

# CONNECT TO PROTECT

NEW HAMPSHIRE COASTAL WATERSHED CONSERVATION PLAN



## PROTECTING OUR WATERSHED FOR THE FUTURE

### ONE ACRE A DAY

That's how quickly we are losing natural lands in New Hampshire's coastal watershed to development. Natural lands protect drinking water, sustain wildlife habitats, protect productive farmlands, and make our region an attractive place to live, work and play. As our climate becomes hotter, drier, and stormier, the value and cost of protected land will only increase. We must act now to protect the lands that sustain natural systems and human communities before they are lost.

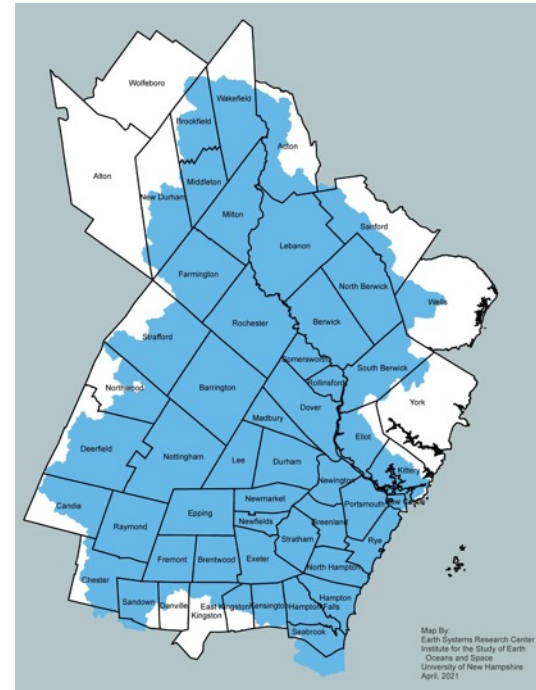
### ALIGNING EFFORTS TO MAXIMIZE BENEFITS

The [2021 New Hampshire Coastal Watershed Conservation Plan](#) was developed by The Nature Conservancy and its partners to provide clear guidance for where future conservation efforts are most needed. An update to an earlier (2006) version, the Plan aligns efforts to protect high priority lands in the coastal watershed. The Plan identifies high priority natural areas and agricultural resources based on their ability to provide specific benefits, including:

- Drinking water source protection and groundwater recharge
- Wildlife habitat and corridor protection
- Flood reduction and salt marsh habitat protection
- Local farm productivity

### CONNECT TO PROTECT

Conservation partners have set an ambitious goal of protecting **4,000 acres a year** and are working hard to attract and direct funding to meet this goal. Communities, land trusts and conservation groups across the watershed are invited to join these efforts and use the Plan.



The Plan focuses on the **New Hampshire Coastal Watershed**, which is the geographic area that drains into the Atlantic Ocean from the Piscataqua River, the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary, and the coastline in between. The 990 square mile watershed includes 42 communities in NH and 9 communities in Maine that are fully or mostly in the coastal watershed. These communities are home to over 400,000 people.

### FIND SUPPORT

Visit [www.connect-protect.org](http://www.connect-protect.org) for resources to support your conservation work:

- Locate [local conservation organizations](#) that can help
- Sign up for [upcoming workshops](#)
- Learn how to [communicate the value](#) of land protection
- Find [funding sources](#) for conservation projects
- Request [assistance](#)

