

TESTIMONY TO THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES  
BY THE NEW ENGLAND FOREST POLICY GROUP  
EMILY BATESON, CHAIR

MARCH 23, 2015

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony today on behalf of the New England Forest Policy Group and the 92 conservation, forestry, and recreation interests listed at the end of my testimony.

We respectfully request an increase in overall funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the Authorized level of \$900 million, including \$100 million for the Forest Legacy Program, \$556.879 million for the federal LWCF, \$100.121 million for the State Grants Program, and \$25 million for the Urban Park and Recreation Fund in the FY 2016 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill. We also respectfully request a minimum of \$5 million for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program, \$34.145 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, \$70 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, \$10 million for the Recreational Trails Conservation Assistance Program, \$31 million for Urban & Community Forestry, \$48 million for the Cooperative Forest Health Program, and \$29 million for the Forest Stewardship Program.

These levels are based upon the established needs of the New England states and in consideration of the demands these Programs face across the Nation. These conservation and forestry programs provide great benefit to communities that depend upon our region's forests and to the nation as a whole. Anything less than the requested funding will further impact these Programs' effectiveness, especially in light of notable funding declines over the past decade. Inscrutably, America is under-investing in its natural resources despite the clear economic, ecologic, and cultural value to our health, well-being, and future.

The New England Forest Policy Group is an informal coalition of forestry, recreation, and conservation organizations and businesses united by efforts to conserve and utilize the forested landscapes that characterize our region. New England's forests are the backbone of our forest products and recreation economies, and they provide other services of incalculable value including clean water and biodiversity protection, climate mitigation, and flood resilience. As the most forested region in the country, New England's economy is strongly dependent on the health and integrity of its forests. New England's forests are 80% privately owned, mostly in relatively small parcels, and landowners are facing profound challenges from rising land prices, escalating development pressures, climate change, and associated threats that will significantly diminish this irreplaceable landscape without the support of the programs we list here.

As the Subcommittee crafts its Interior & Related Agencies Appropriations bill, there are several key points we respectfully request you to consider:

- 1. Overall Funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900M.** Funding at the recommended \$900 million is critical for the conservation of the natural legacy of New England and the country. For 50 years, LWCF has protected our nation's natural and historic treasures and is a vital tool for conserving working forests, wildlife habitat, and supporting state and local parks. It is paid for by a portion of receipts from offshore oil & gas drilling; it is not funded from taxpayer dollars. All six New England states will receive funding for critically important LWCF & Forest Legacy projects if the

requested level of \$900 million is provided in FY 2016. But more than half of New England's FY 2016 Forest Legacy projects are not likely to succeed unless full funding is appropriated.

