

Synthesis: A Place In Between

**Organizations working to maintain a healthy landscape
Between the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks**



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A product of The Staying Connected Initiative

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About this document

The following pages comprise a synthesis intended to capture the nature and locations of land-focused organizations and their scope of work within the geographical area identified by the Staying Connected Initiative as the “Adirondacks—Southern Green Mountains Linkage,” roughly comprising the Southern Lake Champlain Basin in Vermont and New York. This is an area of habitat critical for maintaining healthy wildlife populations, as it is one of very few places where forest habitat is uninterrupted between the two mountain ranges. It has been identified through a connectivity analysis by Two Countries, One Forest as one of six priority wildlife linkage areas important for maintaining wildlife connectivity across the Northern Appalachian Ecoregion from the Tug Hill Plateau to the Canadian Maritimes. Of course, this area also confers a wide range of local ecological benefits and community values.

The goal of this document is to enhance the work of the many groups and organizations engaged in habitat connectivity and water quality protection work in this geographic area, by identifying common themes, opportunities for collaboration, and gaps and opportunities.

This synthesis is by no means comprehensive. Information on these pages was collected during a meeting held on January 28, 2011, in Whitehall, New York, and via email follow-up with others who did not attend. Some appropriate organizations may not have responded or were accidentally excluded and are therefore not represented on these pages. We have made every effort to fill these gaps so as to capture a reasonably comprehensive view of the work accomplished within the region to maintain a healthy landscape.

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Contents

Guide to the maps	3
Map 1: Organizational Geography	5
Map 2: Wildlife and Natural Resource Science	6
Map 3: The Intersection of Roads and the Natural Landscape	7
Map 4: Technical Assistance to Municipalities	8
Map 5: Land Management and Natural Resource Protection	9
Map 6: Aid or Assistance to Landowners	10
Appendix: Gaps and opportunities	11

Guide to the maps

On the following pages, the first map depicts the geographical focus areas of landscape-focused organizations working within the region. Organizations that work throughout the target geography or throughout either the state of Vermont or the state of New York are listed on the right; focus areas of those organizations working only within a portion of the identified geography are depicted with colored outlines on the map.

The remaining five pages represent a more detailed account of the projects or activities accomplished by each organization. In order to better analyze where opportunities for collaboration and sharing exist, as well as where there may be topical and geographical gaps in the work, we have divided these activities into five categories:

- Wildlife and Natural Resource Science
- The Intersection of Roads and the Natural Landscape
- Technical Assistance to Municipalities
- Land Management and Natural Resource Protection
- Aid or Assistance to Landowners

The locations of organizational names and activities have been placed loosely over a map of the region. While an attempt was made to represent each entity over an appropriate geography, limited space sometimes caused a modification of the placement of words on the maps. Also, the activities captured by this activity represent a wide variety of scales. Some activities are specific to a particular parcel, some are generalized across the landscape, and most are practiced within an intermediate scale. Placement on the map therefore represents geography of the activity only nominally.

Organizations appearing on these maps include the following:

- Agricultural Stewardship Association
- Champlain Area Trails
- Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership
- Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership
- Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York
- Cornell Cooperative Extension, Warren County
- Empire State Future
- Lake Champlain Basin Program
- Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board
- Lake George Association
- Lake George Land Conservancy
- Middletown Springs Conservation Commission
- Nancy Kimball, Wildlife Rehabilitator
- Natural Resource Conservation Services
- New England Forestry Foundation
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York Department of Transportation
- Poultney-Mettawee Natural Resource Conservation District
- Rutland Natural Resource Conservation District
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission

