecticut’s Forest Legacy Area, and promising potential exists for a multi-state Forest Legacy project application.
4. Despite the temporary downturn in the economy, the area is ripe for becoming a new bedroom community for Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. The

need is great to protect the important unbroken forested areas before they become fragmented by development.

5. A Legacy Area will help protect the federal investment already made in this region. The federal government has acquired hundreds of acres of land and constructed large dams in three U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control and recreation sites. These facilities were constructed at a cost of \$16 million in the early 1960's. Rampant development with large new areas of impervious surfaces will stress their original purpose of flood control and reduce the excellent habitat and forest values these facilities provide.

Massachusetts' original Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program was approved in 1993. An Amendment Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program was completed in the summer of 2000, with subsequent approval by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture on December 7, 2000. The original and Amendment Assessment of Need established criteria for the selection of Forest Legacy Areas. These criteria are reiterated in Section III below. These criteria will be the basis for this amended Assessment of Need and the addition of the proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area.

III. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A. Legacy Area criteria (Archev, 1993)

To be eligible for the Forest Legacy Program, the proposed area must meet the following criteria:

1. Be threatened by present or future conversion to non-forest uses
2. Contain one or more of the following important public values:
 - a. scenic resources;
 - b. public recreation opportunities;
 - c. riparian/hydrologic areas;
 - d. fish and wildlife habitat;
 - e. known threatened and endangered species;
 - f. known cultural/historic areas; and/or,
 - g. other ecological values
3. Provide opportunities for continuation of traditional forest uses
4. Reflect important regional values

B. Evaluation factors

The nominator's description of a proposed Forest Legacy Area may utilize these evaluation factors and provide a persuasive argument for the nominated area. These evaluation factors are intended to assess the degree of fit with the Legacy Area Criteria listed above.

1. Threat by conversion to non-forest uses

There are various kinds and degrees of threat to valuable forested areas such as: encroaching housing development, improved town roads, sewer line and power line extensions into undeveloped areas, and fragmentation of land ownership into smaller, less manageable parcels. In determining the threat to forested tracts, factors to consider include the following:

- a. Area is in danger of conversion to non-forest use within five years.
- b. Area may remain wooded, but will become further fragmented.
- c. Area is currently on the open market/listed by realtors.
- d. Loss of one tract would open the area to further development.
- e. Area is remote, but vulnerable; example: able to pass a percolation test and frontage on town road.
- f. Area is not under Chapter 61 or other forest management program.
- g. Area may remain wooded but is in danger of being over-harvested.

2. Contains one or more important values

a. Scenic resources

The scenic aspects of a natural resource area may often be subjective, but there are several means of measuring the special qualities that make a given area stand out. The criteria set out in DEM's Scenic Landscape Inventory and the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act provide a means of citing scenic qualities. In identifying scenic amenities of a Forest Legacy area, these factors must be considered:

- Area is listed in DEM's 1985 Massachusetts Landscape Inventory as "Distinctive" or "Noteworthy," or meets the criteria for such designation.
- Area includes locally important panoramic views and/or exceptional short views.
- Area is situated along a designated scenic road.

More recently the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation completed Heritage Landscape Inventories for numerous communities that detail local heritage values, which often include scenic resources such as natural and agricultural areas (Translations: Chapter One of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program 2001-2008).

b. Public recreation opportunities

Recreational use (especially public access) of a proposed Forest Legacy Area is an important component to be considered. Documents such as the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP) will provide proponents of a Forest Legacy Area necessary information on the relative importance of the following factors:

- Water-based recreation is present – boating, swimming, fishing, rafting, and canoeing.
- Trail-based and/or day use recreational opportunities exist – hiking, picnicking, horseback riding, ice skating, cross-country skiing.
- Natural resource recreational activities are available – camping, hunting, nature touring, etc.
- Adjacent land is protected.

c. Riparian/hydrologic areas

In an urbanizing state such as Massachusetts, one of the most important forest “products” may be water. Proper management of forested and riparian lands through institution of a Forest Legacy Area can increase the quality and quantity of water for the residents of the Commonwealth. Factors to be included in determining the value of riparian areas are:

- Area is situated on a major river or stream recognized by Massachusetts DEM Scenic Rivers Inventories or Massachusetts DFWELE Adopt-a-Stream programs, or meets the criteria for inclusion in such inventory.
- Area has an extensive (over 300’) river or wetland shoreline.
- Area includes floodplain and natural valley storage components (according to USGS Atlas; FEMA flood hazard maps)
- Area contains a minimum 80’ strip of native trees and shrubs as a natural buffer and sediment filter, per USFS guidelines outlined in Riparian Forest Buffers (Welsch, 1991).
- Area contributes to public or private drinking water supply (DEP Zone 2).
- Area contains important wetlands, especially isolated wetlands and/or vernal pools.

d. Fish and wildlife habitat

Preventing the fragmentation of forest tracts into smaller units is crucial to maintaining viable populations of particular wildlife species. Factors to be considered for fish and wildlife habitat are:

- Area contains outstanding habitat, as evaluated per Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife guidelines, BioMap2, and other ecologically recognized criteria for one or more species that include:
 - Forest interior nesting birds.
 - Significant populations of resident species.
 - Neo-tropical migrant species.
 - Areas for resting and feeding of migratory species.
 - Forest-inhabiting mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.
 - Connective habitats, corridors, habitat linkages and areas that reduce biological isolation.
 - Known threatened and endangered species.

As urbanization and fragmentation of forest lands continues, the need to give special attention to threatened species of fish, wildlife, and plants increases. Areas nominated for the Forest Legacy Program should be inventoried for such natural habitats that may contain imperiled species, while considering the following:

- Area contains plant or animal species on the Massachusetts State list as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern (consult Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program).

e. Known cultural/historic areas

Conversion of forest lands to other land cover types and uses may destroy or degrade valuable cultural and historic resources. In particular, material evidence of early human occupation in Massachusetts, including historic features and vernacular landscapes, comprises a unique and irreplaceable resource for which the following factors should be considered:

- Area contains recorded archaeological sites; e.g. burial, midden, fire pit, or artifacts of Contact, Woodland, or Archaic periods.
- Area includes historic features; e.g. charcoal kilns, church or village sites, battle sites, historic roads, paths, or lookouts.

f. Other ecological values

In addition to the characteristics already outlined, an area may exhibit additional or exceptional conditions that are important and add to the quality of the nominated Forest Legacy Area, such as:

- Area supports a mix of ecological communities (bio-diversity).

- Area includes ecological communities that are dwindling in Massachusetts, such as vernal pools, mature riparian floodplain forest, and pine barrens.
- Area contains old growth forest (natural area).
- Area provides watershed/water supply protection.

g. Productive soils

Of the 3.2 million acres of forests in Massachusetts, nearly 67% are classified as “prime,” based on the productive soils upon which they grow. This classification system is useful in determining the importance of individual tracts within a Forest Legacy Area:

- Area contains soils of “Prime,” “Statewide,” or “Local significance” for agriculture.
- Area contains soils of “Prime,” “Statewide,” or “Local significance” for forestry.

3. Provide opportunities for continuation of traditional forest uses

Maintaining traditional forest uses is important in a Forest Legacy Area in that it permits owners to remain on the land without requiring high-cost services (schools, street clearing and repair) by the town. Positive factors which reinforce this include:

- Area will remain available for sugarbush operation, cordwood or timber management under a Stewardship Plan.
- Area will continue to serve watershed and water filtration roles.
- Area will continue to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

4. Reflect important regional values

Through careful selection, Forest Legacy Areas should provide units that have regional, not just local significance, the features and function of these units should include:

- Linkages for recreational values such as trails, especially long river greenbelts, mountain ridges, and parcels that connect existing publicly owned lands.
- Public access to boating and swimming relative to the needs of local population centers and the effects of projected land use change.
- Public or private drinking water supply protection (ground or surface water).
- Scenic qualities having their basis in the traditional New England natural and cultural landscape.

IV. DESIGNATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREST LEGACY AREAS

It should be noted that a Forest Legacy Area nomination is a brief written narrative utilizing elements listed below. Other pertinent items may be included, but for an area to be designated a Forest Legacy Area the points listed below must be included.

- A. Location of each geographic area on a map and a written description of the proposed Forest Legacy Area boundary (see Section V below).
- B. Summary of the analysis used to identify the Forest Legacy Area and its consistency with the Eligibility Criteria (see Sections V, VI, and VIII below).
- C. Identification of the important environmental values and how they will be protected and conserved (see Sections VI-VIII below).
- D. The conservation goals or objectives of the Forest Legacy Area.
 - The conservation goal of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area is the permanent protection of its outstanding resource values, including public water supply watersheds; rare, threatened and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working forests; and scenic values associated with forested and rural character. Strategic land protection will ensure that the most important and highest quality of these resources remain intact and unfragmented by haphazard development.
- E. List of public benefits that will be derived from establishing the Forest Legacy Area (see Sections VI and VIII below).
- F. Identification of the governmental entity or entities that may hold lands or interests in lands.
 - The main tool for protection within the FLA will be conservation easements. Fee ownership and/or easements may be held by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR – formerly DEM) and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG – formerly DFWLE). Both are departments within the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). Conservation Commissions for each municipality may also hold the fee ownership and/or easements with approval by their Board of Selectmen or Mayor. EOEEA and its agencies have a Conservation Restriction Stewardship Policy. This document details how “baseline reports” and annual monitoring will be completed.

When the land has been donated for the Forest Legacy Program, local non-profit conservation organizations (including but not limited to: Opacum Land Trust (OLT), East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), Kestrel Land Trust (KLT), Norcross Wildlife Foundation (NWF), The Trustees of

Reservations (TTOR), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC)) may hold land or interest in lands and may have some management responsibilities thereupon. These conservation organizations may also hold the underlying fee title of easements on land enrolled in the Forest Legacy Program (where a government entity holds the easement). Local municipal governments and the U.S. Forest Service may also hold lands or interests in lands in the FLA.

- G. Documentation of the public involvement process and analysis of the issues raised (see Section IX below).

V. PROPOSED NEW FOREST LEGACY AREA

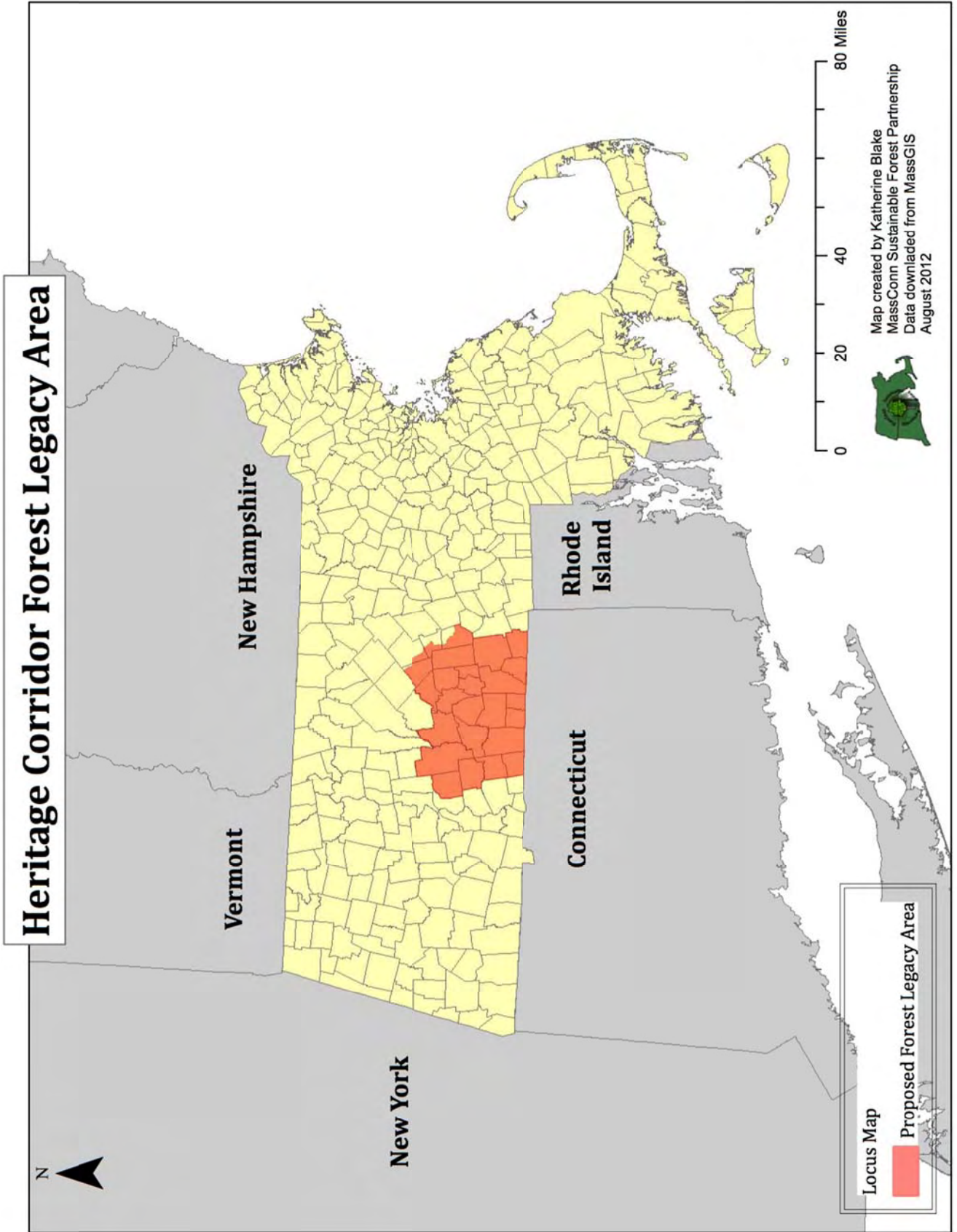
The proposed Heritage Corridor FLA covers 421,100 acres and consists of all of the towns of Granby, Belchertown, Ludlow, Wilbraham, Hampden, Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Warren, Ware, West Brookfield, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Sturbridge, Southbridge, Dudley, Charlton, Spencer, the majority of Oakham, Leicester and parts of Rutland and Paxton.

A. Location maps and boundary description

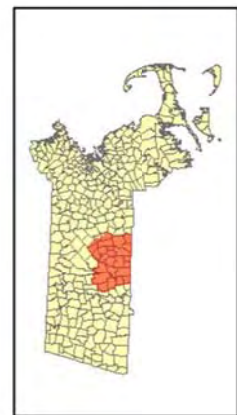
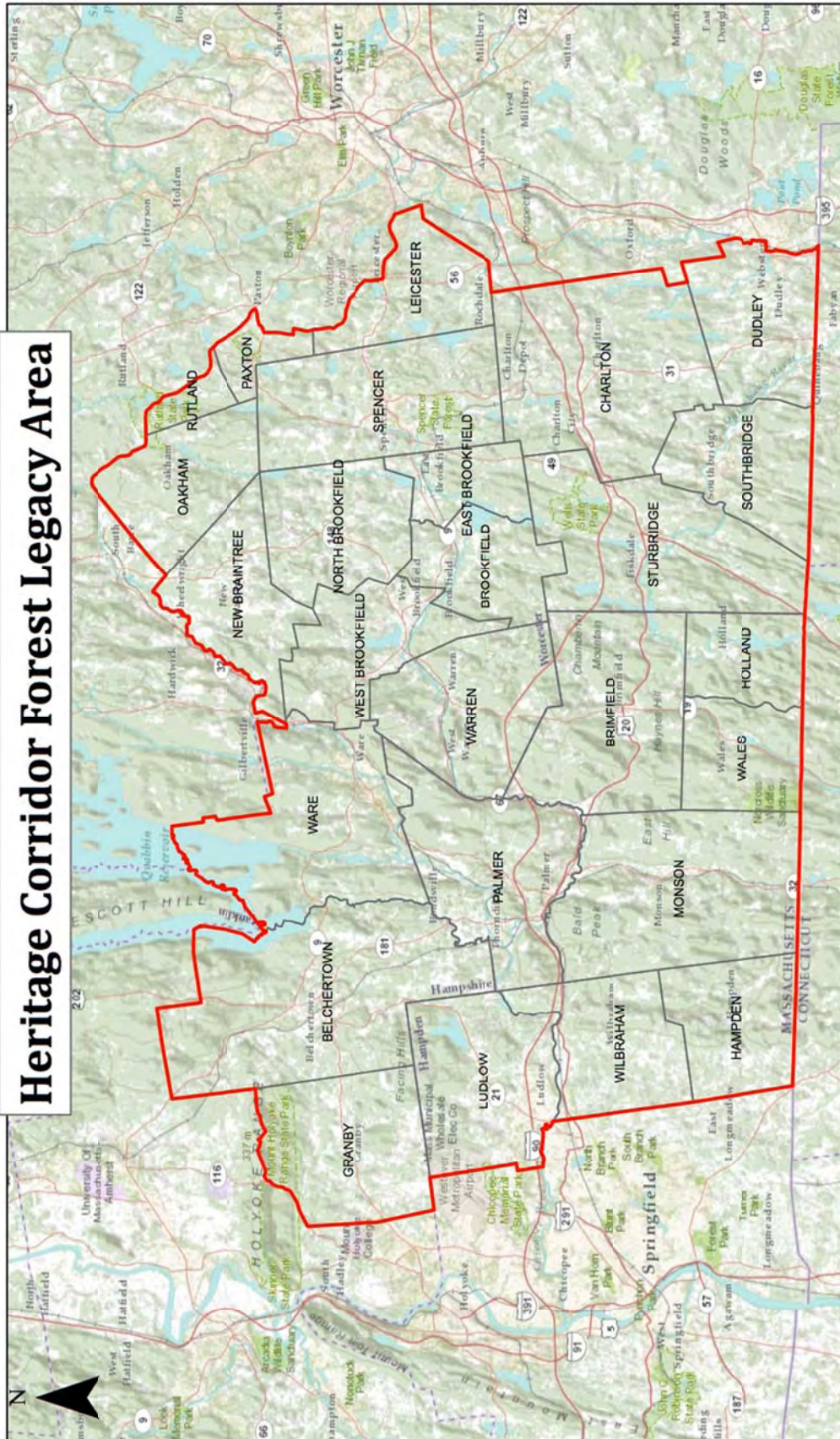
1. Maps

