

H.126 - Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection

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Windham Connectivity Collaborative

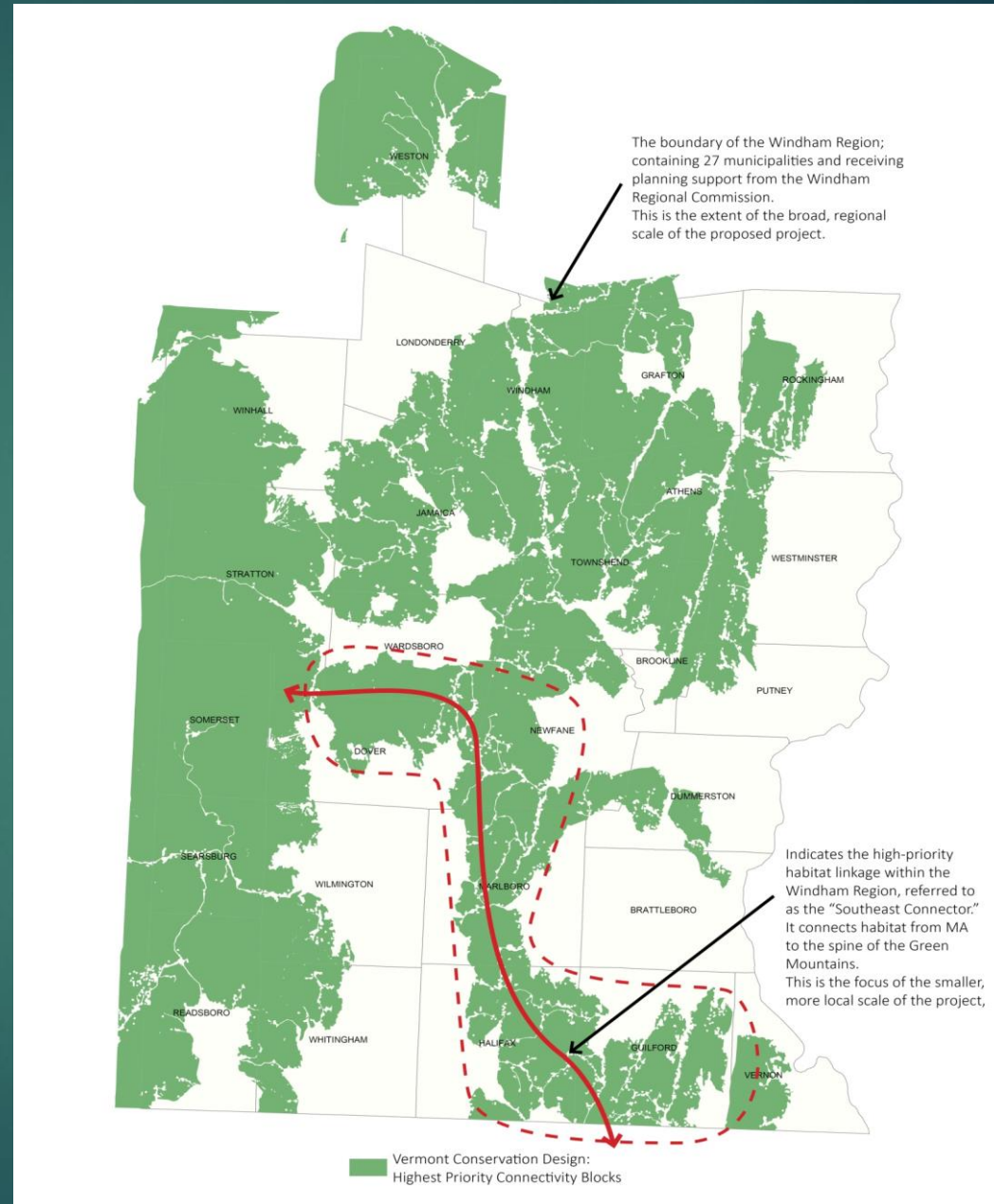
Funded by the High Meadows Fund.

