

*For immediate release*

*August 31, 2016*

Media Contacts:

Eve Frankel,  
The Nature Conservancy in Vermont,  
[eve.frankel@tnc.org](mailto:eve.frankel@tnc.org)

Kathryn Morse,  
Nature Conservancy of Canada, Atlantic Region,  
[kathryn.morse@natureconservancy.ca](mailto:kathryn.morse@natureconservancy.ca)

**Connected Forests and Waters a Priority  
for the 40<sup>th</sup> Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers**

**Boston, Massachusetts**, The partners of the Staying Connected Initiative applaud the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers for signing a resolution that recognizes the value of forests and waterways and calls for collaboration across state, provincial, and international borders to ensure they remain connected. The partnership would also like to recognize the leadership of Vermont's Governor, Peter Shumlin, to bring this resolution forward and advocate for its passage. Forests are essential to the vitality of the region's native wildlife and plants, as well as its human communities, livelihoods, economies, and quality of life. Keeping them connected, particularly in the face of climate change, protects all of these values by bolstering resilience and fostering adaptation.

The vast forest spanning the border of the northeastern U.S. and southeastern Canada is globally important as the most intact, contiguous temperate broadleaf forest in the world. It is home to over five million people in five states and four provinces, along with countless native wildlife and plants. As the climate changes and new development and road infrastructure expand, cross-border collaboration is essential to ensure that the landscape remains connected for both nature and people.

The action of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers aligns with cross-border collaboration that led scientists and conservation groups from the U.S. and Canada to form Two Countries, One Forest, a binational conservation organization focused on the protection, conservation and restoration of forests and natural heritage across this region. Their analyses showed that despite hosting large intact forest blocks, the region risks becoming separated into "ecological islands" unless steps are taken to safeguard forest connectivity across the landscape. This finding led to the formation of the trans-border Staying Connected Initiative (SCI) in 2009 to sustain and enhance landscape connectivity.

SCI partners from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, along with The Nature Conservancy's Vermont Chapter and Canadian affiliate, and Governor Peter Shumlin, worked closely to identify key

provisions for the Governors and Premiers' newly signed Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation.

"We are grateful to Vermont's Governor Peter Shumlin and his team for their leadership on this important initiative. Keeping our forests and waterways connected in Vermont and across our borders is key to sustaining the landscape we love and depend on. This visionary action by our region's Governors and Premiers provides a vital platform to achieve that goal and will help ensure the vitality of nature and human communities in the face of climate change," stated Heather Furman, The Nature Conservancy's Vermont State Director.

"We thank the Governors and Premiers for this catalytic step to safeguard the health and resiliency of the region's forests and waterways. Our forested landscape is as rich in wildlife as it is vital to our economy and way of life. Working across borders will have far greater impact than working alone. On behalf of SCI's many partners, we look forward to working with the New England states and eastern Canadian provinces to implement this resolution," said Jessie Levine of TNC Canada, Coordinator of the Staying Connected Initiative.

"We commend the Premiers and Governors on taking this step to recognize the shared value of the Acadian forest and waterways that link our provinces and states together. Our wide-ranging mammals like moose, lynx and black bear don't recognize political boundaries, and neither do the impacts of climate change. Working together to ensure our natural ecosystems remain connected and diverse will benefit the health and resiliency of forests and wildlife across the region, as well as our communities that depend on these natural resources," stated Paula Noel, New Brunswick Program Director with the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

"The conservationists and researchers that work within the Two Countries, One Forest network are very pleased that the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers have made this commitment to work together on the connections among natural areas across our shared borders. This will be a significant step towards conserving the resilience of our forests, rivers and coastlines in the face of climate changes. We are eager to work with our governments to move this resolution toward action on the ground," said Roberta Clowater, Chair of Two Countries, One Forest and Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - New Brunswick Chapter.

The Staying Connected Initiative ([www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org](http://www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org)) is a unique cross-border public/private partnership of nearly 30 collaborators. Through science, land protection, land use planning, local outreach, policy engagement, and transportation planning, SCI partners work together to ensure a connected landscape for people and nature.