See following pages for:

- Locus Map
- Topographic Map
- Regional Forest Legacy Area Map
- Boundary Description Map



Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area



 Proposed Forest Legacy Area



Map created by Katherine Blake
MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership
Data downloaded from MassGIS
August 2012

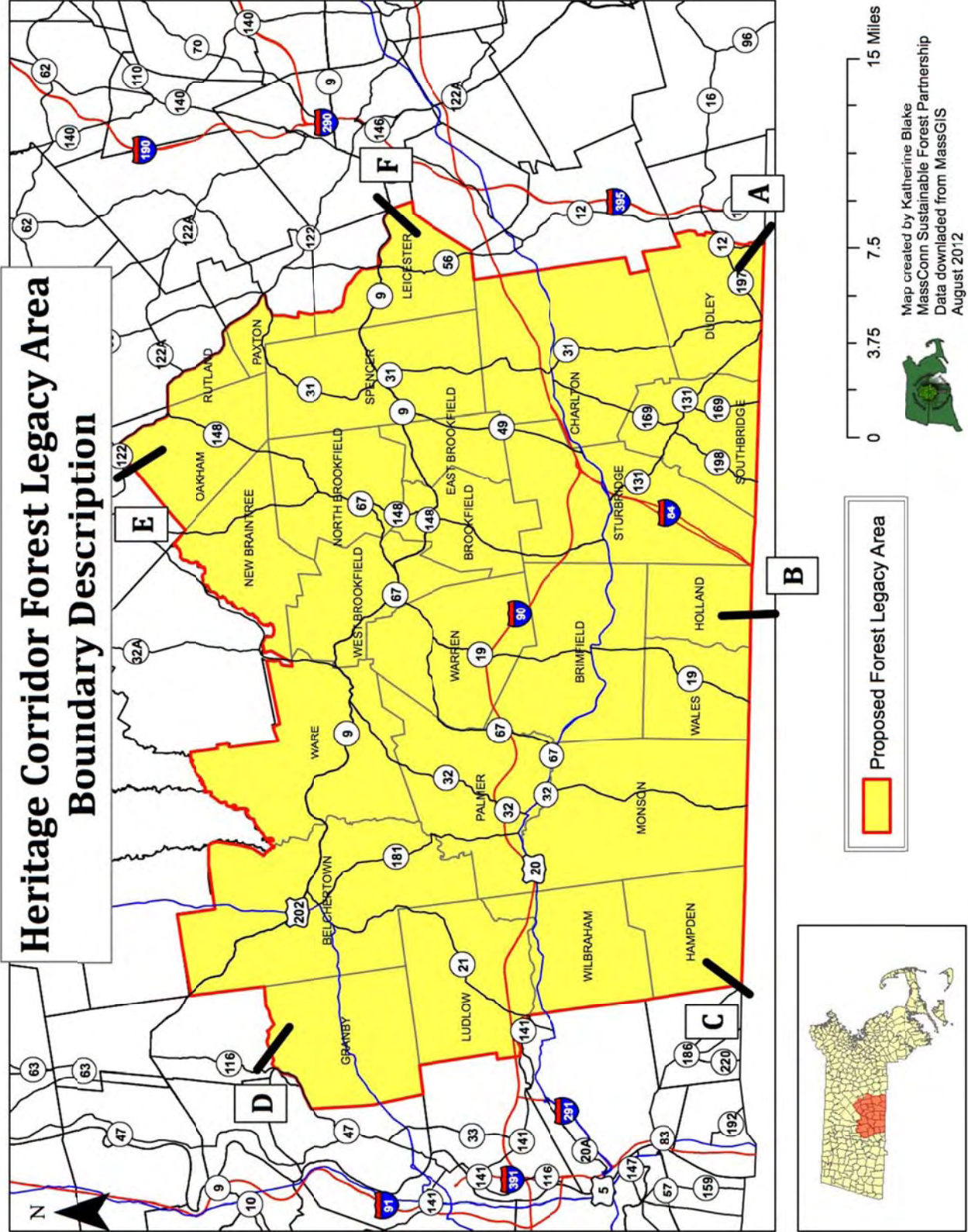


V. PROPOSED NEW FOREST LEGACY AREA, CONTINUED

2. Boundary Description

Letters correspond to the appropriate boundary segments shown on the Boundary Description Map on the next page.

- A. Beginning at the intersection of the Massachusetts/Connecticut state line at the town boundary between the Towns of Dudley and Webster,
- B. Thence westerly along the Massachusetts/Connecticut state line, along the southern border of the towns of Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Holland, Wales, Monson and Hampden, a distance of 29.6 miles,
- C. Thence northerly along the western border of the towns of Hampden, Wilbraham, Ludlow and Granby, a distance of 22.9 miles, running along the southeastern boundary of the Connecticut Valley Western Valley FLA,
- D. Thence easterly along the northern border of the towns of Granby, Belchertown, Ware, New Braintree and Oakham to the point of intersection with the Nashua River Greenway FLA, a distance of 68.3 miles, which also runs along the southern boundary of the North Quabbin Corridor FLA,
- E. Thence southerly along the boundary with the Nashua River Greenway FLA in the town of Oakham, Rutland, Paxton and Leicester, a distance of 32.9 miles,
- F. Thence easterly and southerly along the boundary of the towns of Leicester, Charlton and Dudley to the point of beginning, a distance of 19.8 miles.



V. PROPOSED NEW FOREST LEGACY AREA, CONTINUED

B. Summary of the analysis used to identify the FLA and its consistency with the eligibility criteria.

The proposed HCFLA is a largely forested, rural area that contains public water supply watersheds; rare, threatened and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working forests; and scenic values associated with forested and rural character. However, time is running out to protect the integrity of these valuable resources as this area is the next frontier for development as bedroom communities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. The region's forests, rivers, habitats, and abundant recreational opportunities are currently at risk from unrestricted development of single-family subdivisions and relatively low land prices. The region's community identity, open space, and rural character are threatened.

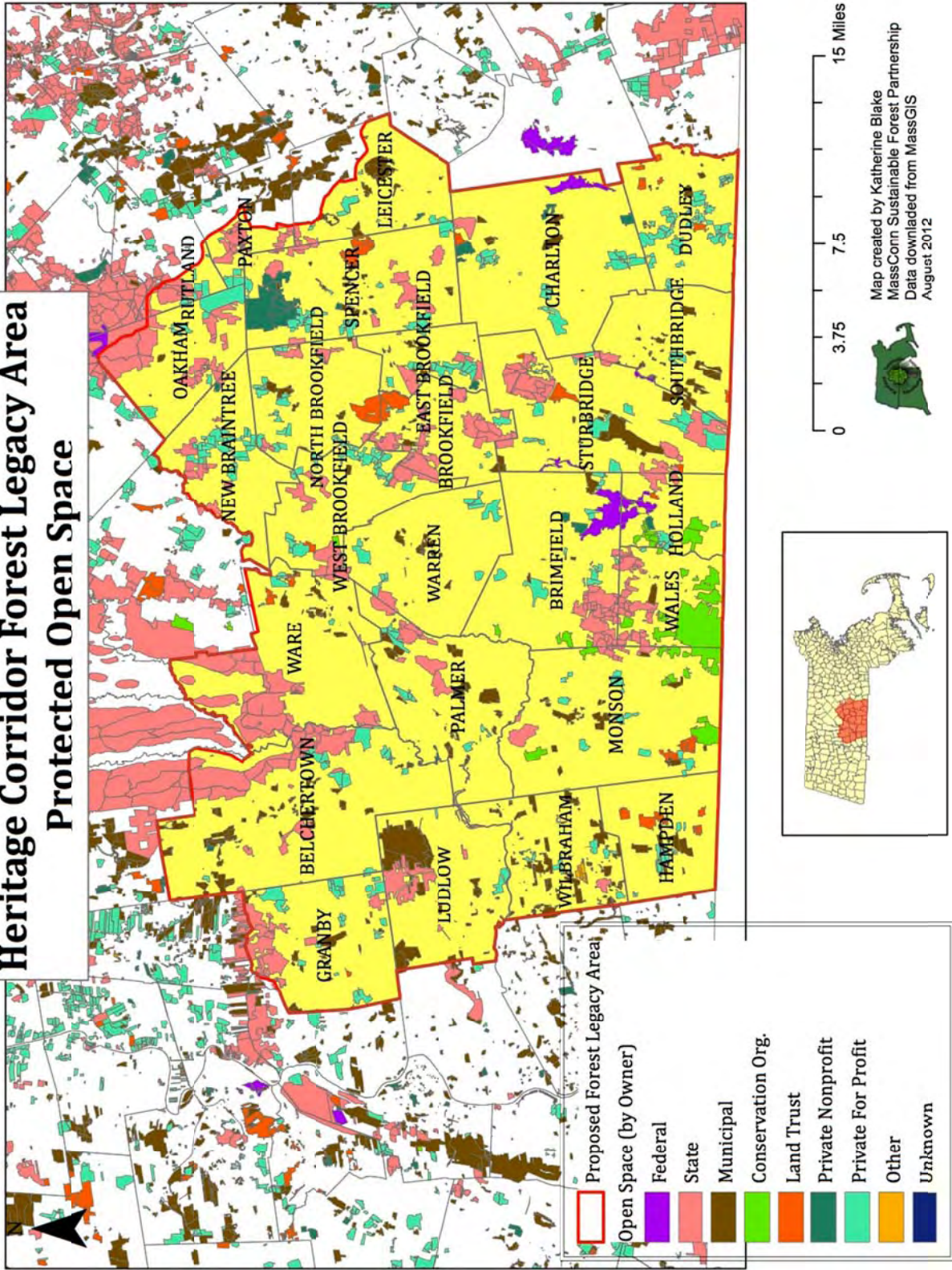
Forest cover in the HCFLA is substantial – 66% of the land inside the boundaries is forested (278,208 acres), but only 23% (63,230 acres) of that forested land is protected. Another 7% is agricultural land, 4% is open water, 1% is undeveloped open land, and 11 % is wetland. Of the total area, 84,410 acres are currently protected by state, federal and non-profit conservation agencies and organizations, or 20% of the total area (see the Land Use and Protected Open Space maps on the following pages). Designation of this area as a Forest Legacy Area would increase the opportunities for the protection of the resources in this significant area. Consistency with the Eligibility Criteria and Evaluation Criteria is addressed in Sections VI and VIII below.

VI. IDENTIFICATION OF IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC VALUES

A. Scenic resources

The Heritage Corridor FLA contains a unique mix of beautiful forest, farm and village scenery which provide a pastoral backdrop to several regionally important recreational, cultural, and water resource sites detailed in the following sections. The hilly terrain that makes up much of the proposed Heritage Corridor FLA includes several summits above 1,000 feet including Tupper Hill, Bear Hill, Colonels Mountain, and Peck Hill. The valleys of the Quinebaug, Quabog, Swift, and Ware Rivers contain many scenic vistas and thousands of passing motorists enjoy vistas from the Mass. Turnpike and State Routes 9 and 20 every day. This region is also an integral part of the Southern New England Heritage Forest designated by the Northeast Governors Association as a priority region to expand outreach to landowners for land conservation and stewardship benefits.

Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area Protected Open Space



B. Water Resources

The Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (FLA) spans five watersheds: The Blackstone River Watershed, The Connecticut River Watershed, The Quinebaug River Watershed, The Chicopee River Watershed and The French River Watershed. Thirteen percent (57,122 acres) of the Connecticut River Watershed (which spans four states) falls within the FLA in the eastern-most towns of Ludlow, Granby and Belchertown. The proposed FLA contains nearly the entire (95,063 acres) Quinebaug Watershed. Over half of The Chicopee River Watershed (234,211 acres or 51%), Massachusetts's largest watershed, falls within the FLA. Also, over half of The French (32,841 acres or 54%) River watershed falls within the FLA. Although only a small portion of the Blackstone River Watershed falls within the Heritage Corridor FLA, this watershed is part of the National Heritage Corridor System, for its long history as "America's hardest working river." Major tributaries of The Blackstone River include: Quinsigamond, West, Mumford, Mill, and Peters Rivers.

The Heritage Corridor FLA includes 473 miles of major rivers and streams. The major rivers are the Quaboag, Ware, Quinebaug, Chicopee, Sevenmile, Swift, Scantic and Fivemile Rivers. The major brooks include Jarish Brook and Bachelor Broo. The FLA also includes the major river systems of The Swift, Ware and Quaboag rivers that converge to form the Chicopee River in Palmer. The Chicopee River flows west across the proposed FLA to join the Connecticut River.

Another unique feature of the proposed FLA and The Chicopee River Watershed is that it contains 4,711 acres of (or 19%) of The Quabbin Reservoir's water, a manmade reservoir with an area of 187 square miles and capacity to produce 412 billion gallons of pure drinking water for 2.5 million state residents. The water travels to metropolitan Boston via a series of aqueducts, one of which extends from Belchertown (at the Windsor Dam) 14.77 miles to Chicopee.

The FLA also includes the headwaters for the Quaboag (Brookfield), French (Leicester) and Quinebaug (Holland) Rivers. These headwater streams are critical in the protection of water quality and flow (protection against both low flow and flood conditions) within these three important rivers. The Quaboag is the largest tributary of the Chicopee River. The French River is a major tributary of the Quinebaug River. From its headwaters in Leicester, it flows along the eastern edge of the FLA into Dudley and then to Connecticut. The Quinebaug River flows through the towns making up the southern border of the proposed FLA. The Quinebaug is the foundation of the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor. The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers join in Connecticut to form the Thames.

The Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the first watershed to receive such designation, spans all or part of five towns in the proposed FLA. Both the Chicopee River (one of the largest tributaries of The Connecticut River) and the Quaboag River (the largest tributary of the Chicopee River) are part of the Silvio Conte NWR.

Also of note are Army Corps areas in the FLA. One of these areas is the Buffumville Army Corps Flood Control Project in Charlton, where an impoundment on a tributary to the French River created Buffumville Lake. A second area is the Army Corps Hodges Village Project in Oxford, where the French River flows through a dry-bed flood control reservoir. Third, the Quinebaug falls within the East Brimfield Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Project, a flood storage area of East Brimfield. Fourth, the Quinebaug flows through an Army Corps flood control project in Southbridge, Westville.

With a long history of flooding in the Thames River, just downstream of the Quinebaug, the flood control value of the forest and wetland areas within this area are significant. Flood control dams at East Brimfield Lake, Westville Lake and Conant Brook Reservoir were constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control purposes in the 1960s. The East Brimfield and Westville Lake dams have prevented and estimated \$68 million in flood damage since their construction. In addition, there are two historically significant hydropower projects of the Quinebaug, one in Sturbridge (owned by Old Sturbridge Village) and one in Dudley, both within the proposed FLA.

There are 47,946 acres (11% of total FLA area) of wetlands in the Heritage Corridor FLA that include open water, reservoirs, bogs, fens, marshes and wooded swamps. Of these acres, only 20% of wetlands are within protected open space. There are 12,839 acres of protected wetlands classified as water supply protection, and 1,292 protected acres classified as flood control areas. Of the total wetland acres, 44,597 have been mapped by the USFWS-administered project, The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) that generates information about the characteristics and extent of our nation's wetlands. There are 1,256 ponds and lakes (or 13,954 acres) of NWI-mapped water bodies in the FLA.

Overall, a total of 20,273 acres of surface waters are contained within the proposed FLA. The major reservoirs include East Brimfield Reservoir, Southbridge Reservoir, Hamilton Reservoir, Conant Brook Reservoir, Cohasse Brook Reservoir, Hatchet Brook Reservoir, Ware River Intake, Ludlow Reservoir and Quabbin Reservoir. There are a total of 11,053 acres within the state's water supply Zones A and B (areas within ½ mile of a primary water supply reservoir). There are 146 community public water systems across 19 towns in the FLA that serve at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or serve 25 year-round residents. There are 230 non-community public water systems across 23 towns in the FLA area classified either as transient non-community (TNC) or non-transient, non-community (NTNC).

