



Conserving Working Landscapes with the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands

ABOUT NASF

The mission of the National Association of State Foresters is to represent state and territorial forester interests by influencing forest policy and leading efforts to promote healthy and sustainable trees and forests.

ABOUT USFS

The U.S. Forest Service mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

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www.stateforesters.org

www.fs.fed.us

www.nhdf.org

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With support from the Forest Legacy Program of the USDA Forest Service, the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands is achieving goals outlined in its Forest Action Plan.

Working in close collaboration with numerous partners, the Androscoggin Headwaters project is the state's third largest conservation project, protecting more than 31,000 acres of forestland.

22,957 acres of working forest have been protected through a conservation easement.

The economy of Northern New Hampshire was anchored for generations by the pulp and paper industry until 2006 when the historic mill in Berlin closed permanently. As part of the decline of the pulp mill, hundreds of thousands of acres were divested and parceled out to new owners creating instability for the region's forest and recreational economy, and uncertainty for residents. These new timberland owners were looking for a return on their investment, which meant that some of the most attractive development parcels around ponds and mountain views were newly threatened. It also meant that there were new opportunities for conservation, where land trusts and public agencies identified thousands of acres that were desirable for protection due to their recreation value, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.

In 2009 the Trust for Public Land began working with the Plum Creek Timber Company to develop a conservation strategy for the 31,300 acres Plum Creek owned next to the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge and the Androscoggin River. The Androscoggin Headwaters Project aimed to conserve the most important wildlife habitat through fee purchase and conveyance to the US Fish and Wildlife Service or New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game. The balance of the lands would be conserved with a working forest conservation easement held by the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development and funded by the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP).

“The Androscoggin Headwaters project is an example of what can be achieved when public agencies, private organizations and individuals work together to achieve a shared goal,” said Brad Simpkins, State Forester. “We believed in the vision of maintaining commercial forestland next to protected wildlife habitat. The successful efforts of all involved have ensured that this land will remain a critical part of the region’s economy and ecology.”

This project required buy in from numerous agencies, stakeholders and the political leadership of the state. At over 31,000 acres, this was the third largest conservation project in the State's history and it required a multi-year investment from over a dozen funders to secure over \$17 million.

This Androscoggin Headwaters Project was consummated in a 5-phase project structure that unfolded between 2010 and 2014. In Phases I and II, the Umbagog Refuge acquired 7,455 acres in fee. Phases III and IV had the State of New Hampshire acquire working forest easements on 22,957 acres using \$7.319 million in FLP funds. Finally, in Phase V, the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game acquired 934 acres around the Greenough Ponds, two of only three of New Hampshire's self-sustaining wild brook trout ponds. At the end of the project, 27% of the property was purchased in fee and wildlife conservation will be the dominant value. The remaining 73% will stay a private commercial forest and the conservation easement guarantees that harvesting will be done sustainably and take into account recreational and wildlife values. All of the property remains open to public access for recreational activities.

The Androscoggin Headwaters Project remains a highlight of New Hampshire land conservation efforts and a model of state government, federal government, non-profit and industry working together to ensure the right balance between commercial forestry and wildlife conservation. It took patience and a collaborative spirit to get through five phases and achieve a successful conservation outcome.