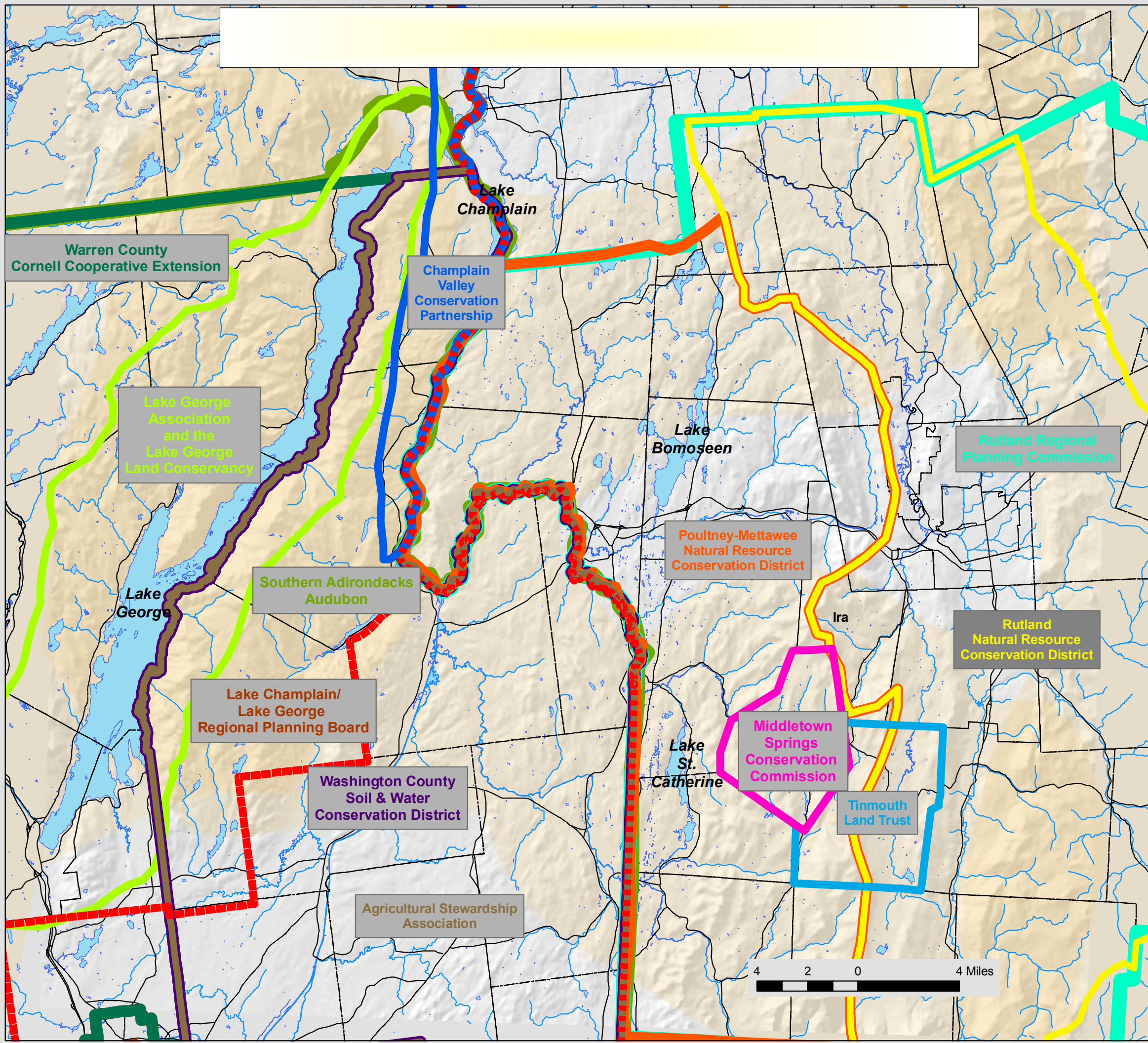
- Salisbury Conservation Commission
- Southern Adirondacks Audubon
- The Nature Conservancy (New York Chapter)
- The Nature Conservancy (Vermont Chapter)
- Tinmouth Keeping Track
- Tinmouth Land Trust
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont Coverts

- Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
- Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
- Vermonters for a Clean Environment
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas
- Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Wildlife Conservation Society
















Information was requested, but not received, from many additional groups. These groups therefore do not appear on the maps, despite their involvement in associated work:

- Addison County Planning Commission
- Adirondack Council
- Audubon New York
- Capital District Regional Planning Commission
- Conservation Fund
- Darrin Freshwater Institute
- Ducks Unlimited
- Cornell Cooperative Extension, Essex County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension, Washington County
- Elan Design
- Energize Vermont
- Essex County Planning Department
- Fund for Lake George
- Green Mountain National Forest
- Lake Champlain Ecosystems Team
- Lake Champlain Research Consortium
- Lakes to Locks
- Middlebury College
- Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- National Wildlife Federation
- New York Department of Safety
- New York Natural Heritage Program