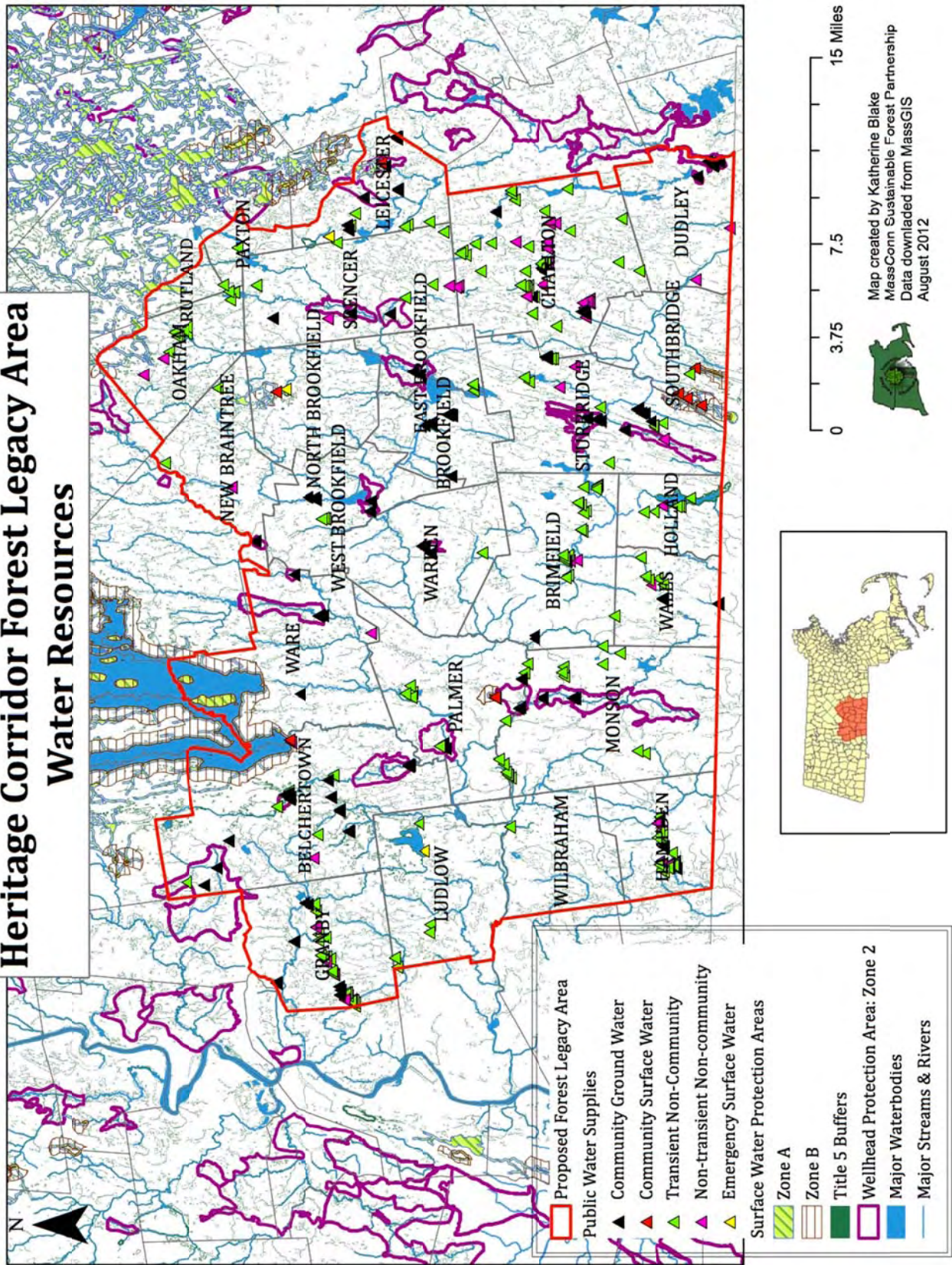
The Heritage Corridor FLA has 32,010 acres within the state's "Title 5" designation, wetlands with a 100-foot buffer zone for the purpose of aiding in the siting septic systems. Of these acres, 25,453 (80%) acres are forested, 2,793 (9%) acres are developed and only 7,834 (24%) acres are protected.

To protect private and public well water supplies, the state has designated Approved Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II) areas, land that directly contributes water to the well site. There are 15,815 acres of Zone II land within the area. Of these acres, 7,208 (46%) acres are forested, 4,000 (25%) acres are developed and only 2,208 (14%) acres are protected. In addition to the 15,815 acres of Zone II areas, there are 8,099 acres of Interim Wellhead Protection Areas (IWPA) in the proposed FLA, which in the absence of approved Zone II areas, has these areas designated as protected public water supply groundwater recharge areas.

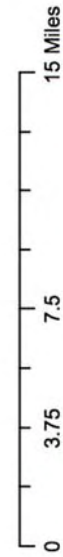
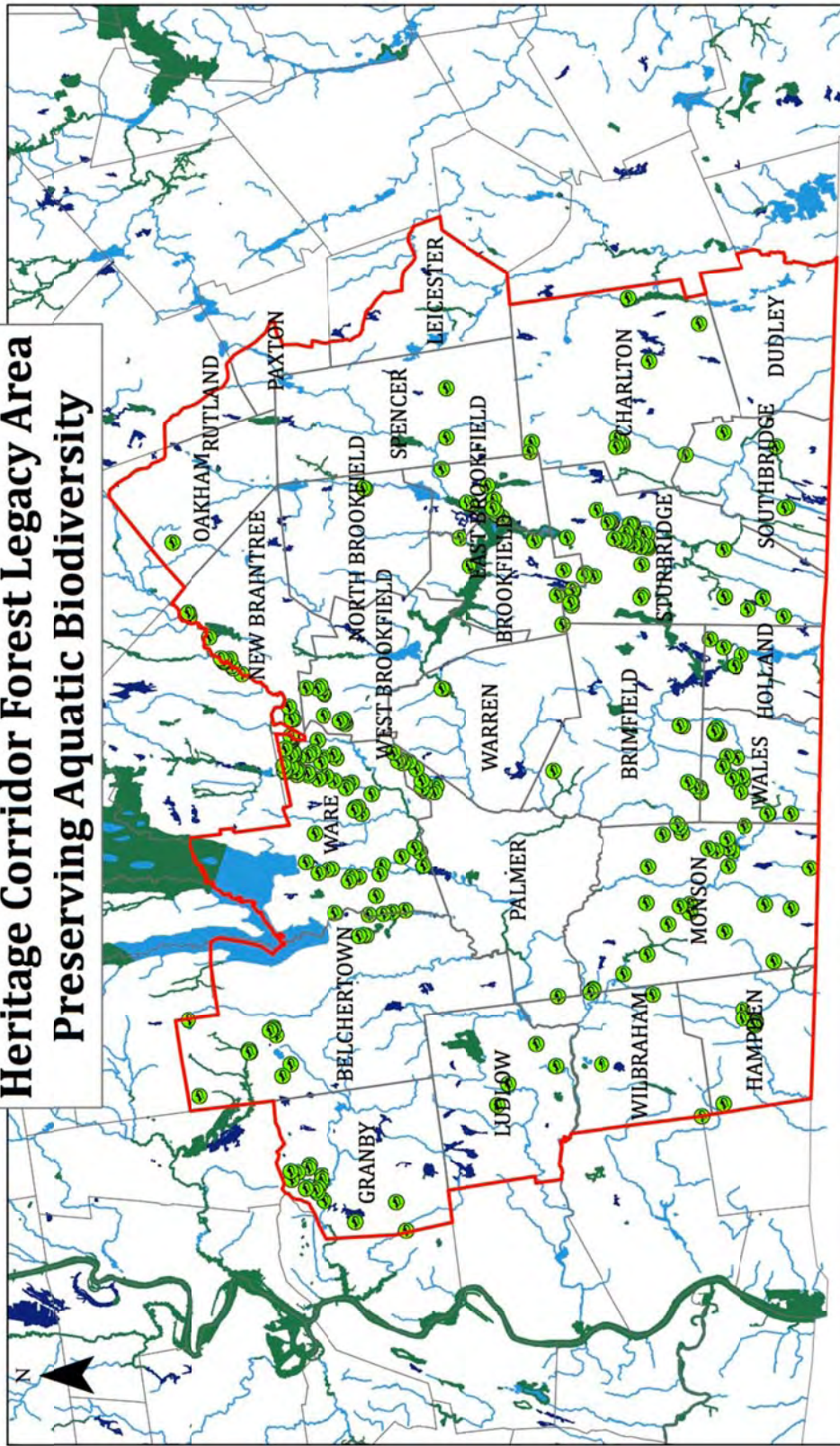
As part of the state's plan to protect biodiversity, the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) developed *BioMap-2* in 2010. The aim of *BioMap-2* is to guide land conservation and stewardship activities over the most critical areas necessary for ensuring long-term persistence of rare species and habitats. The Heritage Corridor FLA contains 8,939 acres of Bio-Map2 classified aquatic core habitat, which contains integrated and functional ecosystems for fish and other aquatic species of conservation concern. Of this Bio-Map2 area, 3,270 acres (37%) are protected. There are 4,351 acres of wetland core, the least disturbed wetlands within undeveloped landscapes. 1,942 acres (45%) of wetland core are protected. There are 995 acres of priority natural community wetlands, the most intact wetlands. Of these acres, 707 acres (71%) are protected. The Natural Heritage program has also documented 301 certified and identified 2,836 potential vernal pools in the proposed FLA.

In a report entitled, "An Assessment of Forest Resources of Massachusetts," researchers quantified the ability of Massachusetts's forests to produce clean water. They found that the Chicopee, Blackstone, and Quinebaug River Watersheds ranked in the top 5% as sub-basin with high inherent ability to produce clean water and both are areas where a large number of consumers that depend on water. Forests provide and protect much of the drinking water supply in Massachusetts, however, the sources that sustain public drinking water are not protected. This study found that The Chicopee and Blackstone River Watershed public water supply areas depend largely on private forestland and landowners for forest protection. The Chicopee and Blackstone and Quinebaug watersheds were also in the top 5% of northeastern sub-basins where development pressure is highest (where forest conversion to residential or industrial is predicted). The need for forest protection, particularly of private forestland, is imperative for water supply protection in the proposed FLA.

Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area Water Resources



Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area Preserving Aquatic Biodiversity



Map created by Katherine Blake
MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership
Data downloaded from MassGIS
August 2012

C. Wildlife Habitat

The proposed Heritage Corridor FLA spans four ecoregion types as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Lower Worcester Plateau, Worcester Plateau, Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills and the Connecticut River Valley. The majority of the 26-town region falls within the Lower Worcester Plateau ecoregion, which is comprised of open hills, and transition to hardwood and central hardwood forest. Most parts of this ecoregion drain to the Chicopee and Quinebaug Rivers.

The proposed FLA falls within the High Allegheny Plateau ecoregion, as defined by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the U.S Forest Service (USFS). The High Allegheny Plateau is “a wide upland plateau that includes low mountains (Catskills), high hills (Allegheny Plateau) and steep ridges (Kittatinny and Shawangunks) in southern NY, northern PA, and northwest NJ. Glaciated sections primarily consist of till soils, and the unglaciated regions are mostly sandy clays.” This ecoregion is mainly forested with oak-heath forests, maple-beech-birch northern hardwoods, hemlock-white pine and oak-hickory-ash.

In a recent, ground-breaking report by The Nature Conservancy, *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region*, they describe a new approach to land conservation. Their project identifies key areas, across numerous ecoregions, to focus conservation efforts most likely to succeed over time and in the face of climate change. The key areas were developed based on analyzing land characteristics that will increase biodiversity and resilience. TNC uses the definition of resilience by Gunderson (2000) as “the capacity of a site to adapt to climate change while still maintaining diversity.”

One of the metrics TNC developed to estimate site resilience included a model that measures a site’s permeability (or connectivity), using regional flow patterns (or species movements and ecological processes). These regional flow patterns looked at broad north-south and east-west flow patterns to further identify areas where species movement is likely to be concentrated, diffuse or re-routed in the face of climate change. In the map entitled *The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Resiliency Data: Regional Flow Patterns*, one of two major north-south corridors identified as concentrated flow in the northeast runs directly through the proposed FLA. The proposed FLA is and will be (as it responds to climate change) a critical corridor for species north-south movement.

TNC also identified focal areas for each ecoregion that contain significant biodiversity. In the map entitled, *The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Resiliency Data: Focus Areas and TNC Portfolio Sites*, the areas of dark green meet the criteria for “high estimated resilience and for significant biodiversity.” Areas in brown “have significant biodiversity but are estimated to be vulnerable to climate change.” Areas in pale green “have high estimated resilience but were not known to have ecoregionally significant biodiversity features.” In the area of the proposed FLA, there are sizable portions at the north and south borders that ranked high for resilience and significant biodiversity. The majority of the central portion of the proposed FLA area was ranked as high estimated resilience, but was not

identified as ecoregionally significant for biodiversity. Again, these results stress that nearly the entire area of the proposed FLA is estimated to be highly resilient in the face of climate change and as such remains an important corridor for species, especially in the face of challenging ecological conditions.

There are 84,410 acres of protected open space within the proposed FLA, comprising 20% of its total area. Of the protected lands, 13,940 acres are state wildlife management areas. These wildlife management areas are open to hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreation activities. The Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge accounts for 56,960 acres (13% of total NWR acreage) and covers all or part of five towns of the proposed FLA. Areas of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge are also open to hunting of deer, waterfowl, migratory birds, big and small game, turkey and upland birds. The Refuge also has numerous fishing spots, where anglers can catch Bass and American Shad.

The Heritage Corridor FLA contains 67,316 acres (16% of the total area) of *BioMap-2* designated Core Habitat (Core), which is described as, “necessary to promote the persistence of species of conservation concern, exemplary natural communities and intact ecosystems,” of which only 21,815 acres (or 32%) are protected. Forest Core, a sub-component of Core Habitat, has been identified as the best example of large, intact forests that are least impacted by development and also serve as critical habitat for many woodland species. There are 9,347 acres of Forest Core within the proposed FLA, of which 5,698 acres (or 61%) are protected. Another sub-component of Core Habitat is Species of Conservation Concern data, which represents important areas for species listed on the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and non-listed species present in the State Wildlife Action Plan. There are 52,424 acres identified for Species of Conservation Concern, of which only 16,211 acres (or 31%) are protected.

A third sub-component of Core Habitat is Priority Natural Communities, which cover 2,427 acres within the proposed FLA. These natural communities “represent the extent of various natural communities of biodiversity conservation interest in Massachusetts.” The following natural communities exist in the Heritage Corridor FLA (* indicates total coverage of 50 acres or more):

1. Acidic Graminoid Fen*
2. Acidic Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community
3. Acidic Shrub Fen*
4. Black Ash Swamp
5. Black Gum Swamp
6. Calcareous Basin Fen
7. Circumneutral Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community
8. Circumneutral Talus Forest/Woodland
9. Deep Emergent Marsh*
10. Dry, Rich Acidic Oak Forest
11. Hemlock-Hardwood Swamp
12. Hickory-Hop Hornbeam Forest Woodland

13. Highbush Blueberry Thicket
14. Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp*
15. Kettlehole Level Bog
16. Level Bog
17. Mixed Oak Forest*
18. Oak-Hickory Forest*
19. Ridgetop Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak Community
20. Shallow Emergent Marsh
21. Shrub Swamp
22. Spruce-Fir Swamp

Together, the natural communities of Mixed Oak Forest (1,108 acres) and Deep Emergent Marsh (503 acres) account for 66% of the Priority Natural Communities component and comprise significant portions of the central region of the HCFLA, in the Brookfields, Warren, and Palmer. The Deep Emergent Marsh community is of exemplary species diversity, size and quality (free of human disturbance and exotic invasive species) and is home to state-listed rare plants and animals. The Mixed Oak Forest community has intact natural processes (such as regular burnings) and has few exotic species.

The FLA also contains 97,906 acres (23% of total FLA) of *BioMap-2* designated Critical Natural Landscape (CNL), areas that are able to “identify and prioritize intact landscapes in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames.” Only 35,076 acres (or 36%) of the CNL are protected.

Together, Core Habitat (Core) and Critical Natural Landscape (CNL) account for 40% of the total area of the Heritage Corridor FLA. Nearly the entire MA-CT border, large portions of the northwestern corner and significant portions of the center around the Brookfields in the FLA are mapped as either Core or CNL. Large Core and CNL areas exist from the Norcross Tupper Hill Sanctuary north to Brimfield State Forest, surrounding the Sturbridge and Southbridge water supplies and surrounding a mountain ridge in the northwest corner of the heritage Corridor FLA. Large Core and CNL areas exist in the northwest corner where the Quabbin and Ludlow Reservoirs sit as well as The Mount Holyoke Range State Park, the unique east-west orientation of the 3,000-acre range of mixed forest types and numerous wetland ecosystems. Also, there are significant Core and CNL areas in north Sturbridge and Brookfield, around the Quaboag River and associated headwaters and wildlife management areas.

The Heritage Corridor FLA is home to species requiring vast expanses of forests, such as black bear, moose, bobcat, fisher and nesting habitat for migratory songbirds. As the following information shows, the Heritage Corridor FLA contains statewide significant rare and exemplary habitat areas.