2. **New England Needs for Federal Land Acquisition under LWCF.** In Fiscal Year 2016, New England's proposed federal LWCF projects are found in the "Discretionary" sections of the Administration's proposed budget; however if the full \$400 million "Discretionary" funding level is not funded, it is likely several of these important projects will not be completed.
  - a. **National Park Service LWCF Acquisitions—New England National Scenic Trail in Massachusetts at \$875,000, part of the Collaborative Landscape Proposal for the National Trails landscape (#17, Discretionary).** The proposed FY 2016 LWCF funds are necessary for conserving and expanding the New England National Scenic Trail. New England's outdoor recreation economy is worth approximately \$43 billion each year and supports more than 330,000 jobs, according to the Outdoor Industry Association.
  - b. **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Acquisitions—The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge at \$2M (#11, Discretionary).** Securing protection of these ecologically rich watersheds and habitat corridors is a top regional priority. The Conte Refuge encompasses the spectacular Connecticut River watershed—a critical four-state habitat corridor and a treasure trove of ecological diversity, recreation, and economic opportunity.
  - c. **National Park Service LWCF Acquisitions—Acadia National Park at \$2.476M (#17, Discretionary).** Acadia National Park contributes \$200 million to Maine's economy every year and supports more than 3,000 jobs. This project will secure an inholding that provides high priority access and protection to the paddling gem, Round Pond.
3. **LWCF State Grants Program—\$100.21M (Programmatic, Discretionary and Mandatory).** The LWCF state assistance program provides matching grants to help states and local communities protect parks and recreation resources. This is the primary federal investment tool to ensure that families have easy access to parks and open space, hiking and riding trails, and neighborhood recreation facilities.
4. **US Forest Service Programs of Special Importance to New England—USFS Forest Legacy and USFS Community Forest Programs.** These two programs in the Interior Appropriations bill are particularly important to New England given our region's high percentage of private forestland ownership and the intense development pressures on these lands.
  - a. **USFS Forest Legacy Program (FLP) needs full \$100M Appropriation to meet New England's needs.** The FLP has protected more than one million acres of forestland in New England since its establishment in the 1990 Farm Bill. Originally created to help address needs in New England and New York, this program has expanded to 53 states and territories while funding levels remain static. New England has an outstanding group of FLP projects in the proposed FY 2016 Budget, including two of the top fifteen projects nationally. FLP must receive the full \$100 million requested to ensure that all of New England's projects are funded. New England's full FY 2016 interests include:
    - **\$3.8M for Big Six Forest in ME (#6, Discretionary); \$1.43M for Whip-Poor-Will Woods in CT (#12, Discretionary).**
    - **\$4M for the Worcester Woods in VT (#20, Mandatory); \$1.35M for Groton Forest Legacy Initiative projects in VT (#28, Mandatory), \$510,000 for Oliverian Valley in NH (#32, Mandatory), and \$820,000 for Arcadia Woodlands in RI (#41, Mandatory).**
  - b. **USFS Community Forest Program needs a minimum of \$5M.** The Community Forest Program (CFP) is a 50-50 matching grant program to help local governments, tribes, and non-profit

organizations expand the region's proud tradition of locally owned and managed lands, such as town forests. In the FY 2014 round of CFP grants, project partners leveraged \$2.3 million in federal funds to secure \$4.9 million in non-federal funding. In our region, CFP grants have been awarded for spectacular community forest projects in Barre and Dorset, Vermont; and in Easton, New Hampshire. Funding the Community Forest Program at the \$5M level will much better match demand than the Administration's proposed level. This program is critical to New England's community character and economic vitality.

5. **North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) at \$34.145M.** The Nation's premier conservation program for wetland habitat protection and restoration is critical to New England. Our remarkable marshes and coastal and estuarine habitats support commercial and sport fisheries and myriad wildlife species. These lands are also important for protecting coastal communities—a high regional priority given recent devastating events like Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy.
6. **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (SWG) at \$70M.** This important U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program provides federal grant funds for developing and implementing programs that benefit wildlife and their habitats and provides core funding for research, habitat restoration, and monitoring under the State Wildlife Action Plans. \$70 million will reinvigorate the program and benefit landowners by keeping species off the Endangered Species list.
7. **Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) at \$10M.** RTCA partners with communities to protect 700 miles of rivers, create 1,300 miles of trails, and conserve over 60,500 acres of open space annually. RTCA allows the NPS to support private conservation organizations as well as local and state governments, usually in coalition, to foster important recreation, river protection, and land conservation efforts. This program is of high value to the populous New England states.
8. **Cooperative Forestry Program (including Urban & Community Forestry at \$31M, Cooperative Forest Health at \$48M, Forest Stewardship at \$29M).** These programs fund landowner services provided by State Foresters and Cooperative Extension Foresters. The proposed funding levels reflect the critical needs for private forestlands as endorsed by the National Association of State Foresters. The programs provide educational services to landowners and communities, and help ensure that our forested landscape remains healthy, resilient, and economically viable. Levels lower than those recommended will result in curtailing of vital services that help New England's family forest landowners sustainably manage their land.
9. **Urban Park and Recreation Fund (UPARR) at \$25M.** The President's budget proposes that UPARR, which provides matching grants and technical assistance to urban communities, be included within the LWCF umbrella and the proposal for full funding. It helps provide Federal assistance for rehabilitation of critically needed recreation facilities and for recreation planning in many New England communities.
10. **Wildfire Disaster Funding at \$2.118 billion.** This funds wildfire suppression to protect the nation's forest resources from wildfires. Our request reflects the modeled levels of suppression through the Interior bill and the wildfire budget cap adjustment to meet suppression needs in FY2016. Current spending levels for the suppression and FLAME accounts will not be sufficient for FY2016 and fighting fires will end up coming at the expense of other already constrained programs. We appreciate the Committee's support of the bipartisan Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (W DFA - H.R. 167; S. 235) and respectfully request that the language be highlighted in the bill.

