

Open Space Institute

Resilient Landscapes Initiative

Southern New Hampshire and Maine Forests

Facts

Total Acres: 1,400,000

Total Conserved Acres: 338, 617

Resilient Acres: 1,215,000

Important Geology Types:
Moderately limestone

Noteworthy species: Landlocked salmon, Blandings turtle, black racer and timber rattlesnake

Key Rivers: Upper Saco, Crooked and Merrimack Rivers



Blandings Turtle

Contact

**Southern New Hampshire
and Maine Forests**

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NH forest; Photo: Jerry Monkman

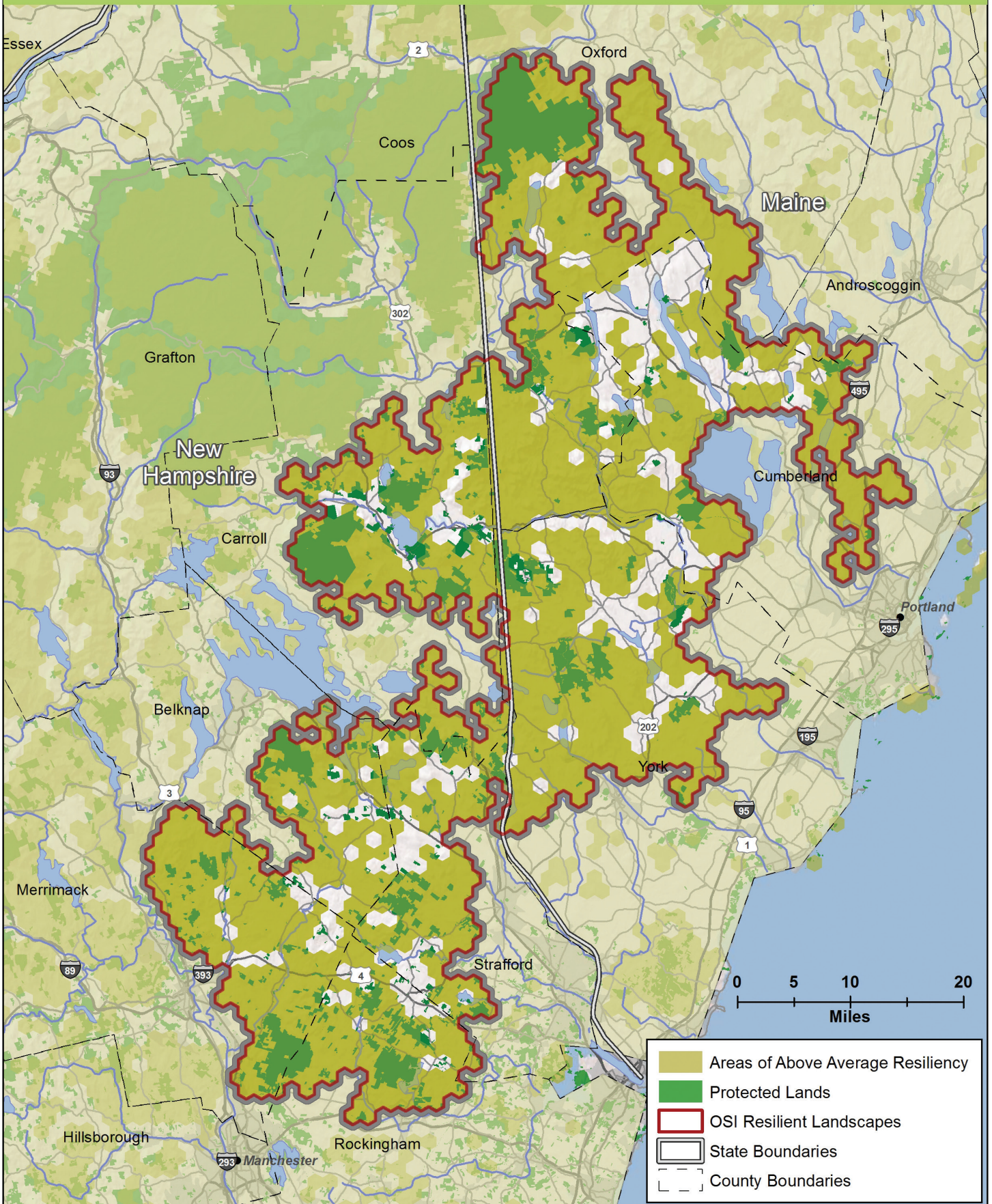
The Southern New Hampshire and Maine Forests region is one of four landscapes across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic that are strongly positioned to facilitate wildlife adaptation to climate change, according to the Open Space Institute's (OSI) analysis based on data from The Nature Conservancy's *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation*. Resilient landscapes are natural strongholds that are potentially resistant to drought, flooding, rising temperatures and other threats associated with climate change, providing habitat for a variety of plants and animals and benefits, such as clean water, for humans.