The entire 26-town region contains numerous rare amphibian, beetle, bird, butterfly/moth, crustacean, dragonfly/damselfly, fish mammal, mussel, reptile and

vascular plant species. Thirty-nine of the total 100 rare species are state-listed Endangered Species and two are federally listed Endangered Species. The complete list of rare species includes:

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Amphibian	<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>	Blue-spotted Salamander	SC	
Amphibian	<i>Scaphiopus holbrookii</i>	Eastern Spadefoot	T	
Amphibian	<i>Ambystoma jeffersonianum</i>	Jefferson Salamander	SC	
Amphibian	<i>Ambystoma opacum</i>	Marbled Salamander	T	
Beetle	<i>Cicindela purpurea</i>	Purple Tiger Beetle	SC	
Bird	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American Bittern	E	
Bird	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	E	
Bird	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl	SC	
Bird	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Common Loon	SC	
Bird	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	SC	
Bird	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Golden-winged Warbler	E	
Bird	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Grasshopper Sparrow	T	
Bird	<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>	Henslow's Sparrow	E	
Bird	<i>Rallus elegans</i>	King Rail	T	
Bird	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Least Bittern	E	
Bird	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	T	
Bird	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Pied-billed Grebe	E	
Bird	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>	Sedge Wren	E	
Bird	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Upland Sandpiper	E	
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Callophrys hesseli</i>	Hessel's Hairstreak	SC	
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Rhodoecia aurantiago</i>	Orange Sallow Moth	T	
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Euchlaena madusaria</i>	Sandplain Euchlaena	SC	
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Callophrys lanoraieensis</i>	Bog Elfin	T	
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Metarranthis pilosaria</i>	Coastal Swamp Metarranthis Moth	SC	
Crustacean	<i>Eubbranchipus intricatus</i>	Intricate Fairy Shrimp	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Stylurus spiniceps</i>	Arrow Clubtail	T	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Ophiogomphus aspersus</i>	Brook Snaketail	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Anax longipes</i>	Comet Darner	SC	

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Enallagma laterale</i>	New England Bluet	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Rhionaeschna mutata</i>	Spatterdock Darner	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Gomphus abbreviatus</i>	Spine-crowned Clubtail	E	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Neurocordulia yamaskanensis</i>	Stygian Shadowdragon	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Enallagma carunculatum</i>	Tule Bluet	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Neurocordulia obsoleta</i>	Umber Shadowdragon	SC	
Dragonfly / Damselfly	<i>Stylurus scudleri</i>	Zebra Clubtail	SC	
Fish	<i>Notropis bifrenatus</i>	Bridle Shiner	SC	
Mammal	<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	Indiana Myotis	E	E
Mammal	<i>Synaptomys cooperi</i>	Southern Bog Lemming	SC	
Mammal	<i>Sorex palustris</i>	Water Shrew	SC	
Mussel	<i>Alasmidonta varicosa</i>	Brook Floater (Swollen Wedgemussel)	E	
Mussel	<i>Strophitus undulatus</i>	Creeper	SC	
Mussel	<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>	Dwarf Wedgemussel	E	E
Mussel	<i>Alasmidonta undulata</i>	Triangle Floater	SC	
Reptile	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Blanding's Turtle	T	
Reptile	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Eastern Box Turtle	SC	
Reptile	<i>Carphophis amoenus</i>	Eastern Worm Snake	T	
Reptile	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Wood Turtle	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i>	Adder's-tongue Fern	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Myriophyllum alterniflorum</i>	Alternate-flowered Water-milfoil	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Elatine americana</i>	American Waterwort	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Corallorhiza odontorhiza</i>	Autumn Coralroot	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Acer nigrum</i>	Black Maple	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Ranunculus pensylvanicus</i>	Bristly Buttercup	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Lygodium palmatum</i>	Climbing Fern	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Adlumia fungosa</i>	Climbing Fumitory	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's-root	T	

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Vascular Plant	<i>Blephilia ciliata</i>	Downy Wood-mint	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Poa saltuensis ssp. languida</i>	Drooping Speargrass	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Lipocarpa micrantha</i>	Dwarf Bulrush	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Arceuthobium pusillum</i>	Dwarf Mistletoe	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Carex lupuliformis</i>	False Hop-sedge	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great Laurel	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Boechera missouriensis</i>	Green Rock-cress	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Agrimonia pubescens</i>	Hairy Agrimony	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Isoetes lacustris</i>	Lake Quillwort	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Desmodium cuspidatum</i>	Large-bracted Tick-trefoil	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	Linear-leaved Milkweed	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Nabalus serpentarius</i>	Lion's Foot	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Rhynchospora scirpoides</i>	Long-beaked Bald-sedge	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Cardamine longii</i>	Long's Bitter-cress	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Scirpus longii</i>	Long's Bulrush	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Calystegia spithamea</i>	Low Bindweed	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Carex michauxiana</i>	Michaux's Sedge	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Asplenium montanum</i>	Mountain Spleenwort	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Claytonia virginica</i>	Narrow-leaved Spring Beauty	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Verbena simplex</i>	Narrow-leaved Vervain	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Liatris scariosa var. novae-angliae</i>	New England Blazing Star	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Calamagrostis stricta ssp. inexpansa</i>	New England Northern Reed Grass	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Galium boreale</i>	Northern Bedstraw	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Platanthera flava var. herbiola</i>	Pale Green Orchis	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Panicum philadelphicum ssp. philadelphicum</i>	Philadelphia Panic-grass	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Scheuchzeria palustris</i>	Pod-grass	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Clematis occidentalis</i>	Purple Clematis	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Purple Milkweed	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Aplectrum hyemale</i>	Putty-root	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Morus rubra</i>	Red Mulberry	E	

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Vascular Plant	<i>Utricularia resupinata</i>	Resupinate Bladderwort	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Sphenopholis nitida</i>	Shining Wedgegrass	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Eriophorum gracile</i>	Slender Cottongrass	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Sparganium natans</i>	Small Bur-reed	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Rumex verticillatus</i>	Swamp Dock	T	
Vascular Plant	<i>Pedicularis lanceolata</i>	Swamp Lousewort	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Sagittaria teres</i>	Terete Arrowhead	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Podostemum ceratophyllum</i>	Threadfoot	SC	
Vascular Plant	<i>Ranunculus micranthus</i>	Tiny-flowered Buttercup	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Carex polymorpha</i>	Variable Sedge	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Potamogeton vaseyi</i>	Vasey's Pondweed	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Oxalis violacea</i>	Violet Wood-sorrel	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Juncus filiformis</i>	Thread Rush	E	
Vascular Plant	<i>Doellingeria infirma</i>	Cornel-leaved Aster	E	

There are 301 Certified Vernal Pools and 2,836 Potential Vernal Pools in the proposed FLA, based on the aerial photo analysis by the state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Vernal pools are nesting and feeding habitats for several rare species. Certifications of vernal pools require volunteers to show evidence of the presence of vernal pool indicator species. The Natural Heritage Program staff review this evidence before certification is given. Fieldwork across the state has shown that the vast majority of potential vernal pools are actual vernal pools.

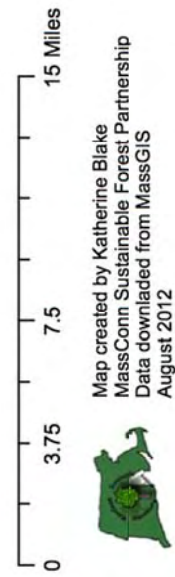
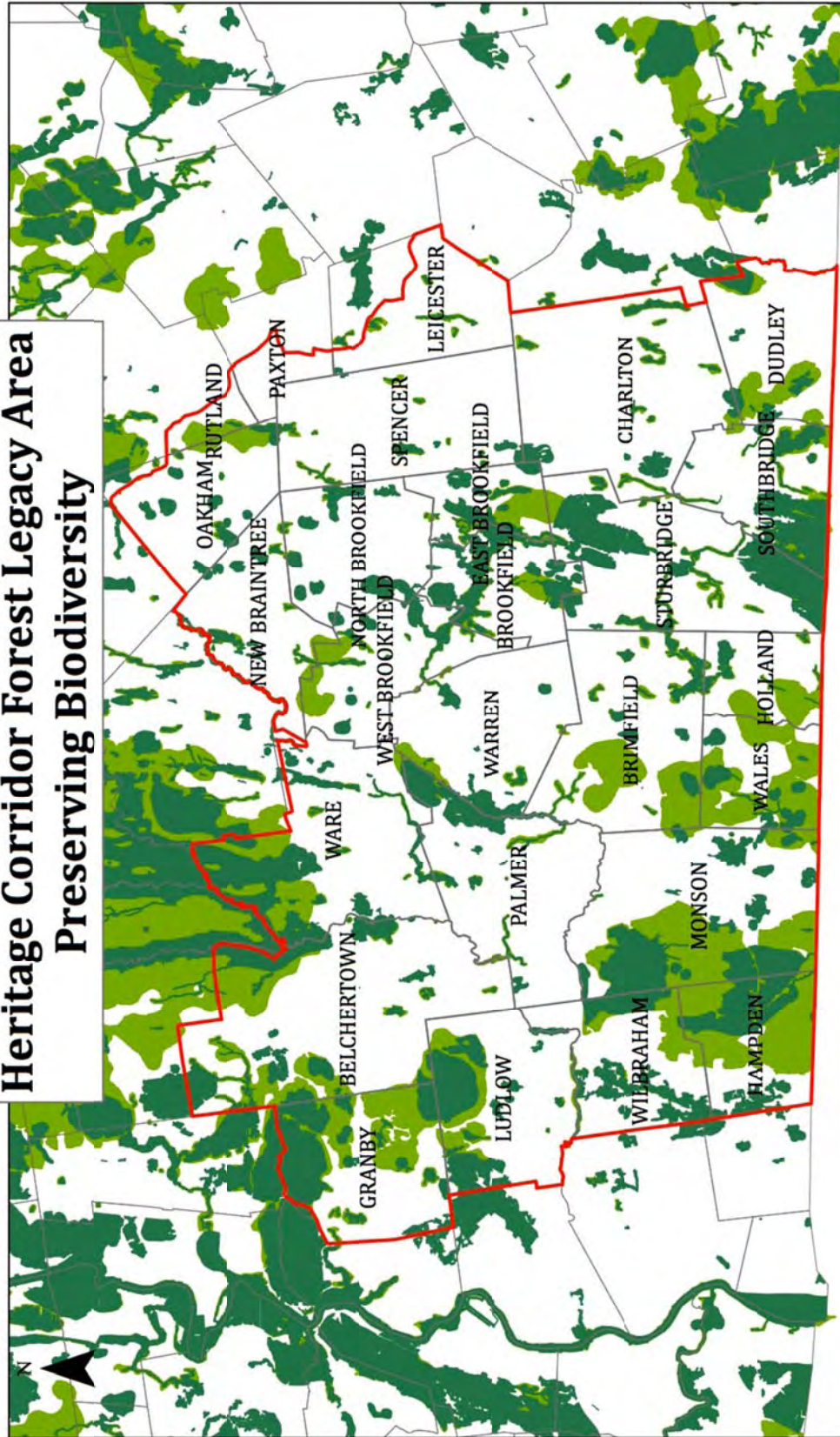
The proposed FLA is also home to a variety of fish species. The inventory of fisheries resource of the Quinebaug conducted by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife included eight sampling sites, seven of which are in the proposed FLA. The fish inventory included the following species: fallfish, common shiner, redbreast sunfish and white sucker (most common component) and largemouth bass, bluegill, tessellated darter, eastern blacknose dace and longnose dace (minor component) as well as 27 other species with an occasional occurrence. In a 2009 report by Massachusetts' Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, *Developing Target Fish Community Models for Massachusetts Mainstream Rivers*, the most abundant fish species identified in the Quinebaug, Chicopee, Blackstone and French Rivers included: fallfish, white sucker, redbreast sunfish, tessellated darter, longnose dace, common shiner and blacknose dace.

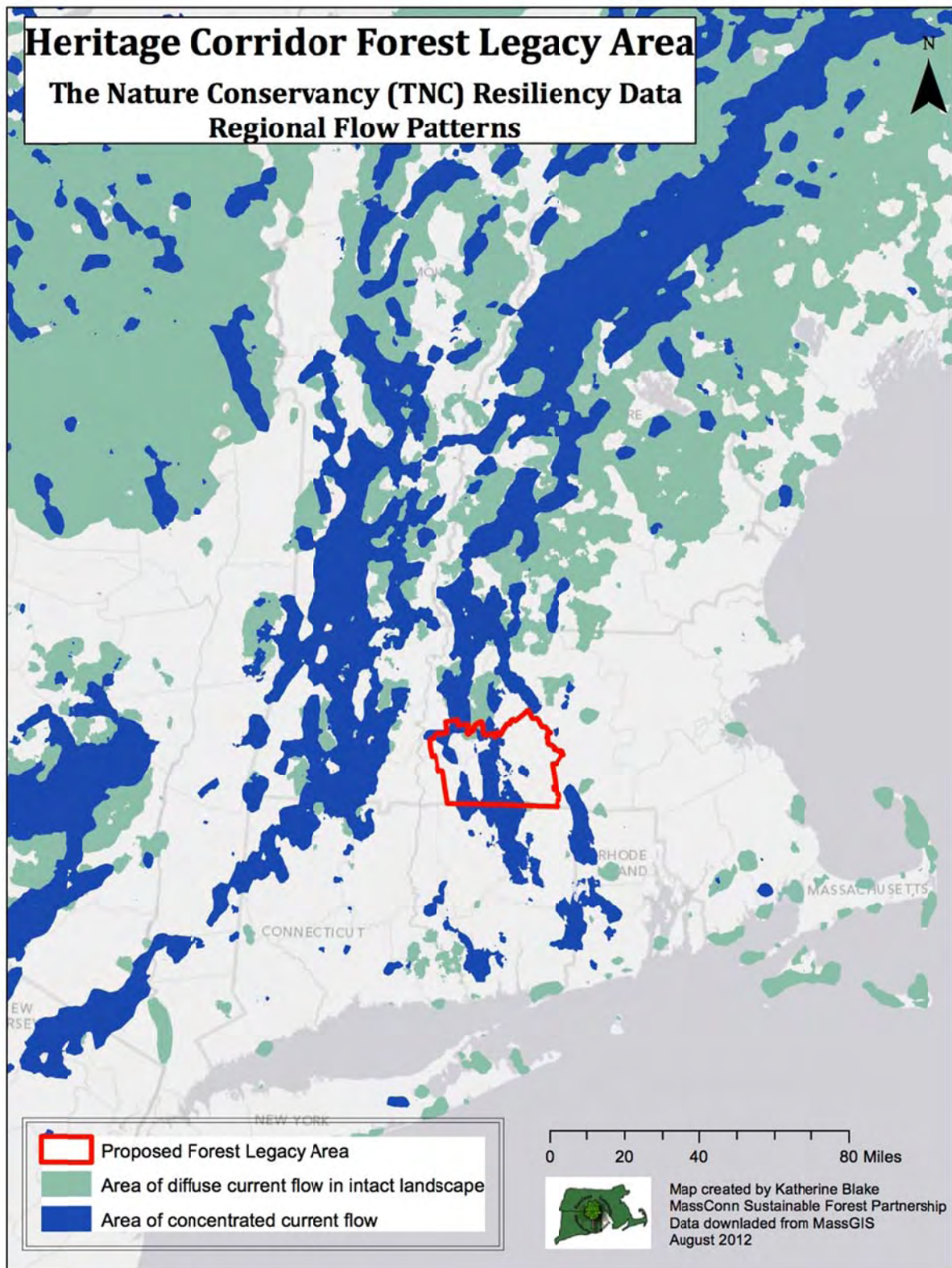
One of the two federally Endangered species of the FLA, the Dwarf Wedgemussel, depends especially on fish communities and riparian habitats. Particularly, its main host is the tessellated darter, which was identified as one of the most abundant fish in the FLA. However, some of the main threats to the Dwarf Wedgemussel include habitat fragmentation and altering the dynamics of river corridors. The Natural Heritage

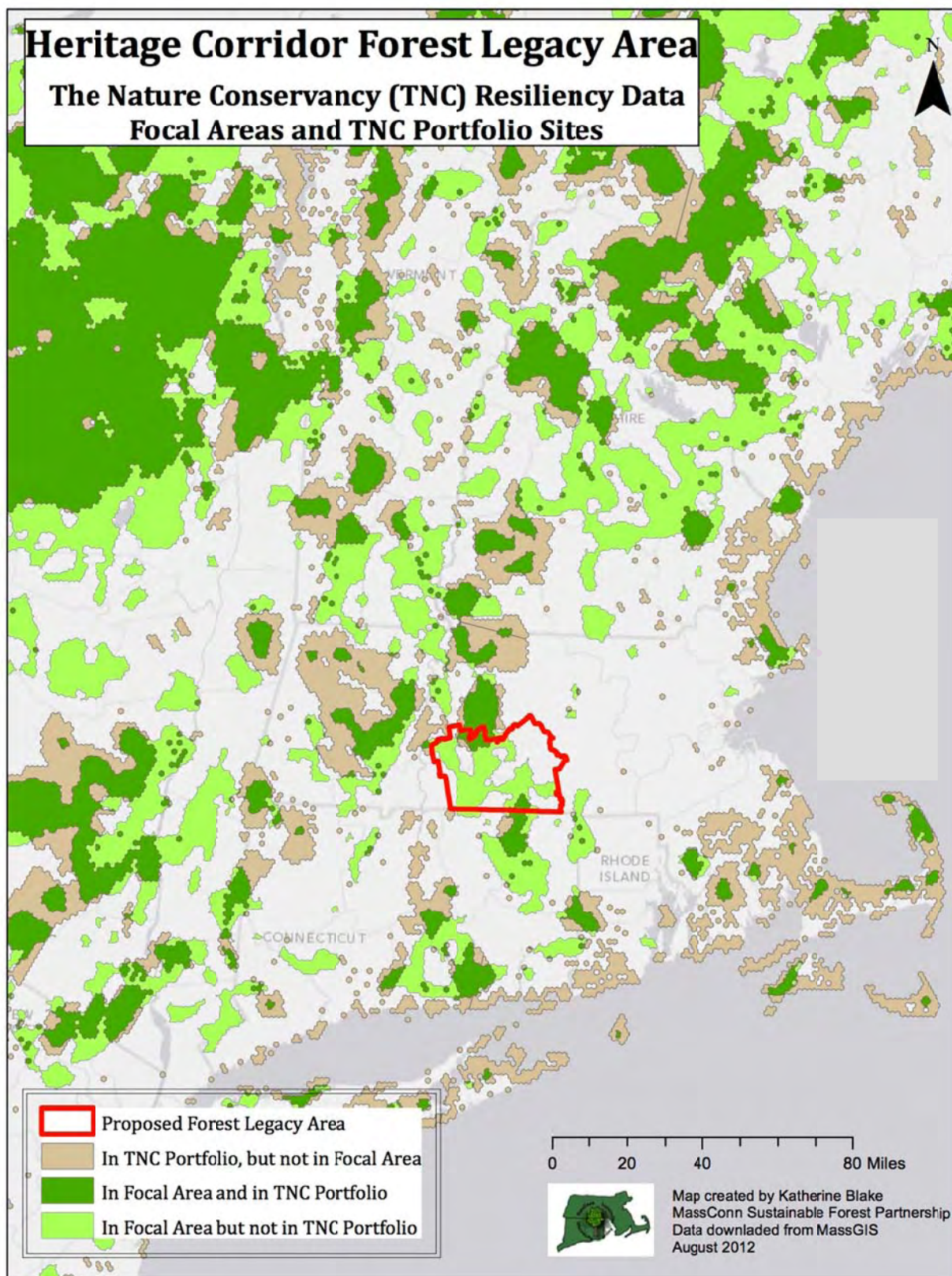
Endangered Species Program recommends maintaining vegetated riparian buffers and protecting land at high priority sites. To start, this includes protection of the remaining (%) of the total wetland acres of the FLA and ensuring forest protection with these areas.