- Northeast Wilderness Trust
- Open Space Institute
- Pember Museum
- Queensbury Land Conservancy
- Rensselaer Land Trust
- Rutland Audubon
- Saratoga County Planning Department
- Saratoga PLAN
- Silver Bay Association
- Smart Growth Vermont
- Trout Unlimited
- Trust for Public Land
- Two Countries, One Forest
- Vermont Audubon
- Vermont Family Forests
- Vermont Natural Resource Council
- Vermont Woodlands Association
- Warren County Planning Department
- Warren County Soil & Water
- Washington County Planning Department
- Washington County Sportsmans Federation
- Wildlands Network



Organization Key

-  The Nature Conservancy Chapter Lines
-  Middletown Springs Cons. Comm
-  Tinmouth Land Trust
-  Salisbury Conservation Commission
-  Champlain Valley Cons. Partnership
-  Agricultural Stewardship Association
-  Rutland NRCD
-  Poultney-Mettawee NRCD
-  Washington Co. Soil & Water Cons. Dist.
-  Lake George Assn/Lake George LC
-  Warren Co. Cornell Cooperative Ext.
-  Rutland Regional Planning District
-  Lake Champlain Lake George RPB
-  Southern Adirondack Audubon
-  The Staying Connected Initiative

Wildlife and Natural Resource Science

Wildlife Conservation Society

- ◆ Annual loon census
- ◆ Moose genetics study
- ◆ Studies impacts to wildlife from low-density development (bird nest success & small mammals)

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Warren County

- ◆ Various forestry projects (with State Extension Forester Pete Smallidge)
- ◆ Woody biomass projects

Lake George Land Conservancy

- ◆ Winter tracking/habitat surveys, animal inventory, and bird studies on conserved lands

Lake George Association

- ◆ Citizen science turtle monitoring project in Lake George
- ◆ Coordination of annual loon census
 - ◆ Water quality monitoring
 - ◆ Wildlife education for children

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ Endangered species monitoring and recovery planning

Nancy Kimball, Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator

- ◆ Public programs with educational (non-releasable) raptors.

Lake Champlain Basin Program/Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership

- ◆ Potential grant opportunities

Southern Adirondack Audubon

- ◆ Peregrine falcon monitoring

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ Community Wildlife Program
- ◆ Assistance with connectivity mapping

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ Natural resource inventories and assessments, biological monitoring, natural resource planning (surface water based)
- ◆ River Management Program does river assessments and corridor planning

The Nature Conservancy

- ◆ Natural resource and wildlife modeling

Poultney-Mettawee Natural Resource Conservation District

- ◆ Wildlife habitat assessment

Tinmouth Keeping Track

- ◆ Wildlife monitoring program

Salisbury Conservation Commission

- ◆ Education and advocacy for the conservation of natural resources.
- ◆ Presentations, field trips, etc. for local citizens
- ◆ Wildlife corridor workshop to share efforts with other towns.

Vermonters for a Clean Environment

- ◆ Environmental study on impacts of big wind projects

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

- ◆ Online information, field trips, presentations, a DVD, posters, courses, and direct interaction to promote the conservation of reptiles and amphibians

Land Management and Natural Resource Protection

Empire State Future

- ◆ Implementation of Smart Growth policy for land use planning

Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York

- ◆ Erosion and sediment control
- ◆ Watershed management and stormwater retrofitting

New York Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ Permitting programs for wetlands, streams, and water quality

Lake George Land Conservancy

- ◆ Conserves land via acquisition and conservation easements

Lake George Association

- ◆ Land acquisition and easements through the West Brook Conservation Initiative
- ◆ Stormwater management
- ◆ Combatting invasive species (mostly, but not entirely, aquatic)

Lake Champlain/Lake George Regional Planning Board

- ◆ Stormwater erosion & sediment control, invasive species management, native plantings, and shoreline buffers

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership/CATS

- ◆ Land acquisition and easements, along with partner organizations.

Lake Champlain Basin Program/Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership

- ◆ Potential grant opportunities (but not for land or easement purchase)

Agricultural Stewardship Association

- ◆ Agriculture and forestry easements

Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District

- ◆ Culvert installations for fish passage
- ◆ Water chestnut harvesting
- ◆ Riparian buffers

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

- ◆ Use Value Appraisal program keeps large tracts of working forest undeveloped

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ Administers Farm Bill programs, including cost-share incentives, conservation easements, forest management, and habitat management
- ◆ Landowner Incentives Program helps with management costs for landowners with rare, threatened, or endangered species on their land.