Decision-makers can use this resiliency science to identify places to conserve today that will likely

support a diversity of plants and animals tomorrow as the climate changes. The four landscapes, chosen from among a dozen that OSI evaluated using this new data, contain unprotected climate resilient habitat, strong nonprofit capacity and potential matching funds for conservation. All four areas are eligible for land protection grants and technical assistance through OSI's \$6 million Resilient Landscapes Initiative.

What is a Resilient Landscape?

Based on more than a decade of research, TNC has found that sustaining species diversity across the landscape depends on the geology types below ground and the complexity of associated landforms above ground. The more complex the site, the more species will be able to take advantage of the micro-climates available among the slopes, cliffs, valleys, ravines, caves and lowlands of a complex landscape. Local connectivity — or absence of roads, buildings and other infrastructure — is also important since species need to be able to access the complex features. Together landform complexity and local connectivity indicate the most resilient examples of each geology type. At its heart, this science is based on the idea that while we cannot predict exactly how species and habitats will respond to climate change, we can identify places that provide the greatest climatic options for the greatest number of species.





Peabody Pond, Maine; Photo: The Nature Conservancy

Why the Southern New Hampshire and Maine Forests?



Saco River, Maine; Photo: L. Comeau

This rural corner of Maine and New Hampshire harbors significant biodiversity amid a patchwork of conserved land. The northern limit of many species and the southern limit of others converge here, making it an ecological treasure trove: pine barrens, peatlands, ponds and river systems all contribute to the region's diversity. It is home to regionally significant and at-risk species such as Blanding's turtle, black racer, and timber rattlesnake. The region provides important ecological services for human society as well, such as floodplains, river-based recreation and clean water. The area contains a large part of the Upper Saco River watershed and a portion of the Sebago Lake watershed, which supplies the city of Portland's drinking water. The region is the focus of various national and statewide conservation groups, as well as a dozen small land trusts.

More than 80% of this 1.4 million acre region ranks as highly resilient, using TNC's data. And nearly 50% of the resilient area is also very complex, offering a diversity of microclimates to species. Another key component of resiliency, this area contains geological types that have not been adequately conserved. Such soils — especially limestone — support a broad array of biodiversity and are particularly at risk for development. A little over half of the region ranks as highly connected. However, only 13% of the region's resilient landscapes is conserved. A challenge is to conserve remaining large blocks of intact forest while balancing the needs for active forest management, housing, roads and agriculture.

Resilient Landscapes Initiative

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OSI Resilient Landscapes Initiative Capital Grants

Through the Resilient Landscapes Initiative, OSI will provide \$5.5 million in capital grants within four targeted areas. OSI will award matching grants to projects that permanently protect resilient habitat through the acquisition of land or easements. OSI will solicit grant proposals through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) and, with help of an Advisory Committee, review applications against ecological and transactional criteria. OSI announced the initial RFP in June 2013 and additional rounds will be announced approximately every six to nine months through September 2015. Please go to OSI's website for more information: www.osiny.org/ResilientLandscape.

Outreach and Education

OSI will further enhance the capacity of land trusts and public agencies to respond to climate change through focused outreach and education efforts. We will provide data on resilience and make grants to land trusts and provide technical assistance to public agencies in focus areas to integrate resiliency science into conservation plans. Grants will be made by invitation.

The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and sustain communities. Founded in 1974 to protect significant landscapes in New York State, OSI has been a partner in the protection of nearly 2.2 million acres in North America.

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