This 2009 report *Developing Target Fish Community Models...* details the development of the Target Fish Community (TFC) model in 2008 by Bain and Meixer for use on the Quinebaug River. TFC is one of many models that exist as techniques to assess the health of aquatic ecosystems. As of 2009, this method of water quality assessment has been applied to four rivers in the proposed FLA: The Quinebaug, Chicopee, Blackstone and French Rivers. The Quinebaug was found to be a river with fish communities in fair condition. The Blackstone was found to have fish communities in poor condition, most likely attributed to stream flow problems from its history as a working river and the presences of numerous impoundments. These ranks are based on a calculation between similarity scores (calculation of TFC and current fish communities) and fish species scarcity. The conditions of the Chicopee and French Rivers were not ranked.

Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area Preserving Biodiversity







D. Forest products

The Heritage Corridor FLA has an active forest products industry. A good indicator of the importance of the Heritage Corridor FLA to the forest industry is acreage under the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program. Within the 26 towns in the FLA, a total of 9,229 acres are in the program under 101 separate ownerships (average of 91 acres per ownership). This percentage of land under the program makes up approximately 11.9% of the state overall total.

Since 2008, the state has provided nearly \$250,000 each year for the cost-share of Forest Stewardship Plans. Beginning in the spring of 2012, 1,146 landowners who have Forest Stewardship Plans in Massachusetts were surveyed for their overall satisfaction with the Forest Stewardship Program. As of August 14, 2012, there was a 21.4% response rate (Scheitzer, 2012). It has been found that without state funding, only 25% of the overall respondents would have sought the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan on their land (Scheitzer, 2012). Based on their experience with the program, 87% of respondents would recommend the Program to another landowner (Scheitzer, 2012). Approximately 80% of respondents agreed that the Plan helps them better care for their land and since having the plan completed, 71% of landowners intend to work with a forester on their land (Scheitzer, 2012). In addition to private ownership, there are five municipalities within the FLA with either town forest or water supply lands enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program.

Within the twenty-six towns, there are 52,188 acres of land (under 1,605 forest management plans) enrolled in Chapter 61, Massachusetts' current forest use tax law program (average of 32 acres per plan). This percentage of land under the Chapter 61 program makes up approximately 12% of all Chapter 61 lands enrolled in the program statewide. Participants in this program enroll for ten-year periods after completing a comprehensive forest management plan. Enrollees save 95% on property taxes on the land in the program. Enrollees who leave the program early, must pay roll back taxes plus interest (5% per annum) for the five preceding tax years. Local communities have a "first right of refusal" to purchase land leaving the Chapter 61 program. Many Chapter 61 enrollees are also enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program.

The Heritage Corridor FLA is within 20 miles of the central mill for Hull Forest Products, Inc. This mill produces about 10 million board feet of lumber each year and employs 50± people, making it one of the largest mills in Southern New England. Hull owns and has permanently protected nearly 12,000 acres of working forestland. In 2000, Hull purchased 8,000 acres of the former Peck Lumber Company land and sold a Conservation Restriction (CR) on these lands to agencies of EOEEA as well as non-profit organizations and municipal water supply departments (personal communication, William Hull). A significant number of acres of the Hull ownership are within the proposed HCFLA.

The Hull-EOEEA CR includes high forestry standards that protect and enhance the biodiversity value of these lands. Groups which helped conserve these lands include the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, the New England Forestry Foundation, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (formerly the Department of Environmental Management), and the Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife, as well as municipal water departments such as the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission. The majority of Hull lands are also currently enrolled in a green certification program for their outstanding forest management practices, 6,600 acres of which are enrolled in the Massachusetts Private Lands Group Certification (Forest Stewardship Council).

Within the proposed HCFLA, there are 65 licensed timber harvesters. There are also many additional licensed timber harvesters in surrounding towns with easy access to the forested acres within this area. There are currently 114 Massachusetts licensed foresters who practice private consulting forestry in the state. It is assumed that nearly half of these foresters work within the twenty-six towns that make up the HCFLA. In addition, there are two sawmills, three portable bandsaws and one kiln located within the proposed FLA. In the surrounding area, there are fourteen sawmills, six portable bandsaws and eight kilns. Many of the harvesters that work in the HCFLA use these surrounding operations as a source to send harvested wood products. In addition to these private and small businesses, the work of several state foresters and other natural resources professionals relies upon the forest products industry within the proposed FLA.

E. Recreational values

Massachusetts completed a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2006. The Heritage Corridor FLA includes communities in the southeastern section of the Connecticut Valley Region and the southwestern section of the Central Massachusetts Region of this report. A survey of state residents in these regions found residents highest needs being additional outdoor sites for (in priority order) walking, swimming, hiking and biking (both mountain and road). On average, about 80% of those surveyed in these regions favored purchasing new outdoor recreation areas. These figures show a desire to increase the utilization and protection of open space.

Within the Heritage Corridor FLA, there is great potential to connect forested recreational sites through easements or purchase. One significant recreational asset in the southern part of the Heritage Corridor FLA is The Last Green Valley, also known as the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor designated by congress in 1994, one of only 23 such designations in the country. One of the largest tourist attractions in the area is Old Sturbridge Village, which hosted 263,000 visitors in 2011. This 200-acre living history museum has a forest management plan and harvesting forest products is one of the educational programs shown on the site.

The state Department of Conservation and Recreation oversees 6 properties in this area:

- Brimfield State Forest (Brimfield, Wales, & Monson), encompassing 3,250 acres with 20 miles of roads and trails for activities such as hiking, cross country skiing and mountain biking, as well as opportunities for swimming, fishing and hunting;
- Southern portions of Mount Holyoke Range State Park (Granby), including roughly 1,500 acres of the more than 3,000-acre park, with passive recreation and horse riding trails, scenic vistas and hunting.
- Spencer State Forest (Spencer), encompassing 965 acres with scenic vistas, trails, canoeing, swimming, fishing and hunting;
- Southern portions of the Quabbin Reservation (Belchertown, Ware), including more than 12,000 acres of protected watershed and Quabbin Park, which offers bicycle access and scenic vistas;
- Streeter Point Recreation Area (Sturbridge), encompassing 400 acres adjacent to the US Army Corp of Engineers' East Brimfield Dam and a day-use area that is open for swimming, picnicking fishing and boating; and,
- Wells State Park (Sturbridge), encompassing 1,400 and 10 miles of trails open to passive recreational uses. This is the only state-run camping area in the HCFLA, with 60 campsites, and in 2011 it had a total of 27,182 visitors.

The state Division of Fish & Game has several large properties, totaling 13,940 acres, in the Heritage Corridor FLA. These wildlife management areas are open to recreational activities including fishing and hunting. DFW has been actively working in this region to preserve the state's natural resources and people's right to conservation of those resources.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages flood control projects in the HCFLA that are also used for public recreation. East Brimfield Lake, which also includes Streeter Road Beach in Sturbridge and Lake Siog Park in Holland provides swimming, fishing, hunting, canoeing, boating and nature study attracting 62, 205 visitors in FY2011. Conant Brook Dam in Monson offers hiking, horseback riding, fishing and cross-country skiing and attracted 16,194 visitors in FY2011. The Westville Lake facility in Sturbridge & Southbridge offers picnicking, fishing, hunting, canoeing, boating and nature study and attracted 64,025 visitors in FY2011. It should be noted that the Grand Trunk Trail, a National Recreational Trail (see below), would not exist without the cooperation and support of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Additionally, numerous non-profit conservation organizations operate in the HCFLA and offer trails along with other passive recreational opportunities. A number of these properties are open to hunting and fishing as well. Some have visitor centers and interpretive displays promoting environmental education and

are used by schools for field trips. Among these are Opacum Land Trust, East Quabbin Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, The Trustees of Reservations, Massachusetts Audubon Society and The Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, which has an extensive native plant collection and botanical gardens that are free and open to the public.

The Heritage Corridor FLA encompasses sections of four notable long-distance hiking trails:

- The Grand Trunk Trail, an east-west route that was designated, in part, a National Recreation Trail;
- The 101 mile, east-west MA Central Rail Trail connecting Boston to Northampton;
- The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, also a National Recreation Trail and part of the 215-mile New England National Scenic Trail, which travels through 39 communities in CT and MA, and is overseen by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), Berkshire Chapter; and,
- The Mid-State Trail, which runs 95 miles from Rhode Island to New Hampshire and is under the auspices of the AMC, Worcester Chapter.

These four trails are also prioritized in *Commonwealth Connections – A greenway vision for Massachusetts*, a 2001 publication by DCR and AMC that maps the most important wildlife corridors as well as public trails in the state. Parts of all of these important trails are on private property that could be secured with potential legacy funding.

Water-based recreational trails are also important in this region. Parts of the 45-mile Quinebaug River Water Trail run through the HCFLA, including two segments that have been designated as National Recreational Trails: The five-mile flatwater paddle from Holland Pond to East Brimfield Lake; and Paper Mill Pond, where another 5.5 mile stretch begins a journey to West Thompson, CT. The Holland Pond to East Brimfield segment was the first water trail to be designated as part of the National Trails System by the National Park Service. It is also a designated Watchable Wildlife area. The Quaboag River trail is being developed from Quaboag Pond to the confluence of the Ware and Swift Rivers, where the Chicopee River forms, which will create a 9-mile paddle.

F. Known Cultural Resources

1. Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

Hundreds of prehistoric sites within the Heritage Corridor FLA are recorded in the files of the State Historic Preservation Officer at the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). Several years ago while conducting a statewide Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Resources, the MHC determined that its records contained only a fraction of the sites that were actually known to local amateur archaeologists and

artifact collectors statewide. Therefore, we anticipate that many more prehistoric sites than are recorded actually exist within the area of the Heritage Corridor FLA.

From prehistoric times the rivers have served as transportation corridors within the Heritage Corridor FLA. The Quaboag, Ware, and Swift Rivers are important tributaries of the west flowing Chicopee River, which in turn is an important tributary of the Connecticut River that flows south emptying into Long Island Sound at Old Saybrook Connecticut. Significantly, the Connecticut River Valley contains the highest prehistoric site frequency and density of any non-coastal region in New England. In the southeastern part of the study area the French and Quinebaug Rivers flow southerly into the Thames River drainage system that empties into Long Island Sound at New London Connecticut.

The cumulative evidence from this archaeological record firmly places Paleo Period hunters and gatherers in the Heritage Corridor FLA as early as 12,000 years ago, almost immediately after the Wisconsin glacier receded from the region. The Native American occupation continued without a break, albeit on a seasonal basis, until early historic times.

Within the Heritage Corridor FLA the archaeological record contains sites of Paleo [12,000 – 9,000 Before Present (B.P.)], Early Archaic (9,000 – 8,000 B.P.), Middle Archaic (8,000 - 6,000 B.P.), Late Archaic (6,000 - 3,000 B.P.) and Early, Middle and Late Woodland periods (3,000 – 450 B.P.). This represents sites from the entire archaeological record.

There are several environmental factors that made the Heritage Corridor FLA area so popular during prehistoric times, primarily:

- a. The Quaboag River was a major east/west transportation corridor for people and goods to and from the Connecticut Valley with the French and Quinebaug Rivers providing a north/south corridor to the Thames Valley.
- b. From about 10,000 years ago, the many falls and rapids along the rivers served as fishing stations where anadromous species could be harvested on their spring spawning runs.
- c. Expanses of riverine meadows provided excellent habitat for a wide variety of resident fauna/flora that were important for subsistence purposes.
- d. The rich alluvial deposits along the rivers were favored by the Woodland horticulturalists from 3,000 to 450 years ago.

2. Historic Archaeological Sites

During the 17th century sections of Brimfield, the Brookfields, Sturbridge, Holland and Wales are believed to have developed into a principal core area of settlement for the Quaboags, a sub-group of the Nipmucks. A Native American palisaded encampment reputedly existed on Sherman Pond in Brimfield.

Historically, a network of Native American trails crisscrossed the area, with the major trails tending to follow the course of the Quaboag to the Chicopee River to ultimately connect with the Connecticut Valley, but lesser trails penetrated the upland areas as well. During the Colonial Period (1675 – 1775) and Federal Period (1775 – 1830) many of these Native trails became important roads for the slowly growing population. One such road, the Worcester and Stafford Turnpike (1806) appears to be the present Stafford/Sturbridge Road that goes through the center of Holland. Stafford/Lower Palmer Road and Route 19 appear to be other Native American trails that were reutilized by settlers and were transformed into important roads.

Scattered throughout the Heritage Corridor FLA, often in out of the way and nearly hidden places, are a plethora of historic archaeological sites stemming from 18th and 19th century saw, grist and textile mill operations. More numerous, but not necessarily more visible, are the archaeological remains of hundreds of farmsteads, with the cellar holes of the main houses, barns and out buildings.

3. Historic Landscapes

Part of the Heritage Corridor FLA falls within the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor, which has been declared The Last Green Valley for its undeveloped rural character that is formed by its rivers, hills and forests. Small town centers and agricultural landscape are abundant in this region. While the area was never densely populated in historic times, as it lay at the eastern end of the Springfield regional core, hearty individualists nevertheless attempted to eke out a living in this upland region. Stonewalls are the remnants of the partitioning of land for pasture and tillage. As noted above, the Heritage Corridor FLA contains the archaeological remains of many former farms and mills, which, when combined with those in current operation, create significant vernacular landscapes of considerable importance to the region and to the Commonwealth. Likewise, the combination of these vernacular landscapes and the varied topography create a collection of scenic landscapes that are unique and important to retain.

4. National and State Register Resources

Within the proposed Heritage Corridor FLA there are many historic resources that are listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. This includes individual property listings as well as Historic Districts and Multiple Resource Areas. Included in this inventory are historic farmsteads, mill and factory buildings, mill worker tenements and many other public and private buildings. Scattered throughout the Heritage Corridor FLA, often in out of the way and nearly hidden places, are a plethora of historic archaeological sites stemming from 18th and 19th century saw, grist and textile mill operations. More numerous, but not necessarily more visible, are the archaeological remains of hundreds of farmsteads, with the cellar holes of the main houses, barns and out buildings.

VII. MEANS TO PROTECT PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

1. Acquisition of full fee ownership is appropriate for tracts within the Heritage Corridor FLA, but acquisition of conservation easements is preferred to maximize funding impact. Forest Legacy acquisitions will represent cooperation between state agencies (DCR and DFG), the twenty-six municipalities, and non-profits organizations (principally Opacum Land Trust (OLT), East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), Kestrel Land Trust (KLT), Norcross Wildlife Foundation (NWF), The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). These partnerships have protected significant forest tracts in recent years, and with the addition of Forest Legacy funding, can make significant progress in land conservation within HCFLA.
2. In the case of conservation easements, acquire development rights on all tracts, especially the rights to subdivide, construct buildings, and control utility right-of-way locations.
3. Timber rights retained by the landowner should be conditioned by using “Best Management Practices” contained in the *Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act Regulations* for alleviating soil erosion. Timber harvesting is permitted, but shall be described in a Forest Cutting Plan approved by the appropriate Bureau of Forestry Service Forester.
4. Acquire public access rights on all tracts. Exceptions might be made by the Forest Legacy Committee prior to purchase negotiations. For example, municipal watershed protection or rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat protection may be situations where access would be restricted.
5. Abide by timber harvesting buffer requirements of the *Massachusetts River Protection Act* or other regulations.

6. Restrict existing or proposed mining, excavation of mineral, sand and gravel pits to operations for the sole use of the landowner only. No commercial mining operations will be allowed.
7. No disposal of waste, hazardous material, or unregistered vehicles will be allowed on the properties. Likewise, any previously disposed waste, hazardous material or unregistered vehicles shall be removed prior to acquisition of interests.
8. Prohibit the use of signs and billboards on all properties, except to state the name and address of the property owner and/or provide Forest Legacy information including information on boundaries. A “For Sale” sign or interpretive trail markers would be allowed, as well.
9. Existing dams water impoundments or similar structures shall be allowed to remain consistent with the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety. No new dams, impoundments, or similar structures shall be allowed.
10. Prohibitions included are industrial, commercial activities, except forestry.
11. Utilize the Forest Stewardship and Chapter 61 programs to encourage land stewardship and thereby increase the chances of future permanent protection of parcels. The state is committed to funding a targeted and incentive-based outreach program to all forest landowners within the FLA in order to significantly increase lands under the Forest Stewardship and Chapter 61 Programs.
12. Explore opportunities to utilize the Massachusetts Land Conservation Tax Credit and federal tax deduction for charitable gifts to conserve more acres per dollar.

