

## 2005 NEFA Forum Advocates Ongoing Mechanism

### The Challenge

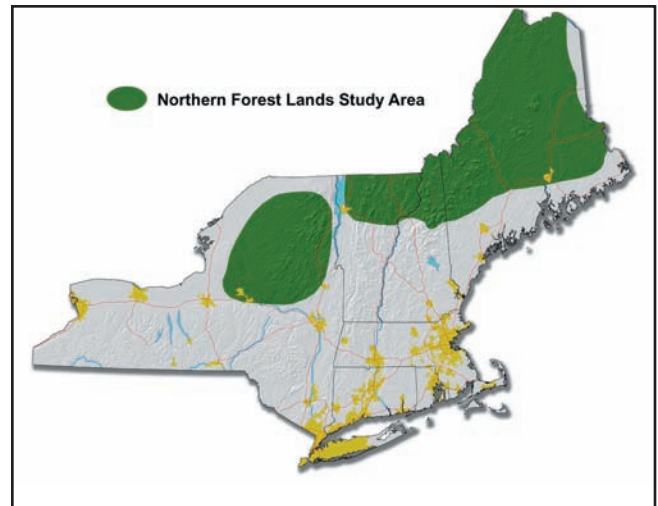
The 26-million-acre Northern Forest, covering northern Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York, is one of the largest tracts of contiguous forest land in North America. So large, it can be seen from orbit with the naked eye, it is a precious environmental and cultural commodity with a character and values all its own. It is the largest single source of local timber in the Northeastern United States, as well as a critical habitat for several species of endangered animals. The Northern Forest's associated industries generate nearly \$20 billion in revenues annually and provide thousands of jobs for the rural communities that dot the landscape. Managing, or even keeping tabs on, something as massive as the Northern Forest is a Herculean task.

### The Solution

In 1994 the Northern Forest Lands Council formed to research the environmental and economic health of the forest, identify key issues and recommend solutions to emerging problems. The council published its results and 37 recommendations in the landmark report *Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest* later that year. Afterward, the council disbanded. No provision remained to recheck changing forest conditions or to implement the recommendations.

Ten years later, the Northeastern State Foresters Association (NEFA) established the 2005 Forum to take another look at the issues as they are today, develop and prioritize new recommendations, and achieve buy-in for follow-through actions. The USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area helped fund the forum through a \$29,900 grant and actively participated in the discussions.

*Industries associated with the Northern Forest generate about \$20 billion in revenues each year.*



The Northern Forest covers an area larger than the States of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined.

### Resulting Benefits

The 2005 Forum focused its four recommendations on today's most prevalent ongoing and emerging issues. It recommended that public and private resources be focused to:

- Support community economic development.
- Help landowners be good forest stewards.
- Promote managed public recreational access to private lands.
- Urge governors to establish an ongoing mechanism to review and address Northern Forest challenges.

### Sharing Success

Governors John Baldacci of Maine, John Lynch of New Hampshire, James Douglas of Vermont, and George Pataki of New York later endorsed the study and its recommendations. Their endorsements reinforced the report's credibility and provided gubernatorial backing for its findings. This served as an important step forward, as implementing the recommendations in the years ahead will require the support of all four state governments to be successful.



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