

Technical Assistance Summary

September 2023

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

From February through September 2023, Connect to Protect project team members provided assistance to six municipalities and two land trusts to support use of the 2021 *NH Coastal Watershed Conservation Plan* (“*The Plan*”). Following a series of overview webinars on *The Plan* held during Fall 2022, participants were sent a brief form to apply for assistance, and the Connect to Protect team members were able to respond to all of the applications received.

In terms of the process, two project team members tag-teamed support for each of the projects. Each assistance process was unique depending on the community and the project itself, but the basic process included:

- Holding an initial scoping meeting with the applicants (~30 minutes, typically via zoom) to discuss goals, context, and next steps
- Having a subsequent (typically in-person) meeting with poster-sized maps (sometimes an existing conservation commission meeting; sometimes as a separate meeting)
- Shared 2-page factsheet, recording of overview webinar, and Connect-Protect.org website
- Depending on the project focus/goals, shared relevant examples and additional resources (e.g., checklist examples) and had follow-up meetings/communications as needed
- Our outreach team has been meeting approximately monthly throughout the process to share updates and learnings and to coordinate where there are some similarities across projects

PROJECT SUMMARIES	
Chester, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Developed a conservation priorities checklist (building on an example from Dover) ❑ Seeking funding to update their Natural Resources Inventory
East Kingston, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Added criteria to their parcel evaluation process ✓ Shared guidance about where to find different data sources
Newmarket, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Developed two maps to help identify and explain opportunities to connect existing conserved lands and trail networks ✓ Brainstormed strategies and partners for their vision of connecting people and wildlife within Newmarket and beyond
Rochester, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Updating an existing evaluation form for land acquisition
Rye, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Developing a checklist for conservation priorities (based on the new example from Chester) ❑ Planning a workshop in late October 2023 for municipal boards and staff as well as community members

<p>South Berwick, ME</p>	<p><i>Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) is working with the town to update their Comprehensive Plan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Met with SMPDC staff and shared GIS files for <i>The Plan</i> data layers to support inclusion in the updated comprehensive plan update ✓ Participated in a Natural Resources focused workshop for the comp plan update and reviewed the draft Natural Resources chapter ☐ Developing a checklist for conservation priorities <p><i>This work will also set the group up well for their Open Space Plan update, a project funded by PREP that is just getting underway.</i></p>
<p>Great Works Regional Land Trust (GWRLT)</p>	<p><i>GWRLT is planning to update their conservation plan (2009).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Created a map of <i>The Plan</i> data layers covering the land trust's region ✓ Met with GWRLT staff to share the maps and discuss ways to include it in their updated conservation plan
<p>Moose Mountains Regional Greenways (MMRG)</p>	<p><i>MMRG's service area is expanding to include several new towns, so they are working to update their conservation plan (2017).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Met with MMRG staff and consultant supporting the update to discuss ways to incorporate data from <i>The Plan</i> ✓ Reviewed MMRG's existing criteria for land conservation projects

OUTCOMES & LESSONS LEARNED

- Overall, these projects have led to new connections with community contacts and land trust staff – they now have contacts on the Connect to Protect team they can turn to if they have questions or ideas for subsequent work.
- The Outreach Team found value in meeting monthly throughout the duration of the assistance projects to share learnings and resources.
- This project underscored the importance of having dedicated assistance to support the use of plans and maps like the 2021 *NH Coastal Watershed Conservation Plan*.
- One of the participants from the South Berwick project said: *We are so very appreciative of your help with this. It has started so much amazing involvement and discussion from community members.*
- The assistance projects have generated ideas for follow-on actions and identification of community needs, which the Team was able to capture through the project's Sustainability Plan.
- Even a relatively light amount of engagement can go a long way.