VIII. USING THE EVALUATION CRITERIA TO ANALYZE PUBLIC BENEFITS

The proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area clearly meets the required eligibility criteria and exemplifies the important public values, as listed above. The evaluation factors described herein provide more specific and detailed measures in relative fashion. Though many of the evaluation criteria are addressed in Section VI, additional factors are discussed below:

A. Threat of conversion to non-forest uses

The Heritage Corridor FLA is unique because it is part of a 421,110-acre forested landscape that bridges the gap between heavily forested northeastern Connecticut and the North Quabbin region. Conservation of key corridors throughout this region are critical for wildlife, sustainable forest management, watershed protection, and wildland recreation; all which benefit from having large unfragmented blocks of forest land. However, the HCFLA is within a zone of influence from possible future development. Before the recent economic

downturn, areas in all directions around the FLA have seen significantly higher development and growth rates

Within the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area, 19,730 acres of forest were lost to development from 1971-1999. Unfortunately, land use data from 2005 cannot be compared with that of the data from 1971-1999 because it was created using different methods. However, according to the 2009 report, *Losing Ground*, by The Massachusetts Audubon Society, residential development accounts for 87% of land use changes state-wide.

The towns within the proposed Heritage Corridor FLA have seen significant growth in housing stock over a six-year period (1999-2005). The rate of land use change here is not the fastest in the state but the changes are significant and represent the “sprawl danger zone” (areas experiencing rapid growth and development pressure) already identified in other areas of Massachusetts. Two towns in the proposed FLA, which are along the eastern border of the proposed FLA, Charlton and Sturbridge, showed the highest amount of housing stock growth, between 15-34% increase in only six years’ time. Additionally, on the western border of the proposed FLA, Belchertown was identified as one of several towns state-wide that has lost the most acres of forest to development between 1999-2005.

Almost all of the new residential development is housing on lots of nearly 2 acres scattered along existing public roads (known as “approval not required” development, which is less restricted by local planning boards in Massachusetts). Therefore, the “fragmentation” impact of each new home with this development pattern is quite significant. For example, a publication by the Environmental Law Institute entitled *Conservation Thresholds for Land Use Planners* recommends a buffer of at least 300 meters around unfragmented “large patch natural communities” in order to minimize the negative edge effects of development on these habitats. Given this guideline, a single home placed in the center of a large forest block would negatively impact over 55 acres of interior forest habitat. The same report recommends buffers around water bodies of 100 meters to minimize the effects of development on wildlife and water quality.

A study done by Harvard University of the region north of Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts (an area with a lower development pressure) found that the average block of unfragmented forest land decreased in size from 1,100 to 800 acres over a recent 15-year period. This amount of fragmentation has a significant effect on habitat, especially for mammals with large ranges such as bear, moose and fisher. The U.S. Forest Service forest inventory of Massachusetts found that 75% of the plots were within ¼ of a mile of forest edge – principally residential development. This type of landscape and parcel fragmentation also has an effect on working forests. One study in Massachusetts estimates that once parcels are reduced below 15 acres they are not economically manageable.

The Wildlands and Woodlands report for New England documents the decline in forest cover after 200 years of resurgence. The *Wildlands and Woodlands* vision calls for a 50-year conservation effort to retain at least 70 percent of New England in forestland, permanently free from development. In Massachusetts, the vision calls for protecting 50% of the land in forest, over 2.5 million acres. Achieving a Forest Legacy designation for the Heritage Corridor area provides a significant additional land conservation tool to meet the Wildlands and Woodlands vision for our region.

B. Exemplify important public values

The public values associated with the Heritage Corridor FLA have been described in detail in Section VI above. The following summarizes why these important public values justify receiving a Forest Legacy Area designation:

1. Timber and other forest commodities:

The Heritage Corridor FLA is already the largest source for sustainable forest products in Massachusetts within such close proximity to Boston, Springfield, Worcester, Providence and Hartford. Recent outreach to landowners shows that there is substantial interest in increasing the conservation and sustainable management of this important forest resource. There is a great potential to increase the sustainable forest products produced by this area. However, further land fragmentation will rapidly close this window of opportunity. Forest Legacy can be an extremely valuable tool in protecting and utilizing this important forest resource.

2. Scenic resources

The southeastern section of the Heritage Corridor FLA has received a National Heritage Corridor Designation due the valuable scenic, natural and cultural resources contained within its boundaries. However, this Designation does not directly provide a tool for the conservation of land that is so critical in preserving the scenic resources that make this area so unique.

3. Public recreation resources

The Heritage Corridor FLA has abundant outdoor recreation opportunities and has great potential for the protection and management of new sites. Surveys of residents show their strong desire to expand outdoor recreation opportunities and their willingness to utilize local resources to assist in this goal.

Recent collaborative land and park conservation efforts including the acquisition of the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area (a collaboration of EOEEA Department of Fish and Game, Town of West Brookfield and the East Quabbin Land Trust) show the interest and energy that exists in

communities within the FLA. The addition of Forest Legacy funding will leverage great amounts of additional public and private funding as well as gifts of land.

4. Riparian areas

The Quinebaug, Quabog, Swift and Ware Rivers are a unique and fairly pristine aquatic resource within an increasingly urbanized state. Protecting these riparian areas, particularly the headwaters for the Quinebaug and Quabog Rivers, that originate within the proposed FLA is essential in conserving the integrity of these aquatic resources. The recent *BioMap2* aquatic habitat assessment demonstrates the extensive amount of rare and exemplary aquatic habitat within the FLA (see related map, above). Additionally, the water resources within the Heritage Corridor FLA are important for water supply and protection. Notably, it contains about 4,711 acres of the Quabbin reservoir which provides 2.5 million gallons of drinking water to Massachusetts residents.

The proposed FLA is unique as it spans five watersheds, of which The Connecticut River Watershed is a federally designated National Wildlife Refuge. The HCFLA also supports numerous important Army Corps. of Engineers areas such as the East Brimfield and Buffumville Flood Control Projects. Water-based recreation is also an important resource within the FLA.

5. Fish and wildlife habitat

The HCFLA has an extensive amount of rare and exemplary habitat that is of statewide significance. The percentage of state BioMap2 Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscape within the FLA is significantly higher than the state average. The large unfragmented forests within the FLA provide excellent habitat for species needing wide expanses of uninterrupted forest such as bear, moose, bobcat, and fisher. According to *The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Resiliency Data: Regional Flow Patterns*, the proposed FLA is one of two major north-south corridors that will be critical for species, especially as they respond to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, nearly the entire proposed FLA was analyzed by TNC to be highly resilient in the face of climate change. It is critical that these exemplary habitats of the proposed FLA are protected for the diversity of wildlife it supports.

6. Cultural resources

The Heritage Corridor FLA has an extensive number of pre-historic and historic sites that remain in an undisturbed condition. Additionally, because of its strategic location and inclusion of four major rivers, there are likely dozens of additional pre-historic sites within the 278,208 acres of forest within the FLA. The FLA contains dozens of mills and buildings on the State and National Register of Historic Sites.

7. Productive soils

With its rolling hills and fertile valleys, the Heritage Corridor FLA has significant areas with prime forest and farm soils. Perhaps the best way to measure the productivity of soils is through site index for the growth of trees. In order to determine the site quality of the FLA, the Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Series guides for East Hampden and South Worcester Counties were evaluated. As the soil maps for Massachusetts have not yet been computer digitized, the best way to estimate the soil productivity for this area is by utilizing the *Woodland Management and Productivity* tables in these guides. By this examination, an average of about 79% of this area has a site index of 60 or greater. By this measure, the Quinebaug FLA is certainly above the state average for soil productivity for forest growth.

8. Other ecological values

The Riparian and Fish and Wildlife Habitat sections outline the extensive resources contained within the FLA. Additionally, the HCFLA includes a significant part of the Norcross Wildlife Foundation's ("NWF") focus area, the Tupper Hill Bioreserve. Land owned by NWF was recognized in the 2002 report *Commonwealth Connections* (MA DEM) as an important greenway connecting Brimfield State Forest and other conserved lands to the north to protected open space in Connecticut, such as Shenipsit and Nipmuck State Forests. The Tupper Hill Bioreserve includes approximately 2,100 acres of NWF's Tupper Hill Sanctuary which is surrounded by an unfragmented forested region in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Bioreserve includes many examples of forest stands in excess of 120 years of age. In addition, NWF has acquired nearly 6,000 more acres, for a total of almost 8,000 acres within the Bioreserve region in an effort to protect important forest and wildlife resources.

IX. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Inclusion of portions of the proposed Heritage Corridor area as a Forest Legacy Area began a decade ago. Originally, a six-town region was proposed as the Quinebaug Forest Legacy Area and outreach to municipal representatives, legislative leaders, landowners and the general public was well received.

On October 2, 2012 this proposal was presented to Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee (MA FLC). An initial proposal was made to the MA FLC on June 29, 2011 (See Appendix A)

In August 2012, a letter was sent to each of the twenty-six towns within the proposed Heritage Corridor FLA as well as the state and federal legislative delegation

explaining the Forest Legacy Program and asking for input or comments on a proposed FLA nomination. In response to this mailing, eight communities sent letters of support for this application in advance of the October 2, 1012 meeting with the MA Forest Legacy Committee. While following up with the remaining communities many expressed their verbal support for the application and were waiting formal approval from town boards. Some requested presentations to be made about Forest Legacy (Ware, New Braintree). Letters of support were also received from the U.S. Congressman, the State Senator and the State Representative who represent the Quinebaug FLA area.

Letters of support were also received from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the MA Department of Fish and Game, The Last Green Valley, and eight non-profit land conservation organizations that operate within the HCFLA. (See Appendix B)

In September 2012 a press release about the proposed Heritage Corridor FLA was forwarded to local and regional press (see Appendix C). This generated newspaper articles explaining the application and designation. (See Appendix D.)

X. LITERATURE CITED

Anderson, Mark, M. Clark and A. Olivero Sheldon. 2012. *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region*. The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Conservation Science.

Archey, Warren E. et al., 1993. *Forest Legacy Needs Assessment, Massachusetts*, Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee, Pittsfield, MA.

Archey, Warren E., 2000. *Amendment Forest Legacy Needs Assessment, Massachusetts: Taconic Range Forest Legacy Area*. Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee, Pittsfield, MA.

Bain, Mark B. and Meixler, Marcia S., 2000. *Defining a Target Fish Community for Planning and Evaluating Enhancement of the Quinebaug River in Massachusetts and Connecticut*. Prepared for the Quinebaug River Instream Flow Study Agencies, Ithaca, New York.

Campbell, Susan M., 2000. *Quantifying Public Benefits on Private Forestland in Massachusetts*. Prepared for the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Boston, MA.

Chamberlain, Thomas C., 2012. US Army Corp of Engineers Park Ranger. E-mail communication to Jennifer Ohop, September 10, 2012.

Daylor Consulting Group, Inc., 2002. *Monson Master Plan, Interim Report*. Prepared for the Monson Zoning and Bylaw Committee, Monson, MA.

De la Cretez, Avril et al., 2010. *An Assessment of Forest Resources of Massachusetts*. University of Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Prepared for USDA Forest Service, Boston, MA.

DeGraff, Richard M. and Mariko Yamasaki, 2001. *New England Wildlife: Habitat, Natural History and Distribution*. University Press of New England, Hanover, MA.
Department of Environmental Management, 2002. *Commonwealth Connections*. Boston MA.

Department of Fish & Game. Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. Mass.Gov. n.d., August 2012.

Environmental Law Institute, 2003. *Conservation Thresholds For Land Use Planners*. Washington D.C.

Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, 2006. *Massachusetts Outdoors 2006 - State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Prepared for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 2000. *Massachusetts Outdoors – State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Prepared for the National Park Service, Boston, MA.

Fife, Joseph, 2012. Visitation numbers to Wells State Park, Personal communication to Jennifer Ohop, August, 2012.

Galvin, W.F., 1985 & 2007. *Historic and Archaeological Resources of Central Massachusetts: A Framework for Preservation Decisions*. Boston, MA.

Gumbert, David, *Quinebaug Highlands Landscape, Connecticut/Massachusetts*. The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut State Office.

Hull, William, 2003. Hull Forest Products, Inc., Personal Communication to Bob O'Connor, August 8, 2003.

Kashiwagi, Michael and Todd Richards, 2009. *Development of Target Fish Community Models for Massachusetts Mainstream Rivers, Technical Report*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Lindblad, Ann, 2012. Visitation numbers to Old Sturbridge Village, Personal communication to Jennifer Ohop, August 2012.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. 2008. Translations: Chapter One of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program. Boston, MA.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, 2002. Commonwealth Connections. Boston, MA.

Massachusetts Watersheds. Energy and Environmental Affairs, Mass.Gov, September 24, 2012, August and September 2012.

MassGIS Datalayers, MassGIS, Mass.Gov, September 24, 2012, August and September 2012.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and The Nature Conservancy, 2010. *BioMap2: Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World*. Prepared for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Boston, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, 2001. *BioMap*. Prepared for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Boston, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, 2002. Tupper Hill Initiative: Priorities for Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Boston, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, 2003. *Living Waters: Guiding the Protection of Freshwater Biodiversity on Massachusetts*. Prepared for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Boston, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Mass.gov, n.d., August 2012.

Neddeau, Ethan, 2007. *Dwarf Wedgemussel, Alismiodonta heterodon fact sheet*. Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Westborough, MA.

Places to Go: DCR Parks in Central Massachusetts. Department of Conservation & Recreation. Mass.Gov. n.d., August 2012.

Quabbin Reservoir. Department of Conservation & Recreation. Mass.Gov. n.d., August 2012.

Scheitzer, AJ., 2012. *Preliminary Report of the Forest Stewardship Plan Survey*. Prepared for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Boston, MA.

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Northeast Region. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, n.d., Web, August 2012.

Smith, Alan F., 2012. Archaeologist, Geologist & Natural Resource Specialist, Personal communication to Jennifer Ohop September 12, 2012.

Sternberg, Mark, 2002. Property Usage Codes, Warren Information Services.

US Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 2003. Update Report for Massachusetts. August 30, 2003.

Widemann, Richard H., 2002. Trends in Massachusetts Forest: A Half-Century of Change. Prepared for the USDA Forest Service, Newton Square, Pennsylvania.

Wildlands and Woodlands Vision for Massachusetts and New England. <http://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/home>.

XI. APPENDICES

- A. Notes from June 11, 2012 MA Forest Legacy Committee Meeting
- B. Letters of Support
- C. Press Release
- D. Newspaper Articles

APPENDIX A.

Notes from June 11, 2012 MA Forest Legacy Committee Meeting

Quinebaug Forest Legacy Expansion Proposal

A strategic connection between existing Forest Legacy Areas

The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership seeks to increase the pace of conservation in our region. Expansion of the Quinebaug Amendment to the MA Forest Legacy Assessment of Need would provide a potential source of funding for one of the most important north–south forested corridors in southern New England. This connection, currently 76% forested, is flanked by development and working forests are being lost. This imminent threat causes losses to local forest based industry and will severely degrade the ecosystem services that our working woodlands currently provide.

The original Quinebaug Amendment area focused on The Last Green Valley (TLGV); this proposed expansion includes much of TLGV within Massachusetts while also addressing new multi-state priorities established by The New England Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission. The proposal connects TLGV to the Quabbin to Cardigan Region, creating a south-north migration corridor that is so vital with the looming threat of climate change.

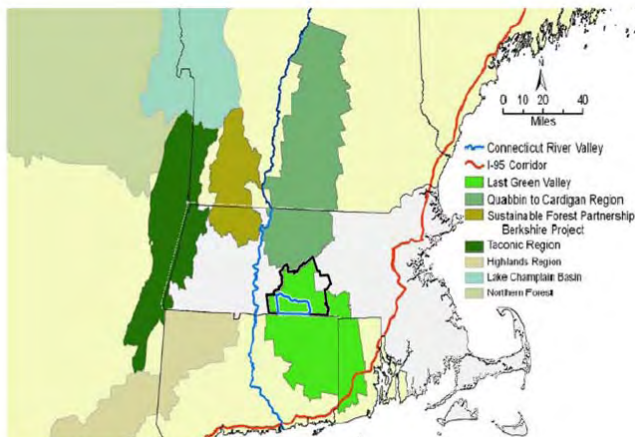
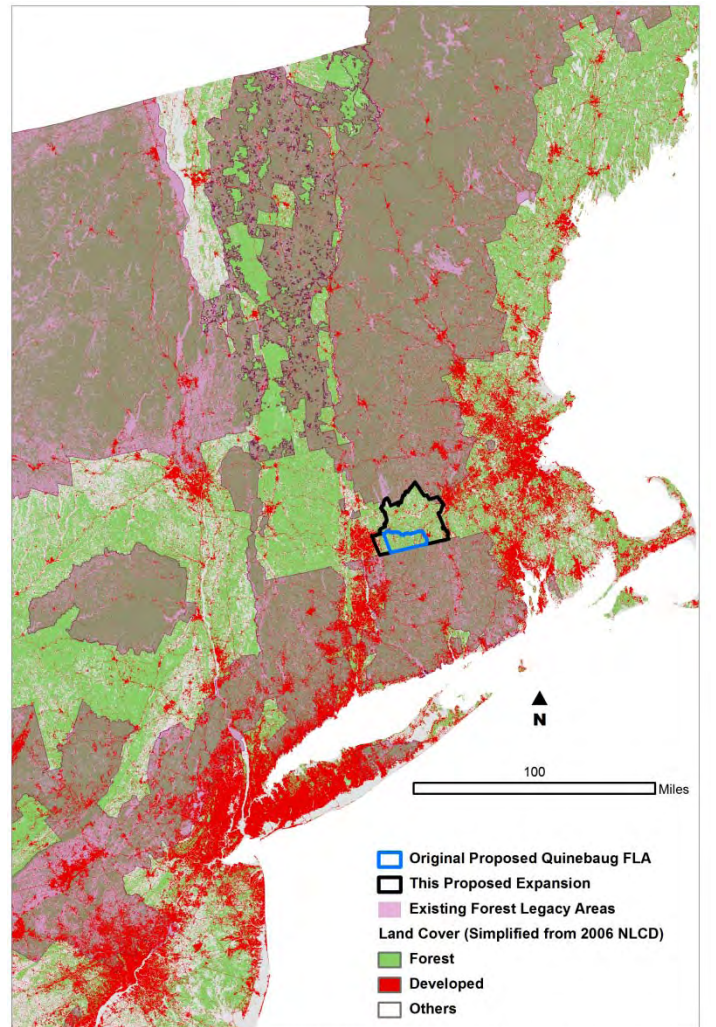


Figure 5.7. Massachusetts Multi-State Priority Areas.