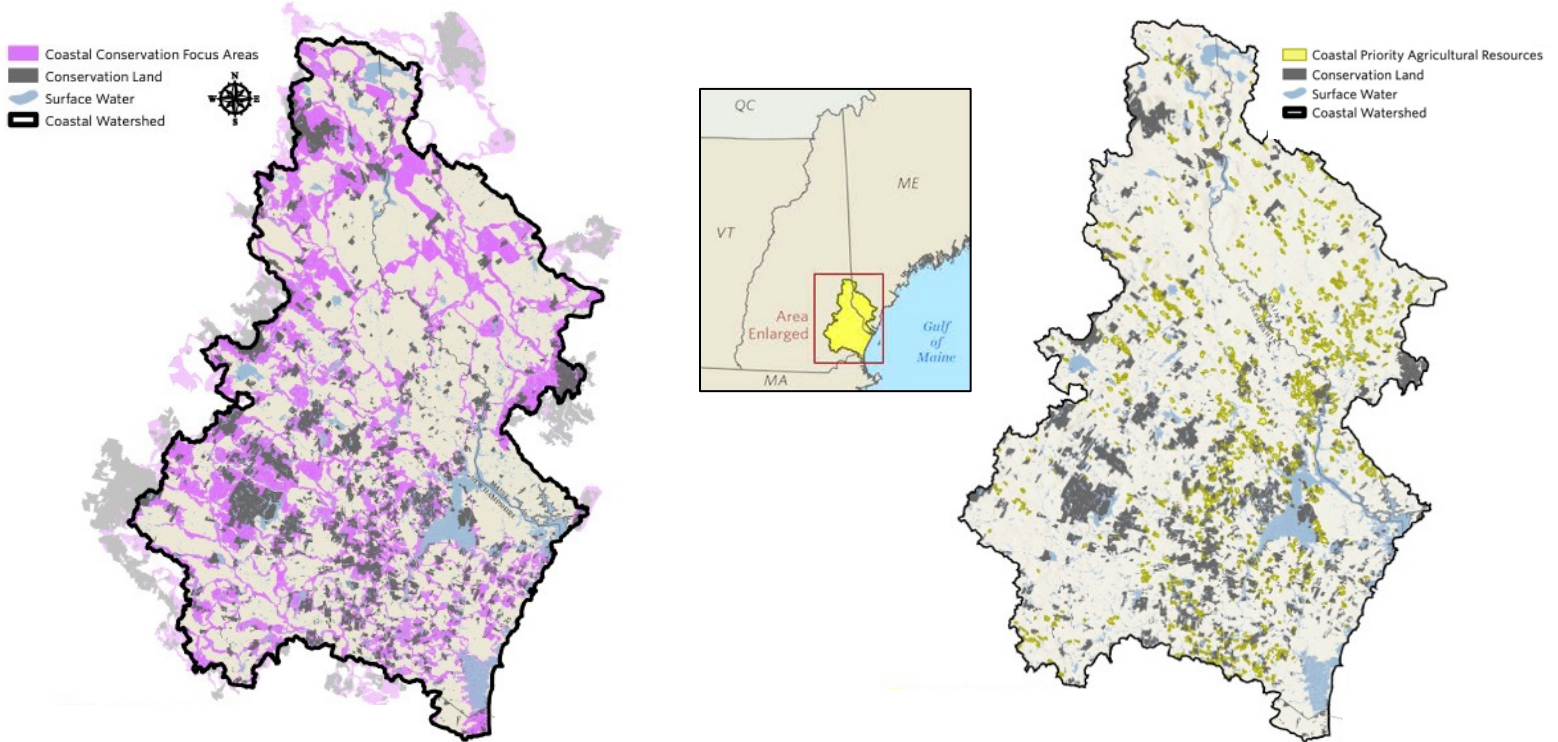


Photos: Jerry Monkman, EcoPhotography  
Courtesy of Southeast Land Trust

[WWW.CONNECT-PROTECT.ORG](http://WWW.CONNECT-PROTECT.ORG)

# MAPS YOU CAN USE

The Plan identifies two sets of conservation priorities:



## CONSERVATION FOCUS AREAS

The Plan identifies Conservation Focus Areas (purple) that cover 38.2% of the watershed (~246,000 acres). These are high priority natural lands that offer benefits for water resources, wildlife, and climate resilience. As of 2021, just over 75,000 acres (~30%) of these focus areas had been conserved, leaving nearly 171,000 acres vulnerable or unprotected.

## PRIORITY AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The Plan identifies Priority Agricultural Resources (areas outlined in yellow) that cover 4.7% of the watershed (~32,000 acres). These are places with soils that are especially productive, versatile, and resilient. By the end of 2021, just over 6,000 acres (~20%) of these priority agricultural resources were conserved, leaving approximately 26,000 acres vulnerable to development.

The Plan provides maps for the watershed, subwatersheds, and individual communities. You can also access the data to customize maps to identify areas that meet a community's specific conservation goals, such as protecting drinking water sources or reducing floods. Visit the [Maps page](#) on the *Connect to Protect* website to learn more about these maps and related data.

## PLAN FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The *NH Coastal Watershed Conservation Plan* provides municipalities, land trusts, other conservation organizations, and consultants with tools to prioritize and protect key conservation lands. Municipal staff and land use planning boards can also use the maps to advance conservation and community development goals. For example, you can use the maps to:

Identify conservation priorities and update master plans or comprehensive plans

Add to natural resource inventories

Propose a conservation overlay district

Locate development while protecting natural resources

As with forests and wetlands, farmlands are also highly susceptible to development, and farmers, municipalities and land trusts can use a variety of tools to preserve productive lands and the livelihood of farmers. Connecting with your [local land trust](#) is a great place to start.