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ With other organizations, implementation of programs/resources to enhance surface water protection (e.g. conservation easements, buffer establishment, fluvial erosion hazard mapping/planning, etc.)
- ◆ Corridor conservation projects in conjunction with partners to obtain permanent channel management rights to a priority section of river and require a 50' unmanaged buffer.

The Nature Conservancy

- ◆ Land protection through acquisition and easements

Natural Resource Conservation Services

- ◆ Offers programs to landowners, including cost-share incentives, conservation easements, aid with forest management, and aid with habitat management

New England Forestry Foundation

- ◆ Ownership and sustainable management of properties for wildlife and wood products
- ◆ Holds conservation easements

Salisbury Conservation Commission

- ◆ Field trips, presentations, website, and other resources related to land management and natural resource conservation

Vermont Land Trust

- ◆ Conserves land via acquisition and conservation easements

Rutland Regional Planning Commission

- ◆ Transportation planning technical assistance
- ◆ Route 22A corridor management planning project currently underway

Vermonters for a Clean Environment

- ◆ Advocacy for minimizing impacts from commercial/industrial enterprises, such as big wind or mining projects

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

- ◆ Educational activities with land and natural resource management goals. Reptiles and amphibians are the wildlife vehicle.

Rutland and Poultney-Mettawee Natural Resource Conservation

- ◆ Provides land management information and resources to landowners, especially with regard to water quality issues
- ◆ Aids in administration of Farm Bill programs

Tinmouth Land Trust

- ◆ Land protection through conservation easements

The Intersection of Roads and the Natural Landscape

Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York

- ◆ Roadside erosion and sediment control
- ◆ Culvert assessments

Vermont Agency of Transportation

- ◆ Environmental permit review for all road, rail, and air projects

Salisbury Conservation Commission

- ◆ Amphibian migration monitoring program (with Otter Creek Audubon)
- ◆ Roadside wildlife tracking program to identify critical movement corridors in and through Salisbury

The Nature Conservancy & New York Department of Transportation

- ◆ Elimination of barriers for aquatic connectivity

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ With Vermont Agency of Transportation, creation of a new database for monitoring wildlife road crossings and roadkill (with Vermont Agency of Transportation)

Lake Champlain Basin Program/Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership

- ◆ Potential grant opportunities

Rutland Regional Planning Commission

- ◆ Transportation planning technical assistance
- ◆ Route 22A corridor management planning project currently underway

Lake George Association

- ◆ Administration of project to deal with issues related to stormwater runoff and roads

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ Culvert and bridge projects related to aquatic organism passage

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

- ◆ Education of Vermont Agency of Transportation employees and the general public about the effects of transportation systems on reptile and amphibian populations.

Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District

- ◆ Culvert installations for fish passage

Vermonters for a Clean Environment

- ◆ Advocacy for minimizing effects of new roads on ridgelines for wind projects

Technical Assistance to Municipalities

Wildlife Conservation Society

- ◆ *Make Room For Wildlife* planning brochure

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership/Champlain Area Trails

- ◆ Creates trails, protects natural habitat and scenic vistas, and promotes outdoor recreation to enhance the local economy.

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Warren County

- ◆ Helps municipalities to understand natural resource issues and concerns

Lake George Association

- ◆ Stormwater runoff program to protect the water quality of Lake George

Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board

- ◆ Grant writing and administration for water quality projects

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ River Management Program works with towns to adopt zoning ordinances that regulate development in the fluvial erosion hazard area.
- ◆ Looks at stormwater problems that exacerbate flooding and general non-point source identification and mitigation.
- ◆ Helps towns in conducting illicit discharge detection and elimination of sanitary sewer discharges into surface waters

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ Identification of local natural resources for use in the town planning process
- ◆ Community Wildlife Program

Poultney-Mettawee Natural Resource Conservation District

- ◆ Is in the process of identifying conservation priorities through a wildlife habitat assessment

Salisbury Conservation Commission

- ◆ Provides information to town and regional planning commissions.
- ◆ Shares methods with representatives of other towns and organizations.
- ◆ Website designed to be useful to other towns

Rutland Regional Planning Commission

- ◆ Offers planning assistance to towns

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

- ◆ Jim Andrews is available for consultation (may be some cost involved, depending on the project)
- ◆ Website, publications, DVD, and posters are available as municipal resources.

