

Session Summaries

2018 RCP Network Gathering
Thursday, November 15, 2018



Session A: 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

A1: Past, Present, and Future Land Use in New England

Speaker: Jonathan Thompson (Harvard Forest). Moderator: Marissa Weiss (Harvard Forest)

Scenario planning is a rigorous way of asking “what if?” about the way the future might unfold. It is a powerful tool for natural resource professionals tasked with preparing for an uncertain future. Jonathan Thompson helps lead the New England Landscape Futures project, which worked with hundreds of stakeholders from throughout the region to define and simulate four scenarios that envision alternative future land use. To build the scenarios the team first researched and simulated the recent trends of land use throughout the region, including the rate and pattern of timber harvest, land protection, and conversion to development. Thompson’s presentation will describe the past, present and potential future land-use in New England. It will show how the New England scenarios were developed and offer a glimpse into what each scenario would mean for the region.

A2: Housing, Conservation, and Social Equity

Speakers: Dottie Fulginiti (Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance), Kate McCarthy (Vermont Natural Resources Council). Moderator: Jennifer Hollar (Vermont Housing and Conservation Board)

The conservation movement and social equity can be advanced by supporting the development of affordable housing in smart growth locations. Learn strategies for balancing housing and conservation on the landscape in service to environmental and social justice.

A3: Northeast Bird Conservation Initiative

Speakers: Sara Barker (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), Hallie Schwab (Highstead/Hudson to Housatonic RCP), Matt Strimas-Makey (Cornell Lab of Ornithology). Moderator: Bill Labich (Highstead/RCP Network)

Would it be possible for RCPs across our region to work together to sustain a bird species under threat and at the same time build the capacity of land trusts and RCPs to conserve and steward more land? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the RCP Network are launching a partnership to help RCP partners who want to do just that. Participants will learn how RCPs can broaden the base of support for their land protection and stewardship activities by engaging the birding community. Birders can use eBird and other tools to monitor and sustain populations of Wood Thrush and American Kestrel, two declining surrogate species. Through breakout group discussions, the audience will have the opportunity to discuss their experiences working with bird conservation with Audubon groups and others and contribute ideas for improving the emergent Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative.

A4: Federal Grants Tailor-Made for RCPs

Speakers: Lois Bruinooge (The Last Green Valley/Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership), Betsy Cook (The Trust for Public Land/Maine West), Sarah Wells (Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust/North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership), Kara Hartigan Whelan (Westchester Land Trust/Hudson to Housatonic RCP). Moderator: Spencer Meyer (Highstead)

This session offers lightning talks by RCP leaders who have successfully used grant programs particularly well-suited to RCPs, including: NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program, USFS Forest Legacy, USFS Community Forest Program, and USFS Landscape Scale Restoration. The moderated discussion that follows will allow time for participants to engage the panelists with program-specific questions.

A5: That Was a Great Meeting!

Speaker: Peter Lane (Institute for Conservation Leadership)

Nearly all RCPs are powered by meetings (whether all partner, steering committee, working group, or committee), but these gatherings don't have to be dull or painful. Boost your meeting design and facilitation skills in this interactive workshop. Good meetings are a vehicle for moving your work forward – they help you make plans and decisions, think together about tough issues, explore and resolve tensions, and build relationships and trust. This workshop will strengthen your skills to plan and facilitate meetings so they make better use of time, are more joyful, and lead to greater impact.

A6: Working Together to Keep Farmland in Farming

Speakers: Shemariah Blum-Evans (Land For Good/Forever Farmland Initiative), Rebecca Fletcher (Equity Trust), Kathleen Mason (Highstead), Jamie Pottorn (Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust). Moderator: Vanessa Johnson-Hall (Greenbelt/Merrimack Conservation Partnership)

Collaborating to keep working farms part of the landscape not only conserves critical farmland, but strengthens the entire local food economy and community. Not sure how your RCP can keep farmland in farming? This workshop will connect you to the partners who work alongside those of us preserving the land to preserve farm viability. Presenters from three different organizations will highlight innovative ways to: address farmland affordability and access, preserve the local food system, connect with farm service providers for farm succession planning, and link senior farmers looking to retire to young farmers seeking land. Together, with this knowledge, we can ensure a future in which local agriculture remains an integral part of New England's economy, food security, and long-term resilience.