Land Cover is based on the NLCD, 2006. Protected Open Space from USGS GAP program. FLA's were provided by Fc

**We hope that you will support our proposed expansion of the
MA Forest Legacy Program Quinebaug Amendment.
Thank you for your consideration.**



MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership

Member groups include:

Public members:

Stafford Conservation Commission
University of Connecticut Forestry & Natural Resources Extension Center
University of Massachusetts Extension Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Program
Monson (MA) Conservation Commission
MassWildlife

Private members:

The Nature Conservancy
Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary
Highstead
Harvard Forest
Joshua's Tract Conservation & Historic Trust
Scantic River Watershed Association
Minnechaug Land Trust
Northern Connecticut Land Trust
The Norcross Wildlife Foundation
CT Forest & Park Association
The Trustees of Reservations
East Quabbin Land Trust
Common Ground Land Trust
The Trust for Public Land
LandVest
Opacum Land Trust
True North
Mass Audubon
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
New Roxbury Land Trust

Forester members:

Gerrish Forestland Management
Broad Arrow Forestry
Hull Forest Products

APPENDIX B.

Letters of Support

SCOTT P. BROWN
MASSACHUSETTS

200 Congress Office Building, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20540
Phone: (202) 794-2649
Fax: (202) 206-2649

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEE
HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ARMED SERVICES

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SMALL BUSINESS

September 18, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members,

I write to you today in support of the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area in south central Massachusetts. The designation would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas.

This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water as well as rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat and working forests. Additionally, the area contains numerous recreational opportunities and scenic values. While there are development opportunities, designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott P. Brown
United States Senator

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

1 Bowdoin Square
10th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

September 12, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

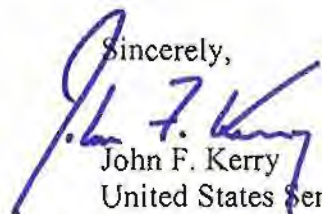
Dear Mr. Fleming:

I am writing on behalf of the MassConn Sustainable Forestry Partnership (MassConn), East Quabbin Land Trust and other local land trusts to express my support for establishing a new Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA). If approved, this Forest Legacy Area will expand eligibility for land protection funds through the U.S. Forest Service's national Forest Legacy Program in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

I strongly support this FY2014 Forest Legacy Project Proposal in order to conserve these forests and natural resources. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry
United States Senator

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

RE: Kestrel Land Trust/Designation of Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:


We are writing on behalf of the Kestrel Land Trust to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among twenty-six towns, three counties, two states and five abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA and ask that your full and fair consideration be extended to this proposal.

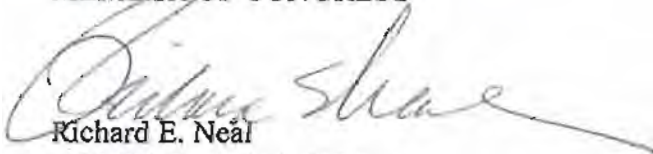
Sincerely,



John W. Olver
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



James P. McGovern
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Richard E. Neal
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR STEPHEN M. BREWER

*Worcester, Hampden,
Hampshire and Franklin District*

STEPHEN.BREWER@MASENATE.GOV
WWW.MASENATE.GOV

Chairman

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 212
BOSTON, MA 02133-1053

TEL. (617) 722-1540
FAX (617) 722-1078

September 11, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forestry Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Mr. Fleming:

I am pleased to be writing in support of a new Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (FLA).

I wanted to take this opportunity to express my support for this FLA, which will expand grant funding to protect forests that span a twenty-six town area in south central Massachusetts. The proposed Heritage Corridor FLA covers over 400,000 acres containing forests, watersheds, rare and endangered species, recreational opportunities, and scenic natural landscapes. The application is a collaborative effort of local land trusts, local governments, and state agencies committed to protecting the diversity of species, ecosystems, and natural landscapes across Massachusetts. Through these Forest Legacy funds, this initiative will safeguard the forested and rural character of south central Massachusetts.

I strongly support the application as this project is a step toward the conservation of a precious natural landscape. I would greatly appreciate your giving all due consideration to the proposal.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,


STEPHEN M. BREWER
State Senator

SMB/js



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

TODD M. SMOLA
REPRESENTATIVE
1ST HAMPDEN DISTRICT
126 BOURNE STREET
THREE RIVERS, MA 01080

BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND,
PALMER, STURBRIDGE,
WALES, WARE, WARREN

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 156
TEL. (617) 722-2240
FAX (617) 626-0696
TODD.SMOLA@MAHOUSE.GOV

September 10, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Opacum Land Trust, its members and supporters, to convey my strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

I respectfully request your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

TODD M. SMOLA
State Representative
1st Hampden District



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge
John Hay National Wildlife Refuge

103 East Plumtree Road, Sunderland, Massachusetts 01375

Telephone: (413) 548-8002

Fax: (413) 548-9725

Andrew.French@fws.gov

September 13, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, Certified Forester
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Mr. Fleming,

Please consider this letter as our expression of our enthusiastic support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south-central Massachusetts. If approved, this will create some tremendous opportunities to partner; leverage funds and magnify the desired impact of those funds. Forest Legacy projects within the HCFLA could sustain the local forest-based economy; maintain a source of wood products and fuel for future generations; provide habitat for the state and federal priority wildlife species; expand quality public outdoor recreational opportunities; promote a "working forest" while including it into the much larger public and private conservation estate.

The Forest Legacy program occupies a well-established and very important niche in the conservation community as well as a proven record of promoting habitat representation, redundancy, resiliency and overall integrity of the Watershed as habitat for plants, fish, wildlife, and people. The creation of the HCFLA will allow important contributions toward the legislated purposes contained in the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act of 1991 (Conte Act) which applies to the entire 7.2 million acre Connecticut River watershed (Watershed). The proposed HCFLA could make vital contributions toward our connectivity objectives in area, elevation, latitude, aspect, and process within the Watershed, better positioning flora and fauna for climate and land use changes. If approved, the HCFLA proposal could also contribute to the Connecticut River and Watershed National Blueway and the corresponding Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, and the Department of the Army which focuses on the Watershed.

In advance, I would like to thank you for reviewing this letter and allowing us the opportunity to provide input. It is my hope the Committee will view the HCFLA proposal favorably; allowing the addition of the Forest Legacy as tool in this important area to promote healthy conservation land and quality outdoor recreation within a working landscape.

Sincerely,

Andrew C. French
Project Leader



Deval L. Patrick
Governor
Timothy P. Murray
Lieutenant Governor

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Fish and Game

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, Massachusetts 02114

(617) 626-1500

fax (617) 626-1505



Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.
Secretary
Mary B. Griffin
Commissioner

August 30, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Fish and Game to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandon Kibbe
Central District Land Agent



September 11, 2012

Michael J. Fleming
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Mass Audubon to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water, rare species habitat, working forests, recreational opportunities, and scenic values.

Mass Audubon has a long history of conservation within the proposed Forest Legacy Area. We own and manage wildlife sanctuaries in Hampden, Brookfield, Dudley, and Spencer, and hold conservation restrictions or have provided land protection technical assistance in several other towns. The region has critical environmental resources that the Forest Legacy Program can help to protect, and that are under development pressure, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston.

As a member of the committee that oversaw production of the original Assessment of Need some 20 years ago and recommended the initial designation of Forest Legacy Areas for Massachusetts, I know we felt then that a targeted approach in narrowly defined areas would best serve the program's launch. With the maturity of the program, the expansion of Forest Legacy Areas to better serve conservation needs where important forest resources are at risk is appropriate and timely.

We encourage your committee to designate the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area to make Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charles Wyman
Senior Land Protection Specialist





September 12, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

The Forest Legacy Program is a critical partner in multiple landscape-scale conservation efforts throughout Massachusetts. The East Quabbin Land Trust is a partner organization in the MassConn Sustainable Forestry Partnership and strongly supports land conservation efforts throughout south central Massachusetts. The East Quabbin Land Trust seeks your enthusiastic support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) to expand land conservation funding sources in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Henshaw". The script is fluid and cursive.

Cynthia Henshaw
Executive Director



18 September 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

Kestrel Land Trust enthusiastically supports MassConn's proposal for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts. The proposed HCFLA would make three towns in Kestrel's focus area eligible for funding: Belchertown, Granby, and Ludlow. Two of these towns, Granby and Ludlow, have not yet adopted the Community Preservation Act, and eligibility for Forest Legacy funds would bolster efforts to engage forest landowners in protection projects. Belchertown, in turn, has long been a primary focus for Kestrel and the town's ongoing efforts to conserve forestland because the northern part of town acts as a forested wildlife corridor between the Quabbin Reservoir and the Mt. Holyoke Range. The opportunity to apply Forest Legacy funding would enable Kestrel to aggregate landowners into larger groups of 1,000 acres or more to facilitate the purchase of Conservation Restrictions over a significant portion of this wooded area.

This region contains many unprotected forest blocks identified as having high ecological integrity by the University of Massachusetts' Conservation Analysis Priorities System. However, development threats to this region are substantial due to relatively low rural land values and proximity to major cities. Belchertown is one of the fastest growing towns in Massachusetts. As a land trust that is committed to conserving both wildlife habitat and working forests, we would look forward to applying Forest Legacy toward collaborative conservation projects in this region. Following the success of the Forest Legacy funded Paul C. Jones Working Forest Conservation Restriction on Brushy Mountain in Leverett and Shutesbury, we would welcome the opportunity to partner with the Forest Legacy Program in this new region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin DeBoer", written in a cursive style.

Kristin DeBoer
Executive Director



September 11, 2012

Michael Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Re: Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

Dear Mr. Fleming and Forest Legacy Committee Members:

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) strongly supports designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

Seven of the towns within the proposed HCFLA are located within the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor, which is managed by TLGV.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 4 abutting Forest Legacy areas. This predominantly forested region contains watershed for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests, recreational opportunities; and scenic values. Development threats are substantial, but designation of the HCFLA would help to reduce those pressures by making critical resources available to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and the rural character of the region.

The Massachusetts Legislature has enacted Chapter 272 of the Acts of 2010, which recognizes the National Heritage Corridor and directs all state entities to take the resources of the Heritage Area into consideration in their planning and projects.

Designation of the HCFLA is consistent with and supports many of the Visions and Strategies in TLGV's 10-year management plan for the National Heritage Corridor, including the following: identify and protect important natural resources; promote and facilitate open space planning and protection to preserve important natural resources and cultural resources, working lands, and recreational opportunities; encourage working farms and forestlands, offering economic opportunities, food, fiber, and forestry products to residents of The Last Green Valley and surrounding communities; educate landowners and the general public about the value of and the need for responsible stewardship; encourage regional planning to protect shared natural and cultural resources and promote intercommunity cooperation; protect large blocks of unfragmented forest land and implement appropriate forest management; protect forest

resources, which absorb and filter air pollutants, generate oxygen, store great quantities of carbon, and help maintain the necessary balance of air components; identify and protect a variety of representative habitats, including unfragmented forest; protect and promote corridors that link critical habitats and minimize habitat fragmentation; encourage municipal and regional planning for the protection of wildlife habitats; and maintain, improve, and expand outdoor recreational activities through public and private partnerships.

As a multi-state organization, TLGV strongly supports this type of collaborative and capacity-building effort. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lois Bruinooge', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lois Bruinooge
Deputy Executive Director



Minnechaug Land Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 455, Hampden, MA 01036

5 September 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Minnechaug Land Trust to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

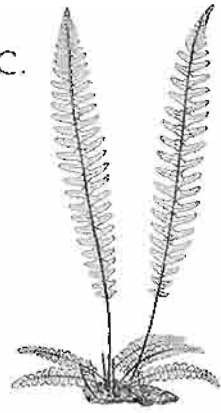
We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sherry Himmelstein, President
Minnechaug Land Trust

THE NORCROSS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION, INC.

30 Peck Road
Monson, MA 01057
Phone / Fax (413) 267-5579



August 29, 2012

Michael J. Fleming
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

On behalf of the Norcross Wildlife Foundation I wish to convey our enthusiastic support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would significantly expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects in 26 towns, three counties, two states and five abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare and threatened species of plants and animals; well-managed working forests; extensive outdoor recreation; and outstanding scenic values.

The HCFLA would advance the mission of the Norcross Wildlife Foundation (NWF) by enhancing opportunities to conserve privately owned forestland in the vicinity of Tupper Hill, the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary. The foundation's primary institutional mission is to perpetuate a sanctuary that is relevant to the habitat needs of all indigenous species of flora and fauna. In the past 20 years NWF has (in part) pursued this mission by purchasing fee interests in over 6,000 acre of land in Monson, Wales, Holland and Brimfield, Massachusetts; and Stafford Springs and Union, Connecticut. However, it is essential to our success that privately owned forests, protected with conservation restrictions, become an integral component of the local landscape.

We encourage the committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you very much for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Dan Donahue
Director of Land Protection & Stewardship



LAND TRUST

PO Box 233

Sturbridge, MA 01566

508-347-9144

info@opacumlt.org

www.opacumlt.org

August 24, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Mr. Fleming and Members of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee,

Opacum Land Trust fully and strongly supports the proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA). HCFLA would include all thirteen towns of the Opacum Land Trust region: Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Palmer, Warren, Brookfield, West Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, Sturbridge, Southbridge and Charlton. With the potential to bring Legacy funding into south-central Massachusetts, our capacity to conserve our valuable forest resources will be that much greater.

The HCFLA is an obvious and necessary north-south connection between existing legacy areas in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Through the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, there is effort being made to bring forth a two state, cross border land conservation project involving multiple landowners and hundreds of acres of forest. The designation of the HCFLA will enhance this effort.

On behalf of the board of directors of Opacum Land Trust, please accept this letter of support for the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Ohop
President

Opacum Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Federal Tax ID #04-3501184

Members: Land Trust Alliance & the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition



193 High Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
Tel 413.532.1631
www.thetrustees.org

20 September 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

The Trustees of Reservations strongly supports the designation of the proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

An expanded Forest Legacy area that connects to adjacent eligibility areas would facilitate greater and more significant forest conservation in a region in which vast areas of forest still remain to be protected – forests which will be vulnerable to increased encroachment from the Worcester, Springfield and Hartford metropolitan areas in the next housing boom. Designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available now to protect the priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this important region before it's too late.

We respectfully encourage the Committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by formally designating the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lee Alexander
Community Conservation Specialist



Brookfield Board of Selectmen

September 4, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Selectmen, Town of Brookfield to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Comtois, II".

Stephen J. Comtois, II, Chairman

Copy: Opacum Land Trust

TOWN OF DUDLEY
MASSACHUSETTS
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Richard J. Androlewicz, *Chairman*
Francis Mikolajczak, *Commissioner*
Nancy J. Vajcovec, *Commissioner*
James Koebke, *Commissioner*
Matthew Marro, *Environmental Engineer*



Paul Wieloch, *Vice Chairman*
George Slingo, *Commissioner*
Samantha S. Costello, *Commissioner*
Caryl Savard, *Clerk*

September 4, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:


The Dudley Conservation Commissioners offer our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watershed for drinking water; rare, threatened and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA in south central Massachusetts.

Sincerely,


Richard J. Androlewicz
Chairman



TOWN OF GRANBY
Select Board
Aldrich Hall
257 State Street
Granby, MA 01033
Tel#: 413-467-7177 Fax#: 413-467-2080
www.granby-ma.gov

September 4, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston, Street
Clinton, MA 01510

RE: HCFLA Support

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

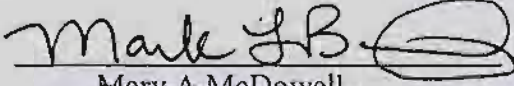
We are writing on behalf of the Town of Granby to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

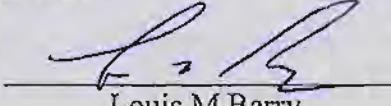
The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominately forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

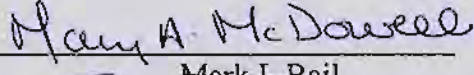
Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Mary A. McDowell
Mark L. Bail


Louis M Barry
Town of Granby Select Board


Mark L. Bail
Mary A. McDowell

TOWN OF HAMPDEN
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HOUSE
625 MAIN STREET
HAMPDEN, MA 01036



HAMPDEN
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Tel. (413) 566-2206
Fax (413) 566-2010

September 10, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Hampden Conservation Commission to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts. Such collaborative efforts vastly expand the ability of small groups such as ours to acquire needed information and other resources.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Geromini, Chair, Hampden Conservation Commission

Phil Grant, Commissioner

Judy McKinley Brewer, Commissioner

MONSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

29 Thompson Street, Monson, Ma. 01057
413-267-4111

August 14, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Monson Conservation Commission to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA this year. The Town of Monson has been waiting to use this important conservation tool for many years. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leslie A. Duthie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Leslie" and last name "Duthie" clearly distinguishable.