In closing, we thank the Subcommittee for your continuing leadership on federal land conservation and forest viability matters and for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Signatory organizations represented by this testimony:

Androscoggin Land Trust (ME)  
 Appalachian Mountain Club  
 Aspetuck Land Trust (CT)  
 Audubon Connecticut  
 Audubon Society of NH  
 Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
 Audubon Vermont  
 Bear-Paw Regional Greenways (NH)  
 Boxford Trails Association/Boxford Open Land Trust (MA)  
 Cold Hollow to Canada (VT)  
 The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts (MA)  
 Connecticut Forest & Park Association  
 Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound  
 Connecticut Land Conservation Council  
 Connecticut River Watershed Council (NH, VT, MA, CT)  
 Conservation Collaboratives, LLC  
 Conservation Law Foundation  
 Cornwall Conservation Trust (CT)  
 East Haddam Land Trust (CT)  
 East Quabbin Land Trust (MA)  
 Environmental League of Massachusetts  
 Essex County Greenbelt Association (MA)  
 Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (CT)  
 Forest\*Care (VT)  
 Franklin Land Trust (MA)  
 Friends of Acadia National Park (ME)  
 Friends of the Moshassuck (RI)  
 Friends of the Rachel Carson NWR (ME)  
 Friends of the Silvio O. Conte NWR (NH, VT, MA, CT)  
 Greater Lovell Land Trust (ME)  
 Green Mountain Club (VT)  
 Harris Center for Environmental Studies (NH)  
 High Peaks Alliance (ME)  
 Highstead Foundation  
 Housatonic Valley Association (MA, CT, NY)  
 Ipswich River Watershed Association  
 Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (ME)  
 Kestrel Land Trust (MA)  
 Land Conservancy of Ridgefield (CT)  
 Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative (CT)  
 Littleton Conservation Trust (MA)  
 Loon Echo Land Trust (ME)  
 Lyme Timber Company  
 Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust  
 Maine Coast Heritage Trust  
 Maine Wilderness Guides Organization  
 Mass Audubon  
 Massachusetts Rivers Alliance  
 MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership (MA, CT)  
 MA Woodlands Institute  
 Middlesex Land Trust (CT)  
 Monadnock Conservancy (NH)  
 Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (MA)  
 Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (ME)  
 National Audubon Society  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 Natural Resources Council of Maine  
 New England Forestry Foundation  
 New England Wild Flower Society  
 NH Recreation and Parks Association  
 North Woods Resource Group, Inc.  
 Northeast Wilderness Trust  
 Northern Forest Center  
 Northland Forest Products, Inc.  
 Opacum Land Trust (MA)  
 Open Space Institute  
 Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership (NH, MA)  
 Randolph Community Forest (NH)  
 Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (ME)  
 Redding Conservation Commission (CT)  
 Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (NY)  
 RI Forest Conservators Organization  
 Rhode Island Woodland Partnership  
 Ridgefield, CT Conservation Commission  
 Salisbury Association Land Trust (CT)  
 Sandy River Land Trust (ME)  
 Sharon Land Trust (CT)  
 Shelburne Trails Club (NH)  
 Sierra Club, MA Chapter  
 Sierra Club, VT Chapter  
 Society of American Foresters, Green Mountain Division  
 Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests  
 Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Association  
 The Conservation Fund  
 The Trust for Public Land  
 The Wilderness Society  
 Upper Valley Land Trust (NH, VT)  
 Vermont Land Trust  
 Vermont Natural Resources Council  
 Vermont Woodlands Association  
 Wildlands Trust (MA)