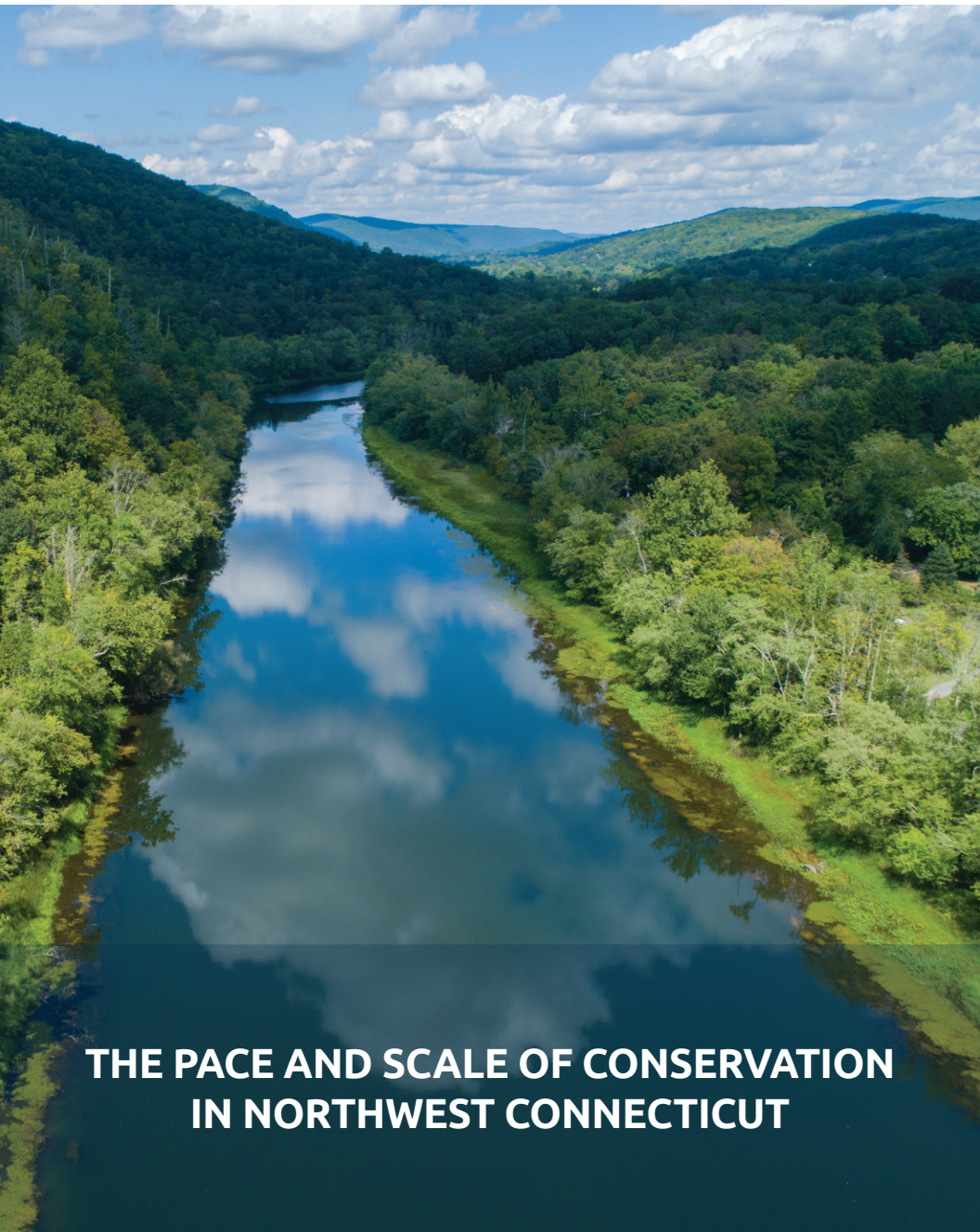




# Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

PROTECTING LAND AND WATER FOR PEOPLE, FOR WILDLIFE, FOREVER.