Leslie A. Duthie
Monson Conservation Commission Chairperson



Southbridge Conservation Commission

Town Hall ~ 41 Elm Street
Southbridge, Massachusetts 01550-2638
Tel: 508-764-5402 ~ Fax: 508-764-5425

September 10, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation & Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Southbridge Conservation Commission to convey their strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Southbridge Conservation Commission through

Karen A. Loin

Karen A. Loin

Administrative Assistant

Southbridge Conservation Commission

TOWN OF SPENCER
Office of Development & Inspectional Services

*Planning Board
Zoning Board of Appeals
Conservation Commission
Board of Health*

*Town Planner
Inspector of Buildings
Health Agent
Wetland/Soil Specialist*



*Memorial Town Hall
157 Main Street
Spencer, MA 01562*

*Tel: 508-885-7500 ext. 180
Fax: 508-885-7519*

Michael J. Fleming, CF

Forest Legacy Program

Department of Conservation & Recreation

355 West Boylston Street

Clinton, MA 01510

September 6, 2012

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Spencer to convey our strong support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

The HCFLA would expand the area eligible for Forest Legacy funding and facilitate collaborative projects among 26 towns, 3 counties, 2 states, and 5 abutting Forest Legacy Areas. This predominantly forested region contains watersheds for drinking water; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat; working forests; recreational opportunities; and scenic values.

Development threats to this region are substantial, due in part to relatively low rural land values and proximity to the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. However, designation of the HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and rural character in this region.

We encourage your committee to make the Forest Legacy tools and funding available for this area by designating the HCFLA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ernest Grimes, Chairman

Spencer Conservation Commission



BOARD OF SELECTMAN

P.O. Box 372

West Brookfield, Massachusetts 01585

September 6, 2012

Michael J. Fleming, CF
Forest Legacy Program
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Forest Legacy Committee Members:

The town of West Brookfield strongly supports the designation of a Heritage Corridor Legacy Area (HCFLA) in south central Massachusetts.

Development threats to this region are potentially substantial, because of the relatively low rural land value, large amount of undeveloped open space, and proximity to Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston economic centers. Designation of this HCFLA would make critical resources available for collaborative efforts to protect priority forests, ecosystems, and the rural character of the region. Our predominately forested and agricultural region contains key watersheds for domestic and aquatic life use, rare species, fish, and wildlife habitat, recreation, and scenic values that are important to protect and our sustainability.

West Brookfield supports a working landscape that includes forests that are sustainably managed. We will highly support Forest Legacy Projects that keep forests in private ownership, protect the forest from development, and manage the forests for multi-purposes including forest products.

West Brookfield encourages your committee to make the Forest legacy tools and funding available for our area by designating the HCFLA.

Sincerely,

Michael Frew
Chairman, Board of Selectmen

cc: Cynthia Henshaw

APPENDIX C.

Press Release



MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership

c/o Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary
30 Peck Road
Monson MA 01057

For Immediate Release:
Monday, September 10, 2012

Contact: Jennifer Ohop, 413-267-4859 or ohop@norcrossws.org

Group Seeks Designation of Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership is seeking to designate a new Forest Legacy Area in Massachusetts. The proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area (HCFLA) covers 421,100 acres and includes 26 communities: all of the towns of Granby, Belchertown, Ludlow, Wilbraham, Hampden, Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Warren, Ware, West Brookfield, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Sturbridge, Southbridge, Dudley, Charlton, Spencer, the majority of Oakham, Leicester and parts of Rutland and Paxton.

The creation of the HCFLA would allow land trusts and state agencies to apply for federal funding to conserve woodland parcels within the HCFLA's boundaries. The designation makes the region eligible for funding; there is no regulatory aspect to the program.

The HCFLA is a largely forested area sandwiched between the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. Ecosystems in this region contain public water supply watersheds; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working woodlands; and scenic values associated with woods, forests and rural character. The HCFLA abuts thousands of acres that have already been established as Forest Legacy Areas: Nashua River Greenway, North Quabbin Corridor and the Connecticut Valley Western Valley to the north and Connecticut's Forest Legacy Area to the south. The HCFLA is a natural wooded landscape connection between these and the potential exists for a multi-regional, two state Forest Legacy project.

The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership is a collaboration of land trusts, conservation organizations, state agencies, and foresters that serve a 35 town region spanning the border of South-Central Massachusetts and Northeastern Connecticut.

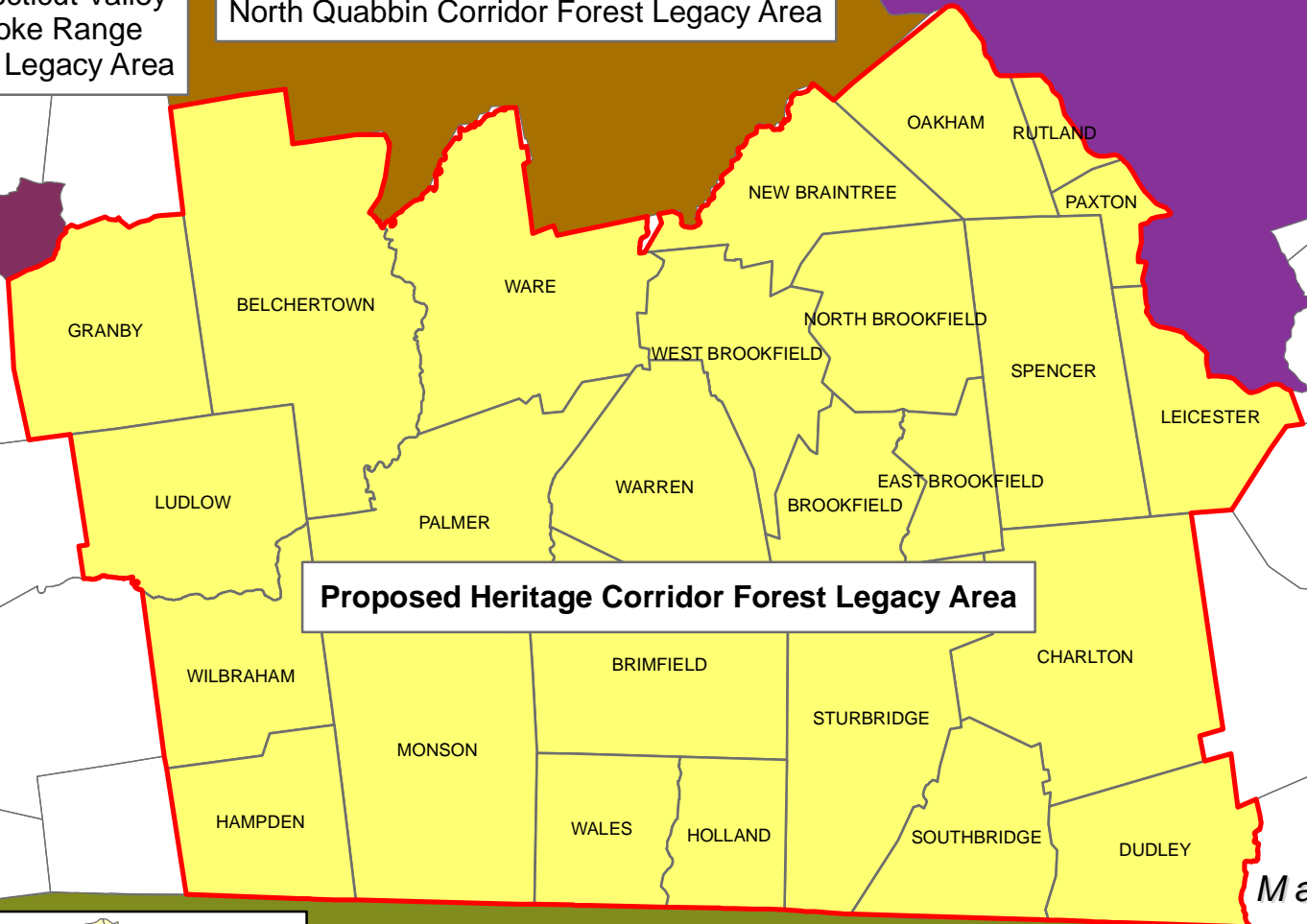


Connecticut Valley
Holyoke Range
Forest Legacy Area

North Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Area

Nashua River Greenway Forest Legacy Area

Connecticut Valley
Western Valley
Forest Legacy Area



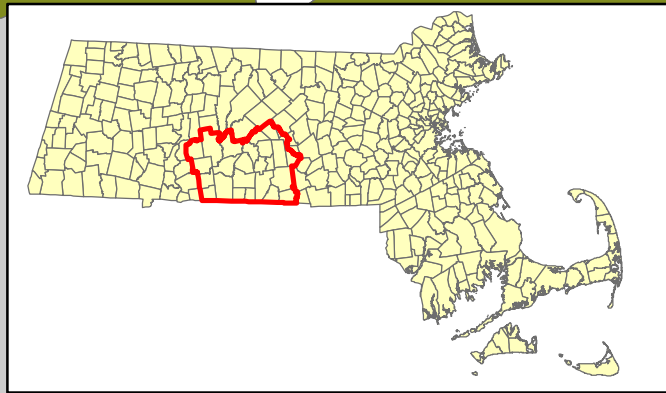
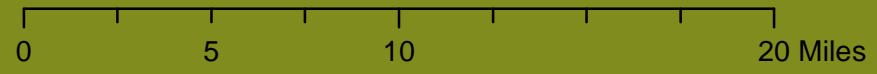
Proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

Massachusetts

Eastern Forest Legacy Area

Connecticut

Mainland
Forest Legacy Area



Map created by Katherine Blake
MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership
Data downloaded from MassGIS
August 2012



APPENDIX D.

Newspaper Articles

ops. These he learned
modern equipment the
I worked to acquire for

student Ade Chamber of West
Brookfield, at the last but a con-
tribution of wisdom and intellect

Please see **PATHFINDER**,
Page 6

the Highland Community Library in
Adams Farm.
Please see **LIBRARY**, Page 6

Highland Park School
of Forestry

PALMER JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 27, 2012

see the e trees

be willard through accord-
ent) and now play host to
rate animal and plant spe-
al dragonflies of all kinds
a harvest everything from
as and grapes to apples
flaming beehives that pro-
entful aromas of honey
treat all kinds of noises at
and Ken. "We try to keep
as separate and support the
a natural state."

It was just that type of
that led Gerrish (who has
ave days walking the land
to nominate the Gagnus
2 "Tree Farmer of the Year."
with a plaque and other
sponsored by the Massa-
Forest Landowners As-
And on Saturday, Sept.
farmers throughout the
hered on their property for
each other's Tree Farm field
ere information was made
from the state Department
ervation and Recreation and
Please see **TREES**, Page 6

Advocates map out land preservation

Seek to classify area parcels

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

In an effort to allow land trusts
and state agencies to apply for
federal funding to conserve
woodland parcels within 26
different communities, a group
comprised of land trusts, conser-
vation organizations, state agen-
cies, and foresters that serve a 35-
town region spanning the border
of South-Central Massachusetts
and Northeastern Connecticut have
come forward seeking to designate
a new Forest Legacy Area in Mas-
sachusetts.

Within the proposal, the group
- the MassConn Sustainable For-
est Partnership - hopes to allocate
421,100 acres in creating the Heri-
tage Corridor Forest Legacy Area
(HCFLA), which spans through
the towns of Granby, Belchertown,
Ludlow, Wilbraham, Hampden,
Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland,



Brimfield, Warren, Ware, West
Brookfield, New Brainree, North
Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brook-
field, Sturbridge, Southbridge, Dud-
ley, Charlton, Spencer, the majority
of Grafton, Leicester and parts of
Rutland and Paxton.

"By achieving this designation,
Please see **MASSCONN**, Page 2

Tuesday Publications
submitted photo

This map
- which was
created by
MassConn
Sustain-
able Forest
Partnership
Coordinator,
Katherine
Blake - in-
dicates the
area upon
which the
group has
proposed
a designa-
tion, called
the Heri-
tage Cor-
ridor Forest
Legacy Area
(HCFLA).

ITION
Fire..... 16
lar 17
Barcode



COMMUNITY
MAC expects
scripted
response
Page 9



SPORTS
Palmer
8-10 beats
Monson.
Page 13



Staff photo by Dave Forness

ar teams still have
o you know where



Last
week's
photo:
The
graphic
directs
pass-
erby to
Camp
Ramen
in Tron-
dika.

Direct fac-
corrections
page 2. To
Editor
zy.com, or
I may also
sue. Ann:
V. 01069.

Insurance Advisory Committee to meet

PALMER — The Insurance Advisory Committee will be holding a meeting on Thursday, Oct. 11 at the Palmer High School library at 3 p.m. Fallon representatives will be there to discuss the recent transition to their insurance and possible wellness programs.

Business & Civic Assoc.

ALFEST BRATION



PALMER JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 27, 2012

MassConn from Page 1

it gives us another tool in funding land conservation projects with the use of federal money," said one of the group's members, Jennifer Ohop, representing Quabbin Land Trust as president as well as naturalist for Northern Wildlife Sanctuary. "We've all stepped up to achieve this."

A few years back in 2003, Ohop said that an attempt was made to similarly designate a six-town area, called the "Quabbin Forest Legacy Area," but unfortunately the process was stalled.

"This time around, the Mass-Conn group has decided to push this proposal forward with the inclusion of many more communities, making the project much more competitive," she said.

But for those leery about the designation and what it means for these towns, a legacy designation has no regulatory aspect and is administered through the US Forest Service

and locally in the Commonwealth by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

"Once established as a legacy area, we can put together a landscape-scale project to conserve for that federal money," she said.

Unlike existing national riparian corridors like that of Blackstone and northern Connecticut, the Forest Legacy designation is different, with the exception of being a federal project.

"A heritage corridor is a designation from the National Park Service, but it does not necessarily mean that there is money coming from the feds to support the corridor," she said.

Ohop describes the HCFCA as a largely forested area sandwiched between the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and Boston.

According to their proposal, the region's ecosystems contain rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working woodlands; public water supply watersheds; and

scientific values associated with forests, forests and rural character.

"The HCFCA also abuts thousands of acres that have already been established as Forest Legacy Areas, including the Nashua River Greenway, North Quabbin Corridor and the Connecticut Valley Western Valley to the north and Connecticut's Forest Valley Area to the south," she said. "Our proposal is a natural, wooded landscape connection between these and the potential exists for a multi-regional, two-state Forest Legacy project. It [the proposal] just makes sense."

So the next step for the group to take at this point is getting the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Assessment of Need to include the Heritage Forest Legacy Area, but even before they do that, the group will be presenting their proposal before the legacy committee on Oct. 2. Should the committee approve the proposal, it will then go on to the federal level which meets early next year.

Have your own nature photos to share? Email them to danner@palmerjournal.com or mail them to Editor Douglas Danner, The Journal Register, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069.

Original home of the

\$5 Fitness

All classes \$5 • No reservation or joining fee • Staff are welcome

The Dance Studio

35 Post Office Park, Wilbraham, MA 01095

DePace HEATING & COOLING

Heating your home the right way

Sales and Service
Licensed and Insured
Free Estimates

CHRIS DEPACE 413-427-3143
DePaceHeatCool@yahoo.com

editorial

We speak for the trees

We have some of the most beautiful woodlands and forests in the entire state and country here in Central Massachusetts and the time has come for protecting even more acres while offering taxpayers more bang for their bucks with passive recreational opportunities.

The federal Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts was officially green lighted in 1993 for five distinct areas, including Stockbridge Yokun Ridge Reserve, Estabrook Woods, Holyoke Range and Western Valley Watersheds of the Connecticut Valley, North Quabbin Corridor, and the Nashua River Greenway. Sadly, a similar six-town proposal known as the Quinebaug Forest Legacy Area stalled out back then. So it is only right that our local woods should be included in this wonderful program we all pay for.

Despite being the third most densely populated state in the nation, well over 64 percent of Massachusetts remains forested. Because of increasing population and demands on land for development, these forests have been fragmented and are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and users. Local land trusts and other environmental preservation groups have done wonders in recent years to fill the gaps by purchasing idle and at-risk properties. However, the process to identify and protect privately owned woodlands that are under threat of fragmentation is still a very real need in our area.

According to Jennifer Ohop, a staff naturalist at Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary and president of the highly effective Opacum Land Trust, a legacy designation for our area, as now proposed by the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, would have no regulatory aspect. It would also enable land trusts like hers and others as well as towns and state agencies to tap into federal funds for land conservation. And that is an ever-shrinking pool of money.

If the measure passes muster at the state legacy committee level on Sept. 19 and then receives approvals with various governing agencies, the proposed Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area would cover 421,100 acres and encompass 26 towns, including Granby, Belchertown, Ludlow, Wilbraham, Hampden, Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Warren, Ware, West Brookfield, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Sturbridge, Southbridge, Dudley, Charlton, Spencer, the majority of Oakham, Leicester and parts of Rutland and Paxton.

Ohop says, "ecosystems in this region contain public water supply watersheds; rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat, especially for reptiles and amphibians; working woodlands; and scenic values associated with woods, forests and rural character." We agree. And such a designation would provide a natural buffer and wildlife corridor connection to neighboring legacy areas.

Just think about how many unprotected forests exist within your towns that are not ripe for commercial or residential development. With such a designation, local land trusts and state agencies could then apply for federal funding to conserve sensitive woodland parcels within the legacy boundaries.

Now is the time to fill in the missing piece of our state's unprotected forest areas. We wish the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership success in its renewed effort to make this proposal become reality.