Session B: 1:00 – 2:15 PM

B1: Scenarios—Applications and Tools for Land Use and Conservation Planning

Speakers: Jim Fox (University of North Carolina, Asheville), Karin Rogers (University of North Carolina, Asheville). Moderator: Marissa Weiss (Harvard Forest).

A web tool is in development to showcase the future scenarios of the New England Landscape Futures project and their impacts on areas of conservation relevance. In this session we will provide an overview of the scenarios, introduce the tool and its key capabilities, and provide case studies for discussion. Participants will explore their own decision space and together we will discuss how the scenario tool can play a role within that space.

B2: Local Zoning and Regulation for Land Protection

Speakers: Wayne Feiden (City of Northampton, MA), Joel Russell (Land Use Attorney and Planning Consultant), Peggy Sloan (Franklin Regional Council of Governments). Moderator: Elisabeth Hamin (University of Massachusetts, Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department)

Everyone knows that land trusts and RCPs need to work hand-in-hand with municipal regulations. But how? This session brings in prominent regional and rural planners to talk about specific, practical approaches municipalities can take toward protecting land. We focus on how RCPs can work with municipalities to align goals and plans, advocate for good regulations, and create connected, high quality protected landscapes.

B3: Regional, Coordinated Messaging Campaign for Forest Conservation and Management

Speakers: Susan Arnold (Appalachian Mountain Club), Cheryl Daigle (Highstead/Hudson to Housatonic RCP), Kira Jacobs (Environmental Protection Agency/Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative), Robert Perschel (New England Forestry Foundation/Maine Mountain Collaborative), Heidi Ricci (Mass Audubon/Resilient Taunton Watershed Network). Moderator: Bill Labich (Highstead/RCP Network)

Imagine if three dozen New England conservation organizations and a dozen Regional Conservation Partnerships developed a shared communication campaign to increase investment in forest conservation. Now imagine if the 100+ RCP member groups employed the same overarching brand and core messages in all their communication to target specific audiences. They would be nothing short of a regional coordinated communication network. The New England Forest Policy Group invites members of the RCP Network to explore building just that. Audience members will learn about and contribute feedback on potential brands and mini-messaging campaign ideas through small and large group discussions.

B4: Seeing the Forest for the Carbon: RCPs as Aggregators

Speakers: Charlie Hancock (North Woods Forestry/Cold Hollow to Canada), Lisetta Silvestri (Lakes Region Conservation Trust), Sacha Spector (Doris Duke Charitable Foundation). Moderator: Paul Catanzaro (University of Massachusetts, Amherst Environmental Conservation Department)

Some land trusts have begun taking advantage of carbon offsets to finance new conservation projects. But making carbon payments work for properties less than several thousand acres hasn't been viable. These presenters are helping landowners and conservation groups collaborate to pool their carbon. We need your help thinking about how RCPs will help create a system to pool carbon, making payments accessible to more landowners.

B5: Reaching Out in Your Network: Getting the Most Out of Peer Exchange

Speaker: Jill Weiss (SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry)

This workshop builds on Dr. Weiss' previous RCP research and last year's workshop: Grounded and Nimble: RCP Leadership and Communication Structures for Memory Retention and Adaptability. The earlier research suggests that the strength of RCPs was the variation in their characteristics and problem-solving methods. Over the years, through knowledge sharing, coordination, and cross boundary networking, the RCP Network is moving towards shared standards and strategies across the system, and presents some traits of a community of practice (CoP). Participants in this workshop can benefit from resources and tools developed for CoPs to strengthen partnerships and maximize peer exchange. This workshop will explain the benefits and risks within shared practice, explore how to take advantage of CoP techniques while maintaining organizational resilience, and offer an opportunity to participate in new RCP research.

B6: RCPs are Catalysts for Landscape-Scale Conservation

Speakers: Tim Abbott (Housatonic Valley Association/Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative), Laura Marx (The Nature Conservancy/Berkshire Wildlife Linkage Partnership), Nancy Patch (Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation/Cold Hollow to Canada). Moderator: Sarah Wells (Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust/North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership)

In this session, participants will learn about an array of strategies that Regional Conservation Partnerships use to conserve at the landscape-scale by working with multiple partners under a shared vision over time. Leaders from conserving RCPs will pull out transferrable elements from successful land protection and habitat connectivity projects including multi-parcel aggregation, mapping shared priorities, engaging key partners, and creating new tools to finance their work. All will be invited to contribute to a discussion of how RCPs can use these approaches and others to knit together connected landscapes of wildlands, woodlands, farmlands, and communities.