**THE PACE AND SCALE OF CONSERVATION  
IN NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT**

## Northwest Connecticut is a place of regional conservation significance.

The region's forests and cold-water streams provide habitat for more than 320 rare species. Our vast, natural lands are among the most complex and climate resilient in Southern New England and are centrally located in a multi-state wildlife corridor.

Connecticut has a goal of protecting 21% of its lands and waters by 2023. Of this, the State intends to protect 10% and asks land trusts and other partners to protect 11%. However, the State faces several significant challenges to meeting this goal. Based on the State's current pace of land acquisition, it will take at least 65 more years to meet its 10% goal. In addition, Connecticut ranks at or near the bottom for conservation funding in New England, and our land values are among the most expensive in the country.

As a result, the essential work and challenge of conservation fall heavily on Connecticut's land trusts. In Northwest Connecticut, 22 private, nonprofit land trusts will largely determine the region's conservation future. Together, we protect the lands and waters on which future generations of people and wildlife will depend. This report summarizes our collective conservation efforts.



## OUR LIVING LANDSCAPE

*Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people*

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Connected Forests:** Northwest Connecticut is a critical nexus point within a multistate habitat corridor known as the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage. This region includes the most intact forest ecosystem in Southern New England, with an estimated 75 percent forest cover.

**Critical Habitat:** Northwest Connecticut's rolling hills and valleys create a complex variety of habitats, recognized for their climate resiliency. Safeguarding these essential lands will support species as they adapt to a warming climate.

**Clean Water:** High-quality waters, including the Housatonic River and its cold-water tributaries, help connect this ecological system. Protecting forested land around these resources maintains water quality and keeps temperatures cool for rare, native species.

**Protected Species:** Together, the lands and waters of Litchfield County provide habitat for 320 rare, endangered, and threatened species. Connecting conserved lands protects these rare species and allows them to move safely across the region.

## ASSESSING THE PACE AND SCALE OF CONSERVATION

To assess the pace and scale of conservation in Northwest Connecticut and our progress toward state and federal conservation goals, in September 2021, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC) surveyed the region's land trusts to aggregate transaction data between 2010 and 2020. NCLC compiled this and its own data to measure the collective conservation impact. The key findings are below.

## KEY FINDINGS

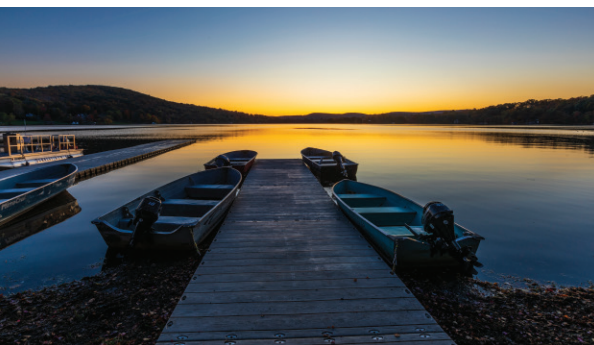
- During 2010–2020, participating land trusts protected 9,772 acres in 253 transactions.
- The average transaction is 39 acres.
- The pace of conservation increased during the lookback period. During 2010-2020, land trusts averaged 23 transactions per year. However, in the last five years, the average number of transactions increased to 28 per year.
- In 2020, land trusts in Northwest Connecticut permanently protected a total of 1,406 acres.

