



**STAYING
CONNECTED
INITIATIVE**

Pathways to an Ecologically Connected Transborder Landscape

*A Distillation of Key Learnings,
Strategies and Actions from the
2024 Northeastern
North America/Turtle Island
Landscape Connectivity Summit*

Executive Summary

**Find the full *Pathways* guide and
more at:**

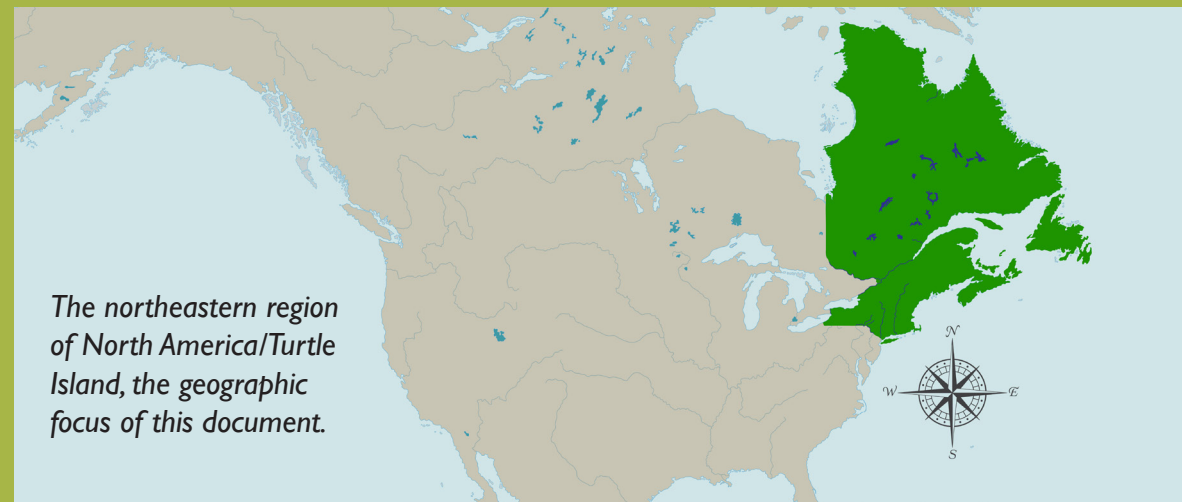
stayingconnectedinitiative.org/pathways



Sherihwakwénienst ne
lonkhi'nisténha tsi lohontsáte



Respect her, our Mother the Earth
En respect de notre Terre-Mère



The northeastern region of North America/Turtle Island, the geographic focus of this document.

“*Pathways to an Ecologically Connected Transborder Landscape*” provides a distillation of key learnings, strategies, and actions to advance ecological connectivity conservation and restoration from the first-ever Northeastern North America/Turtle Island Landscape Connectivity Summit, held in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke, Québec, Canada, in June 2024. It focuses on the area encompassing the five eastern Canadian provinces, seven northeastern U.S. states, and many Indigenous territories within that geography, while recognizing the important ecological and societal connections to adjoining areas in eastern Ontario and the mid-Atlantic states. (Turtle Island is a name used by many Indigenous peoples of this region for what is commonly known as North America.)

The *Pathways* guide is intended to inform collaborative connectivity conservation and restoration efforts among diverse partners across borders, scales, cultures, and sectors in this globally and continentally significant transboundary region. It includes many actions that can be pursued in the near-term by individual entities or groups of partners to move connectivity work forward, as well as others that are more likely relevant for the mid- to long-term. The document intentionally **does not attempt to prioritize which actions may be most important** because that was beyond the scope of this effort and requires further dialogue among the network of partners to develop a consensus.

Pathways is provided as a resource for anyone with an interest and role in connectivity conservation in the

region, including leaders, staff, and practitioners from governmental entities at various levels, Indigenous nations and groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, community groups, landowners, funders, relevant industries, and other interested parties.

This guide emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems, and highlights the need for **multi-scaled, holistic, and integrated strategies** to reverse habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss, and to ensure ecological and community resilience. To succeed, it is essential to foster a **well-coordinated network of diverse entities working synergistically at multiple scales** to sustain and enhance ecological connectivity through collective action.

The **Staying Connected Initiative (SCI)** offers a successful model of partner collaboration and coordination across scales, sectors, and strategies to sustain and enhance connectivity in the region, and there are opportunities to build on its success and further leverage its network.

Key complementary opportunities for advancing this work across borders include the renewed commitment to connectivity as a regional priority made by the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG-ECP) in September 2024, as well as further collaboration with the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA), Indigenous nations, and other important entities and initiatives.

Key Strategies and Solutions: The *Pathways* guide spotlights a number of key strategies woven together in an **integrated, systems-based approach**. For each strategy, a number of actions that were identified through the 2024 Connectivity Summit in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke are presented. The key strategies include:

- **Etuaptmunk/Two-Eyed Seeing:** Integrating Indigenous and Western knowledge systems for a more holistic approach to conservation, emphasizing the interrelationship of people and nature, and the importance of inclusive, ethical approaches, shared stewardship, and co-creation.
- **Coordination, Collaboration, and Partnership-Building:** Enhancing coordination among diverse entities across borders and multiple scales, fostering transdisciplinary work, and avoiding redundancy. This includes strengthening collaboration between the Staying Connected Initiative, the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers’ Ecological Connectivity Working Group, and other key entities.
- **Communication and Engagement:** Improving communication to bridge disciplinary divides and better engage the public, emphasizing the importance of a “relationship with the land” rather than “ownership.” This includes developing an integrated communications strategy, celebrating place, and sharing success stories.
- **Connectivity and Climate Science, Indigenous Knowledge, and Conservation Planning:** Integrating diverse knowledge sources to inform conservation efforts, emphasizing the need for both landscape-scale and sub-landscape-scale science products, as well as community values and Indigenous Knowledge.
- **Land Protection/Securement:** Utilizing land acquisition and conservation easements/restrictions (aka servitudes) to permanently

protect land from development, focusing on connecting lands, co-benefits, and people-centered conservation.

- **Land Management, Stewardship, and Restoration:** Fostering a land ethic that promotes ecological connectivity on both private and public lands, implementing restoration projects and best practices for stewarding working landscapes and wildlands.
- **Land Use Planning, Community Outreach, and Capacity Building:** Integrating ecological connectivity into land use plans and policies through community outreach and capacity building, and encouraging development patterns that maintain connected landscapes and minimize the fragmentation of intact forests and habitats.
- **Linear Infrastructure Mitigation:** Improving transportation infrastructure and minimizing its barrier effects on wildlife movement through improved design of bridges and culverts and other techniques, and by encouraging collaboration between transportation and natural resource agencies along with other partners.
- **Policy Initiatives:** Building policies at various levels of government to highlight the importance of ecological connectivity and wildlife corridors and crossings, and to support collaboration and action across the range of key implementation strategies.
- **Funding:** Increasing funding from diverse sources for connectivity conservation and restoration through a range of approaches and addressing barriers to funding access.

The framework, strategies, and potential actions described in this document are not the last word on what needs to be done, but are intended to help galvanize and inform collaborative, inclusive, and well-targeted efforts to enhance ecological connectivity for all its benefits in this vital transborder region.

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