Session C: 2:30 – 3:45 PM

C1: From Vision to Action—Applying Future Scenarios to Inform Local Initiatives

Speaker: Heidi Ricci (Mass Audubon/Resilient Taunton Watershed Network). Moderator: Jonathan Thompson (Harvard Forest)

This session will explore how Mass Audubon has used future land use scenarios to influence municipal decisions. We will discuss how previous scenarios have engaged municipal officials, how Mass Audubon is using the most recent scenarios from the New England Landscape Futures project, and consider best practices for use by other conservation and planning professionals. This will include a demonstration of the mapping tool, new analysis created for future use, and an in-depth dive into one watershed to consider the varied scales at which to engage and the role of regional partnerships.

C2: How Regional Planning Agencies Can Work with RCPs for Mutual Benefit

Speakers: Margot Burns (RiverCOG/Lower Connecticut River and Coastal Region Land Trust Exchange), Stefanie Covino (Mass Audubon/Resilient Taunton Watershed Network), Sam Gold (RiverCOG/Lower Connecticut River Land Trust), Anne Kreig (AK Planning and Facilitation), Dwayne Shaw (Downeast Salmon Federation/Downeast Conservation Network). Moderator: Bill Labich (Highstead/RCP Network)

Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs) working in the same region often have overlapping missions. RPAs help municipalities plan where, when, and how land could be developed and conserved among other functions and services. RCPs of private and public organizations and agencies help landowners and municipalities collaborate with conservation groups and agencies to conserve, restore, and steward more land at a larger scale. Participants will leave with an understanding of how RCPs approach landscape-scale and community-based conservation activities, and how three RPAs achieve their development and conservation goals by working with and through RCPs. We will explore how RPAs might overcome constraints to engage RCPs in pursuit of shared objectives, and all in attendance will leave with an increased awareness of potential new partners and contacts in their region

C3: Northern Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

Speakers: Sara Barker (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), Jonathan Milne (LightHawk), Robert O'Connor (Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs), Charles Tracy (National Park Service/Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge). Moderators: Simon Rucker (Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust/High Peaks Initiative), Dennis Shaffer (Appalachian Trail Conservancy)

This session will feature a brief overview of the Northern Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership's recent initiatives and successes, followed by a panel discussion on the six core conservation values identified by the partners. Panelists will discuss how these core values can be used to reach new audiences, target new sources of funding, and engage partners in new projects.

C4: Get to Know Your Local Water Utility Manager

Speakers: Laurel Jackson (Portland Water District), Marcy Lyman (Sebago Clean Waters), Martha Sheils (New England Environmental Finance Center), Ron Walters (South Central Regional Water Authority). Moderator: Spencer Meyer (Highstead)

Much of our drinking water is filtered by the healthy forests your RCP helps to protect. Come hear case studies about how RCPs can work with water utility managers to fund conservation, create community buy-in, and steward healthy forests together. From understanding how your missions overlap, to getting to know the right people, to designing water funds: these presenters will share lessons from watershed protection programs.

C5: Co-Creating a Communications Strategy from Process to Packaging

Speakers: Mary Ellen Lemay (Hudson to Housatonic RCP), Bryan Wentzell (Maine Mountain Collaborative), Alissa Young (Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance/Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens Partnership). Moderator: Cheryl Daigle (Highstead/Hudson to Housatonic RCP)

An emerging pathway connecting communities to benefit people and pollinators and everything in between... Maps that inspire people to identify, recognize, and protect what they love about their local landscape... A developing podcast series that takes people into the woods as part of a broader communications strategy to draw national attention to a spectacular, largely undeveloped mountain region... This session provides insight into how three RCPs are effectively engaging their target audiences for greater impact. Learn about how they interact with multiple partners to craft effective communications strategies and the inspiration behind particular products to encourage community members to take action. Presentations will be followed by group discussion and opportunity to raise questions about emerging projects.

C6: Connecting the Dots in the Pioneer Valley

Speakers: David Foster (Harvard Forest/North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership) with panel representatives from regional planning boards, conservation community, social service agencies, and other sectors. Moderator: Kristin DeBoer (Kestrel Land Trust/Forever Farmland Initiative)

This session will explore how Harvard Forest's Vision for New England Wildlands-Woodlands-Farmland-Communities could inform and inspire a comprehensive vision for the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts. In addition to regional conservation leaders, representatives from other key sectors will provide their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities land conservation brings to their areas of concern.