### All Reporting Land Trusts

Year	Total Conservation Transactions	Total Acres Conserved	Easement Transactions	Easement Acres	Fee Transactions	Fee Acres
2010	19	875.9	9	469.7	10	406.2
2011	20	854.9	11	565.1	9	289.9
2012	12	371.9	7	244	5	128
2013	25	1181.4	14	423.9	11	757.5
2014	29	997.5	10	309.1	19	688.4
2015	10	147.5	2	39.7	8	107.8
2016	27	1131.4	11	302.4	16	829.1
2017	30	958.3	8	249.6	22	708.7
2018	26	1038.3	8	353.3	18	684.9
2019	25	808.2	8	333.8	17	474.4
2020	30	1406.2	12	532.1	18	874.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>9771.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3822.7</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>5949.1</b>
<b>Avg/Year</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>888.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>347.5</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>540.8</b>
<b>Avg Acres/Transaction</b>		<b>38.6</b>		<b>38.2</b>		<b>38.9</b>

### ALL LAND TRUSTS LAST 5 YEARS (2016-2020)

Year	Total Conservation Transactions	Total Acres Conserved	Easement Transactions	Easement Acres	Fee Transactions	Fee Acres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>5,342.4</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1,771.2</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>3,571.2</b>
<b>Avg/Year</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>1,068.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>354.2</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>714.2</b>
<b>Avg Acres/Transaction</b>		<b>38.7</b>		<b>37.7</b>		<b>39.2</b>



