



Advancing Transborder Landscape Connectivity in Northeastern North America

A Project of the Staying Connected Initiative

October 2023

Overview: On behalf of the [Staying Connected Initiative](#) (SCI), the [Quebec-Labrador Foundation](#) (QLF) and [Center for Large Landscape Conservation](#) (CLLC) are co-leading a collaborative effort with a wide range of participants over the next year to advance landscape connectivity conservation and restoration across borders in Northeastern North America. The project involves two primary components:

- (1) Convening the **first-ever Northeastern North America Landscape Connectivity Summit** involving key decision-makers, influencers, and partners from the five eastern-most Canadian provinces, seven northeastern-most U.S. states, and Indigenous nations and tribes in the region. (See accompanying map.) The Summit will bring together provincial, state, and federal agency decision-makers and staff; Indigenous leaders and representatives; and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, public and private funders, and others for a 2-day event with 150-200 participants to be held from June 11-13, 2024 in Montréal, Québec.
- (2) Developing a high-level **connectivity “blueprint”** that identifies key opportunities, promising strategies, and potential actions to advance connectivity conservation and restoration across the region. The plan, targeted for completion in Fall, 2024, will build off progress by the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers’ Ecological Connectivity WorkingGroup (ECWG), SCI, and other efforts, connecting the dots between Western science, Indigenous knowledge, strategies, projects, partners, and current funding sources.

Together, the Connectivity Summit and blueprint are intended to help **ensure this region secures its due share of historic near-term funding** now available in Canada and the U.S. to sustain a well-connected landscape for all living beings, setting the stage for future successes and a healthy and climate-resilient environment.

Outcomes:

- Greater visibility and appreciation among key decision-makers and funders for the importance of conserving and restoring connected landscapes across the region.
- Reinforced support for the principles of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers’ (NEGECP) [Resolution 40-3](#) adopted in 2016.
- New and stronger relationships, commitments, and synergies across borders and cultures that will foster progress toward shared goals in the short and long terms.
- High-level blueprint of key opportunities, promising strategies, and potential actions to advance regional connectivity conservation and restoration.
- Increased competitiveness of this region for significant outside funding to implement connectivity projects on the ground.
- Enhanced regional contributions to national and sub-national goals related to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity Framework and the “30 x 30” initiative.
- Mechanism for ongoing regional dialogue, coordination and collaboration to maximize collective impact for the long-term.

Why Here, Why Now: There are a number of key factors at the regional, national, and global levels that make this a **unique, vital, and time-bound initiative**:

- + **Ecological Significance:** Northeastern North America is of continental and global significance as a critical destination and pathway for migratory species and those that are adjusting their ranges northward in the face of climate change. In addition, the Northern Appalachian-Acadian/Wabanaki forest area in the heart of the region is globally significant as the largest remaining largely intact block of temperate broadleaf and mixed forest in the world. Sustaining and enhancing landscape connectivity between habitat blocks and patches is critical to allow all species to move freely within and beyond the region.
- + **Policy Alignment:** Domestic and international recognition of the importance of transborder, landscape-scale connectivity conservation is at an all-time high. Both have been highlighted as essential tools for combating the biodiversity and climate crises, including in the 2022 Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, international climate accords, and Canadian and U.S. commitments to “30 x 30” goals. Canada’s National Ecological Corridors Program, the US Council on Environmental Quality’s Ecological Connectivity Guidance, and recent provincial and state initiatives also are highly relevant.
- + **Funding Opportunity:** Unprecedented levels of government funding and programmatic support are currently available in Canada and the U.S. for landscape-scale conservation and connectivity work. However, some of these opportunities may not persist beyond the next 2-3 years, depending on federal political outcomes. And based on recent trends in the U.S. at least, there is a risk of disproportionate funding going to other regions if the visibility of this region is not elevated and initiatives like this are not developed.
- + **In-region Building Blocks:** Northeastern North America has made important strides on advancing connectivity conservation and restoration within and across borders in recent years. These include the NEGECP’s visionary Resolution 40-3; the subsequent work of the ECWG; the SCI partnership’s innovative and impactful work; and recent supportive statements for connectivity conservation and restoration from senior government officials in several jurisdictions.
- + **Gap In Dialogue:** Despite those important building blocks, there is a lack of ongoing dialogue, coordination, and collaboration on connectivity conservation and restoration across the full breadth of Northeastern North America, in part due to lingering effects of the pandemic as well as recent challenges with the administrative structure supporting NEGECP and its working groups. This jeopardizes the region’s positioning to capitalize on historic current funding opportunities to advance critical work.
- + **More Inclusive Circle:** There is a pressing need for Indigenous voices and perspectives on the values of a connected landscape in this region to be heard, and for Indigenous leadership to be at the forefront of transboundary connectivity conservation and restoration efforts. In addition, New York has not been a direct participant in NEGECP Resolution 40-3 and the associated efforts of the Ecological Connectivity Working Group. Finally, the ECWG did not encompass other key interests such as transportation agencies and non-governmental organizations. This initiative provides an important opportunity to help address these critical gaps.
- + **Model for Others:** With heightened attention on the importance of cross-border, landscape-scale conservation and connectivity in Canada, the U.S., and globally, this initiative can serve as a pilot and inspiration for other transboundary areas.

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www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org/the-northeastern-north-america-connectivity-summit/

Northeastern North America Landscape Connectivity Initiative

Geographic Scope



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