

Connecticut-Pennsylvania Highlands Regional Study: 2008 Update

USDA Forest Service (Arial 8 pt)

Northeastern Area

State and Private Forestry



Description: The Highlands of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut are a region of national significance bordering an expanding metropolitan area. The 3.5-million-acre region has abundant forests, fields, and natural resources that provide quality drinking water, recreation, and economic opportunities to its residents, but pressures to alter land use and land cover are great. Following the direction in the Highlands Conservation Act of 2004, PL 108-421, the Forest Service is responsible for expanding the New York – New Jersey Highlands Regional Study: 2002 Update to cover the Highlands in Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The update will assess the region’s natural resources, identify lands that have high conservation value, analyze the effects of land use change on resources, and develop strategies for conserving them.

Key Issues:

- Conserve landscape character (Northeastern Area [NA] Strategic Plan, Obj. 1.A.)
- Protect water quality (NA Strategic Plan, Obj. 1.D.)
- Conserve the landscape for wildlife, rare plants, and environmental quality (NA Strategic Plan, Obj. 1.A.)
- Sustain important forest components to maintain forest health and ecosystem services (NA Strategic Plan, Obj. 1.A.)
- Retain working forests and farms to ensure economic viability and livability (NA Strategic Plan, Obj. 1.B., 2.A.)
- Provide appropriate recreational opportunities along the urban corridor (NA Strategic Plan, Obj. 2.D.)

Accomplishments:

- Part 1: Resource Assessment for Connecticut and Pennsylvania is complete. Final maps and an interim report are available online. The maps identify areas of high conservation value, a necessary component to qualify for land conservation partnership project funding.
- Part 2: Growth and Impact Analysis is complete and a draft report will be ready by the end of January. The public comment period is scheduled for the spring of 2008. The study team is led by the Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry at the Yale School of Forestry. The U.S. Geological Survey Water Science Centers in Connecticut and Pennsylvania are preparing a regional water budget and streamflow models. A final report will be ready by late summer 2008.

Budget History:

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Source	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
US Forest Service	\$209,510	\$949,905	\$0	\$0
PA Dept. of Conserv. & Natural Resources	\$115,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
William Penn Foundation	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Match: Cooperative Agreements	\$87,602	\$257,826	\$0	\$0
Totals	\$442,112	\$ 1,207,731	\$0	\$0

Future Direction:

- A technical report for Parts 1 and 2 containing detailed information on the analyses and metadata will be complete by the fall of 2008.

- Key results of the report, including the conservation focal areas and conservation strategies, will be shared with local elected officials, stakeholder groups, and the general public. The report will be available in hard copy, compact disc, and online.
- An interactive map server containing the maps from Part 1 of the study will be available at the Rutgers University Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis (CRSSA). These maps will be part of the existing New York and New Jersey Highlands map set at Rutgers CRSSA.

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