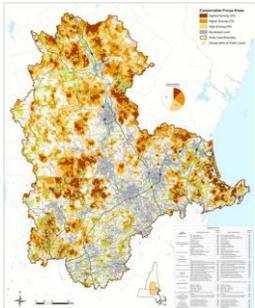


# Merrimack Conservation Partnership

## *A Public-Private Partnership Conserving the Merrimack River Valley in New Hampshire and Massachusetts*

Completed in 2014, the Merrimack Conservation Partnership is the product of two years of effort by a dedicated group of conservation and planning professionals representing 33 private organizations and public agencies in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The Partnership is a collaborative, landscape-scale effort. Working together, the group has developed a science-driven, consensus land conservation plan that integrates the best-available natural resource data with expert judgment to prioritize land protection to protect water quality (especially drinking water supplies), preserve aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, conserve the region's working farms and forests, and provide recreational open space. The Merrimack plan identifies 1.3 million acres of land, representing about 54% of the watershed's total land area, as a priority for conservation. As of the completion of the plan, only 23% of these priority acres are permanently conserved.

### Conservation Focus Areas Map



The Conservation Focus Areas Map is intended to assist local conservation commissions and land trusts in the Merrimack River Valley in making decisions on land conservation projects. The map is the compilation of 45 different natural resource GIS data sets covering the two watershed states. These layers were grouped into 4 themes, although the water-related data was a key driver of the focus areas:

**Wildlife Habitat** – The Wildlife Co-occurrence map depicts the highest ranked habitats in each state, seven critical habitats types, and the habitats that provide the most connectivity for wildlife movement and which will be most resilient in the face of climate change.

**Water Resources** – The Water Resources Co-occurrence Map displays the co-occurrence of 15 different water related data factors, including, but not limited to the watersheds of drinking water sources, high water quality areas, wetlands, aquifers, and outstanding river corridors.

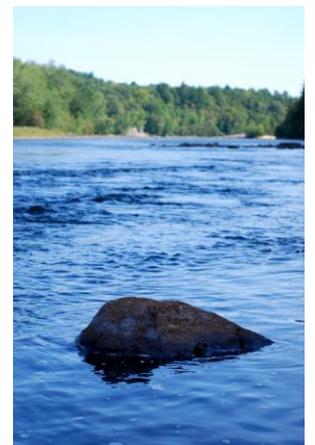
**Agriculture & Forests** – The Agriculture & Forests Co-occurrence Map shows the co-occurrence of areas of intact forest classified by size, as well as prime forest soils, prime agricultural soils, and lands in active agricultural use.

### Why the Merrimack?



The Merrimack watershed is home to more than 2.6 million people - 1.87 million in Massachusetts and 748,000 in New Hampshire. This represents 57% of the total NH population, and 29% of the MA population. The 2010 U.S. Forest Service report, *Forests on the Edge*, identified the Merrimack River watershed as the *most threatened in the nation* in terms of projected loss of private forest land over the next twenty years.

*Photo: The Merrimack River in Canterbury, NH. Jerry and Marcy Monkman, Ecophotography*



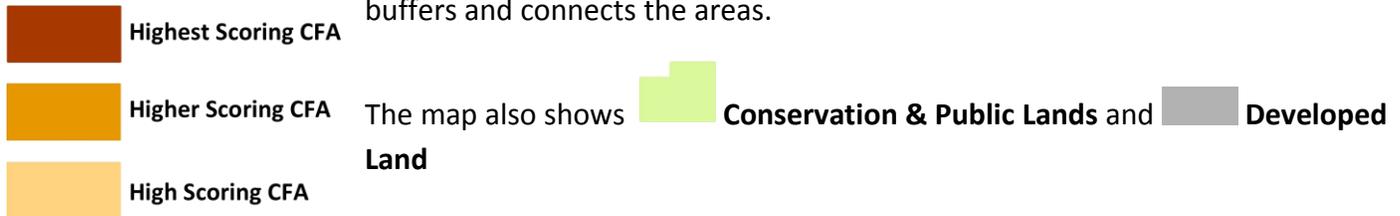
*The Merrimack River in Concord, NH. Emily Lord*

**Recreation & Trails** – The Recreation and Trails Co-occurrence Map is based on unprotected gaps in existing rail trails, hiking trails, and Heritage trails, as well as abandoned rail rights-of-way which may serve as potential linkages. In addition, historic sites, scenic resources, and distinctive cultural resources were included.

### Important Natural Resources

What are **Conservation Focus Areas (CFA)**? They are geographic areas where undeveloped land provides a combination of three core natural values: clean water, wildlife habitat, and good soils for growing food and forests. The Highest Scoring CFAs are the “Best of the best” and Higher Scoring CFAs are the “next best.”

Lastly, the High Scoring CFAs would be conserved a supporting landscape that buffers and connects the areas.



**For More Information:** Contact Brian Hotz, Vice President for Land Conservation at the Society for the Protection of NH Forests at (603) 224-9945 or [bhotz@forestsociety.org](mailto:bhotz@forestsociety.org)

Visit the Merrimack Conservation Partnership website at <http://merrimackconservationpartnership.org/>

### **Merrimack Conservation Partnership includes:**

*Bear Paw Regional Greenways (NH),  
Eight Towns and the Bay Committee (MA),  
Essex County Greenbelt (MA),  
Five Rivers Conservation Trust (NH),  
Ipswich River Watershed Association (MA),  
Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc. (MA),  
City of Manchester, NH Water Works,  
Massachusetts Audubon,  
Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental  
Affairs (EEA),  
Massachusetts EEA Department of Agricultural  
Resources,  
Massachusetts EEA Department of Conservation  
and Recreation,  
Massachusetts EEA Department of Fish and Game,  
Merrimack River Watershed Council (MA/NH),  
City of Nashua, NH,  
Nashua River Watershed Association (MA/NH),  
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric  
Administration,  
NH Association of Conservation Districts,*

*NH Department of Environmental Services,  
NH DRED Division of Forests and Lands,  
NH DRED Division of Parks and Recreation,  
NH Fish and Game Department,  
NH Rivers Council,  
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (MA),  
Piscataquog Land Conservancy (NH),  
Rockingham Planning Commission (NH),  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire  
Forests,  
Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire,  
Sudbury Valley Trustees (MA),  
Town of Tewksbury,  
MA Water Treatment Plant,  
The Trust for Public Land,  
The Trustees of Reservations (MA),  
US Army Corps of Engineers,  
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1,  
US Fish & Wildlife Service,  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*