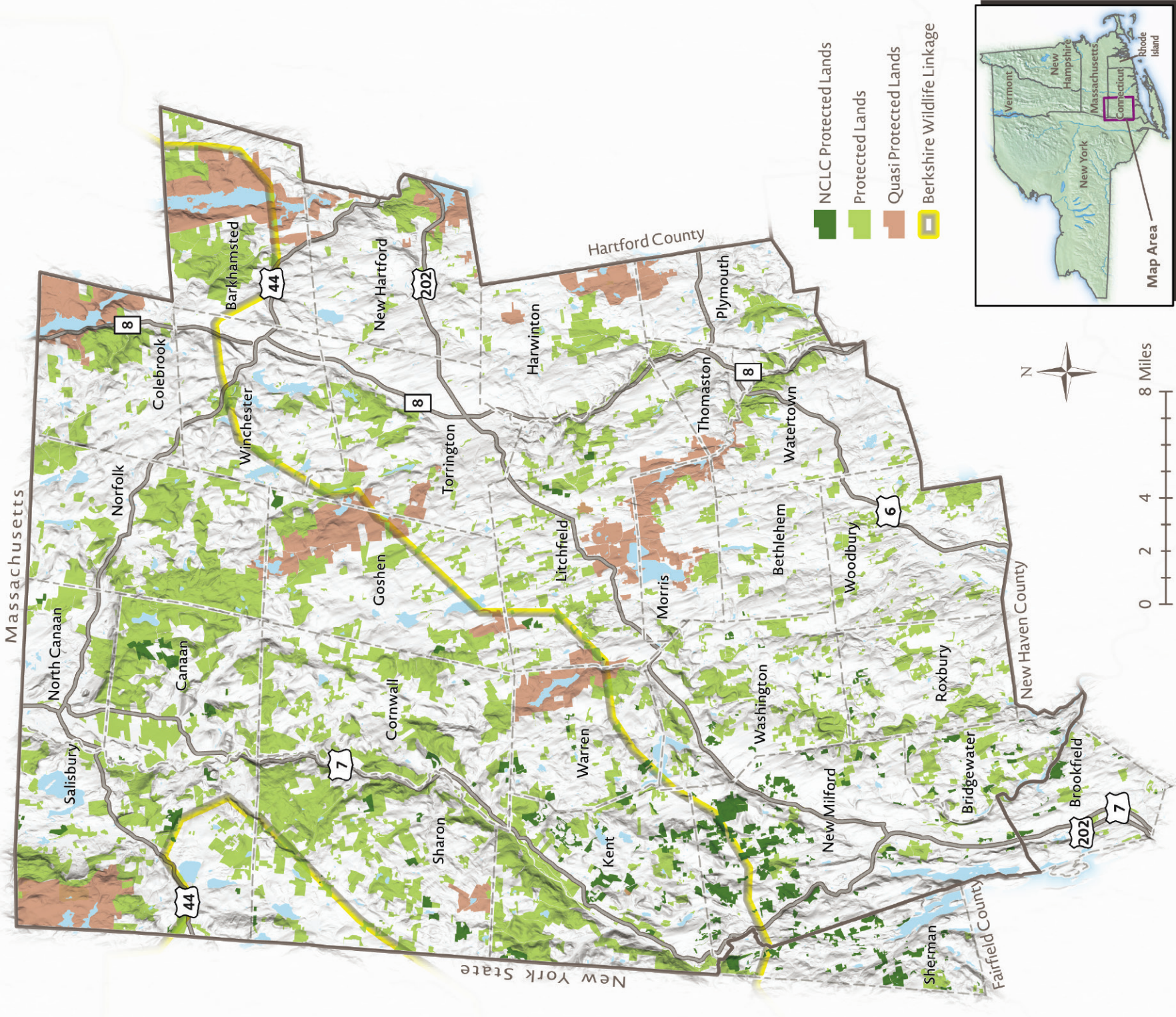




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# Conservation Landscape







## ASSESSING NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT FOR 30 x 30

30 x 30 is a global conservation goal of protecting 30% of the earth's lands and waters by 2030. It has been adopted by 90 countries worldwide and the Biden administration. Based on Northwest Connecticut's existing permanently protected land and the current pace of land acquisition in the region (Litchfield County plus Sherman and Brookfield), if no additional investments are made, it will take approximately 44 years to reach 30% protected.

- Total Land Area in Northwest Connecticut: 632,771 acres
- Total Protected Land: 143,066 acres
- Total Percent Protected: 22.61%
- 30 x 30 Goal: 189,831 acres
- **Acres Remaining to Protect to Reach 30 x 30 (30%): 46,765 acres**

## QUASI-PROTECTED LANDS

During NCLC's analysis, we considered a category of land we call quasi-protected. This category includes: (1) natural lands and waters with statutory limits on sale and conversion, such as water company lands, and (2) lands owned by non-land trusts primarily for conservation or outdoor recreation.

- Total Currently Protected Lands  
143,066 acres
- Total Quasi-Protected Lands  
39,090 acres
- Total acres: 182,156 acres

Including quasi-protected lands, the percentage of protected lands in NCLC's region increases to 28.79%. If the region's land trusts continue to collectively protect 1,000 acres each year our region will reach 30% protected and quasi-protected by 2030. This demonstrates the significance of quasi-protected lands to the region. However, quasi-protected lands are not permanently protected.

## CONCLUSION

The private, nonprofit land trusts of Northwest Connecticut fulfill an essential conservation role. The region's land trusts are instrumental to the state's achievement of its conservation priorities and have collectively protected an extraordinary 10,000 acres of forests, farms, and natural waters in the last 10 years. However, with only existing investment levels, the region will not achieve 30 x 30 without also ensuring the permanent protection of its quasi-protected lands.

## ABOUT US

Founded in 1965, NCLC is Connecticut's largest land trust. As a guardian of natural and working lands, public recreation areas, and drinking water resources, NCLC permanently protects 13,000 acres (and growing) of vast, connected natural areas in Litchfield and northern Fairfield Counties. NCLC's conserved lands serve a resident population of 200,000 people and include 21 public hiking preserves; 41 working farms; over 3,000 acres of habitat for rare species. NCLC is a proud regional conservation partner devoting 1,500 professional staff hours each year to support our partner land trusts. In 2021, NCLC established a goal of accelerating the pace of its land acquisition.

## OUR PARTNERS

- Bridgewater Land Trust
- Brookfield Open Space Legacy (now NCLC)
- Cornwall Conservation Trust
- Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust
- Goshen Land Trust
- Harwinton Land Conservation Trust
- Litchfield Land Trust
- Morris Land Trust
- Naromi Land Trust (now NCLC)
- New Hartford Land Trust
- Norfolk Land Trust
- Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy
- Plymouth Land Trust
- Roxbury Land Trust
- Salisbury Association
- Sharon Land Trust
- Steep Rock Association
- Warren Land Trust
- Watertown Land Trust
- Winchester Land Trust





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