Aid or Assistance to Landowners

Wildlife Conservation Society

- ◆ Landowner brochure about managing land for wildlife

Salisbury Conservation Commission

- ◆ Connects landowners to land conservation resources

Vermont Coverts

- ◆ Course in managing land for wildlife

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership/Champlain Area Trails

- ◆ General conservation outreach to landowners

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

- ◆ Surface water conflict resolution
- ◆ River management program helps some landowners with restoration projects or corridor easements

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Warren County

- ◆ Woody biomass education for forest landowners
- ◆ Programs for forest landowners and managers
- ◆ Outreach to forest industry (including landowners) about forest

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

- ◆ Technical assistance with WHIP/EQIP programs

Lake George Association

- ◆ Native plantings of buffers and rain gardens
- ◆ Lake-friendly living education with a focus on water quality
- ◆ Aid in dealing with nuisance Canada geese

Lake Champlain Basin Program/Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership

- ◆ Potential grant opportunities for public landowners

Lake George Land Conservancy

- ◆ Nature walks
- ◆ Landowner technical assistance

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

- ◆ Website with resources to help identify and protect reptiles and amphibians

Vermont Land Trust

- ◆ Stewardship and technical assistance for owners of conserved land

Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board

- ◆ Cost-share program for septic improvement

Natural Resource Conservation Service

- ◆ Incentives programs for land management (i.e. WHIP and EQIP programs)

New England Forestry Foundation

- ◆ Education about land protection resources

Appendix: Reflections, Gaps and Opportunities

Following is a brief reflection on the previous maps, with a particular focus on the geographic and topical gaps where there may be opportunities for enhanced collaboration, more effective or more geographically widespread delivery of natural resource-related services, or needs that are currently going unmet. This discussion is a collection of observations offered by the participants during the meeting held on January 28, 2011, in Whitehall, New York and feedback solicited after the event. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis but rather to offer reflections on the maps and serve as a starting point for further discussion. Observations are offered on a map-by-map basis.

Organizational geography

- There are relatively few organizations that work within the Adirondacks – Southern Greens linkage area on *both* sides of the New York/Vermont state border. Most organizations focus their work in one state or the other. This offers a challenge for promoting connectivity thinking across the linkage area.
- Nevertheless, opportunities for cross-border collaboration exist and should be explored. One idea for an organized network of cross-border organizations and entities was discussed during the January 28th meeting. The network may meet or communicate regularly, or there may simply be a brochure listing the services offered by regional organizations working to keep the landscape healthy.
- The Lake Champlain Basin Program and its watershed planning approach offers one model and opportunity for cross-border collaboration.
- Granville, Whitehall and Hampton seem to have fewer conservation-focused resources compared with the Lake George and Green Mountain regions. The Taconic mountains may similarly have fewer resources.

Wildlife and Natural Resource Science

- Much of the activity taking place on this topic appears to be region-wide—more so than other topics covered in this synthesis that focus more closely on specific areas. Although this could offer advantages, it also suggests that there may be finer-scaled, place-based needs in terms of on-the-ground monitoring work that are going unmet.

The Intersection of Roads and the Natural Landscape

- Transportation work is inherently state-based because of the DOT/AOT structure.
- There may be opportunities for greater collaboration between DOT/AOT, state Fish and Wildlife agencies, and other organizations in the region, but there are temporal challenges to realizing this opportunity. For example, the planning process for road projects often takes place ~10 years prior to the start of construction. For other organizations to weigh in on the transportation planning process, they will similarly need to think far into the future—a process which many organizations are not currently set up to do.

Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- This topic in general is an area of opportunity; relatively little is currently taking place in this arena.
- There are challenges and capacity issues on both sides of this equation (the organizational side and the municipal side) that are challenging to overcome in terms of providing this type of assistance.
- The organizations that offer technical assistance to municipalities are generally set up exclusively for this purpose, and these are able to work closely with towns on a regular basis.

Land Management and Natural Resource Protection

- This area seems the most thoroughly covered of our topics, although that may be a byproduct of who was engaged in providing feedback and participation. The topic itself is also quite broad and leaves a large range of opportunity for involvement.

Aid or Assistance to Landowners

- There may be some potential for groups within the region to combine outreach efforts. Currently, landowners are often approached separately by different entities, each of which can provide the landowner with a land-based resource. This can be overwhelming or confusing to a landowner. If several entities instead provided joint outreach, the landowner could get a spectrum of options or opportunities at one time.