Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA)

NORTHEAST LANDSCAPE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Spring 2026 Update

MISSION

The Northeast Landscape Wildlife Conservation Committee provides leadership and direction on efforts related to large-scale landscape conservation needs and opportunities, including developing and coordinating shared priorities and interjurisdictional efforts.

NEAFWA'S UNIQUE ROLE IN LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION IN THE NORTHEAST

NEAFWA is uniquely positioned to advance strategic landscape-scale conservation in the northeastern U.S. Collectiviely, its member agencies are empowered to be leaders in this work through:

- **Statutory responsibility** and management authority for fish, wildlife, and public lands and a **conservation land base** to anchor and grow landscape conservation initiatives
- A **shared charge** to promote cooperation, information sharing, and implementation of regional projects and **structural processes** that support planning and delivering conservation across jurisdictions
- **Foundational work** to collaboratively develop and disseminate species and habitat management practices and **institutional knowledge and stability** that enables long-term investment
- Strong **constituent support** for conserving fish, wildlife, and habitats and **relationships with partners** at local, county, state & federal scales whose work can support, and benefit from, landscape conservation
- **Collective expertise** in fish, wildlife, and habitat management and a **track record of success** working together to advance landscape conservation in the Northeast

WHO WE ARE

The committee and its working group represent:

- Wildlife agencies from the 13 Northeast states and the District of Columbia
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service

LASTING CO-BENEFITS FROM LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

- Sustains working forests, fisheries, and farms—supporting jobs in forestry, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.
- Reduces flood risk, protects infrastructure, and safeguards communities from extreme weather.
- Expands public access to nature for hunting, fishing, and recreation, boosting tourism and community well-being.
- Leads to efficiencies and amplified results, leveraging resources for greater impact.

A VISION FOR THE APPALACHIAN LANDSCAPE

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PRIORITIES

The committee continues to emphasize its **seven priority landscapes and themes** in the Northeast with a special focus on the **Appalachian Corridor** and **Atlantic Coast**. In fall 2025, the Landscape Committee worked with the other NEAFWA committees to develop the following vision for the Appalachian landscape.

NEAFWA will work with partners to advance strategic conservation of lands and waters in the Appalachian Corridor Highlands and Streams Landscape to protect the region's globally significant biodiversity, keep irreplaceable north-south migratory pathways intact, and support local culture, communities, and economies shaped by its natural resources. Our proactive approach in this landscape will result in:

- Healthy and diverse ecological systems at multiple scales that support sustainable populations of native fish, wildlife, and plants
- Environmental conditions that support recovery of imperiled species, keep common species common, and sustain populations of species that are hunted, fished, or trapped
- Habitat corridors that allow species to shift in response to climate and land-use change
- Sustainable local natural resource-based economies, such as forestry, farming, and outdoor recreation
- Improved quality of life for all residents with greater access to nature & sustainable recreational opportunities, resilience to natural disasters, and cleaner water
- Recognition of NEAFWA as an integral partner in conserving natural and cultural resources in this region

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN PEOPLE & PLACES

The Landscape Committee is working closely with the Appalachian People and Places Collaborative (formerly the Department of Interior Keystone Initiative) as they develop an Appalachian Conservation Strategy and Investment Plan that will incorporate NEAFWA's vision as well as that of other partners. To provide feedback on that effort, visit the engagement tool using the QR code on the left.

UPDATES IN AREAS OF WORK

The Landscape Wildlife Conservation Committee focuses its efforts in four primary areas of work. Recent and ongoing work in these areas includes:

Communication

SCAN THE CODE TO READ THE ONB STORY

- Published a story about landscape conservation in the Northeast in WMI's Outdoor News Bulletin (ONB).
- Developed a messaging toolkit with key messages, example projects, and ambassador species for landscape conservation.
- Visit our website to see other recent communication products and reach out if you'd like help telling your landscape conservation story!

Mobilizing resources

- Developing a vision and priorities within the seven focal landscapes and themes together with other NEAFWA committees.
- Continuing to seek funds to support projects in focal landscapes through project and proposal development and letters of support, leveraging a total of over $20 million across the region.

Reducing costs and barriers

- Continuing to engage with other NEAFWA committees and technical committees to identify barriers to multistate project funding and implementation.
- Investigating ways to support regulatory streamlining.

Aligning partner networks

- Continuing engagement with Appalachian People and Places Collaborative, Atlantic Salt Marsh Collaborative, Staying Connected Initiative, and the New England Governors / Eastern Canadian Premiers Connectivity Working Group.
- Co-organized a session together with the Staying Connected Initiative and Center for Large Landscape Conservation at the 2026 NEAFWA Conference in West Virginia, entitled: "Partnering Across Scales, Strategies, and Sectors to Enhance Ecological Connectivity and Support NEAFWA Fish and Wildlife Management Priorities."

FOCUS FOR 2026

While developing a 2026 work plan, the Landscape Committee identified two primary areas to advance this year: connectivity and supporting the implementation of regional actions from State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) and other regional plans.

Connectivity

The Committee is developing a Multistate Conservation Grant proposal to advance aquatic and terrestrial connectivity throughout the region and co-designed a session together with the Staying Connected Initiative and Center for Large Landscape Conservation for the NEAFWA Conference in West Virginia in April 2026 that features connectivity work from MA, VA, NJ, and PA as well as regional work and local projects.

Supporting regional plans and SWAP implementation

The committee is engaging with SWAP coordinators to identify ways to support implementation at the regional scale and is supporting several grant proposals to advance implementation of regional conservation plans for Eastern Ruffed Grouse, Northeast Turtles, and other high priority species.

These efforts build on a suite of projects the Landscape Committee has leveraged support for including an integrated aquatic and terrestrial connectivity strategy being developed in the upper Delaware watershed, supported by the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF). This multi-state, multi-sector project led by partners at the Nature Conservancy builds on and complements existing brook trout and cold-water stream projects also supported through the DWCF and America's Ecosystem Recovery Initiative.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Partners working at any scale can support conservation in shared priority landscapes. Even small actions that improve connectivity between habitats make a big difference for wildlife at the regional scale, especially projects that:

- Conserve and restore lands and waters in wildlife corridors
- Upgrade road-stream crossings
- Implement actions in State Wildlife Action Plans and other regional plans and manage and restore habitat for Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need and other priority species

VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR EXPLORE OUR STORYMAP TO LEARN MORE