

Habitat Connectivity, Brandon, VT

Habitat Connectivity Areas

In 2008, the Staying Connected Initiative used GIS modeling to identify lands most important for maintaining and enhancing habitat connectivity between the Green Mountains and Adirondacks. Habitat within these areas serve as important components of a habitat network that links large blocks of habitat together, providing the opportunity for the movement, migration, and dispersal of Wide-Ranging Mammals (WRM) between the Green and Adirondack Mountains. Their integrity supports a healthy and resilient network of wildlife habitat in the region.

Habitat Linkage Lands are areas that contain habitats that are most likely to support a linked habitat network that connects the Green Mountains to Adirondacks for WRM.

Critical Habitat Connectivity Areas connect forested blocks of "stepping stone" habitat >5000 acres. Here, road corridors and/or fragmented forest cover separate larger forest habitat block, and hence these are places where connectivity habitat is most threatened for WRM. These areas support important supporting landscape features for connectivity, (e.g. riparian habitat along streams and rivers, strips of forest cover between developed areas, or even hedgerows and fencerows).

The boundaries of *Critical Habitat Connectivity Areas* extend 500m from fragmented habitats into forest blocks. For example, if a road is the only fragmenting feature in an important connecting habitat, the polygon's boundary has been located 500 meters to either side of the road. If the fragmenting features are more pervasive, the boundary has been demarcated 500 meters into the habitat block from open land.

Important Road Crossings

In 2009, the Staying Connected Project used Geographic Information System (GIS) modeling and field research to prioritize critical east-west wildlife road crossings for maintaining a habitat linkage between the Green Mountains and Adirondacks. 19 important road crossing zones were identified and prioritized across the linkage in VT and NY. Each crossing zone represents a location where maintaining the ability of WRM to cross the road is critical to maintaining habitat connectivity between the Green Mountains and Adirondacks.

Map created by Paul Marangelo (pmarangelo@tnc.org), November 2011, for the Staying Connected project. Boundaries are approximate.



Habitat Connectivity Areas

-  Habitat Linkage lands
-  Critical Habitat Connectivity Areas
-  Important Road Crossing
-  Public and private conservation lands
-  "core" forest blocks > 5000 acres