Regional conservation planning will happen in the Windham Region (at 940 square miles), and localized conservation implementation work will be supported in the roughly 90 square miles regionally-significant habitat linkage referred to as the “Southeast Connector.”

The Windham Connectivity Collaborative project has two tracks operating at two different scales in the Windham Region, informally referred to as the “bird’s-eye view,” and the “bug’s-eye view.”

The main premise of this project is that, together, these two operational scales can provide a comprehensive view of conservation planning in southeastern Vermont. We’ll explore:

- How does regional conservation planning translate to local action?
- What local action is relevant to our communities, and how does that inform regional policy?
- By working at these two scales, this project functions in both theory and practice, generating a solid foundation for future conservation, and connecting the many disparate conservation efforts in the Region.

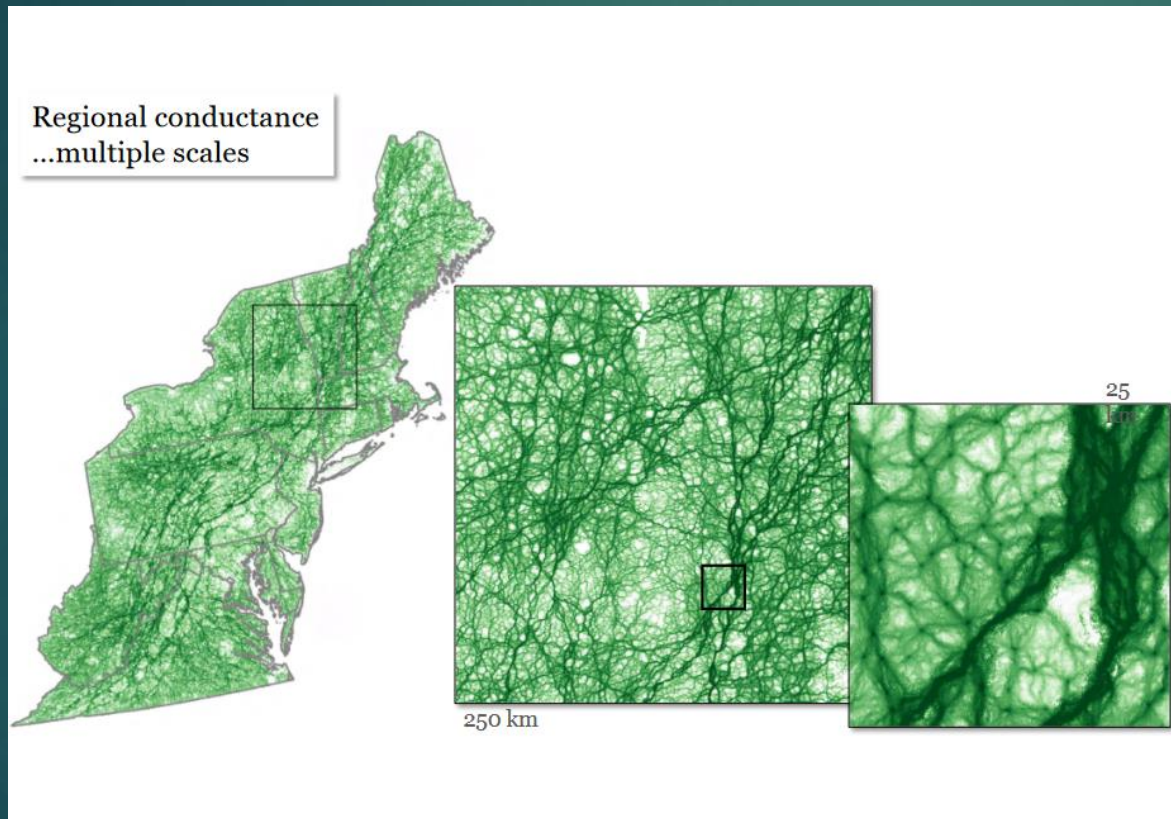




Mill Brook, Townshend



WRC is in discussion with the UMass Amherst Designing Sustainable Landscapes Project to better identify potential habitat corridors.

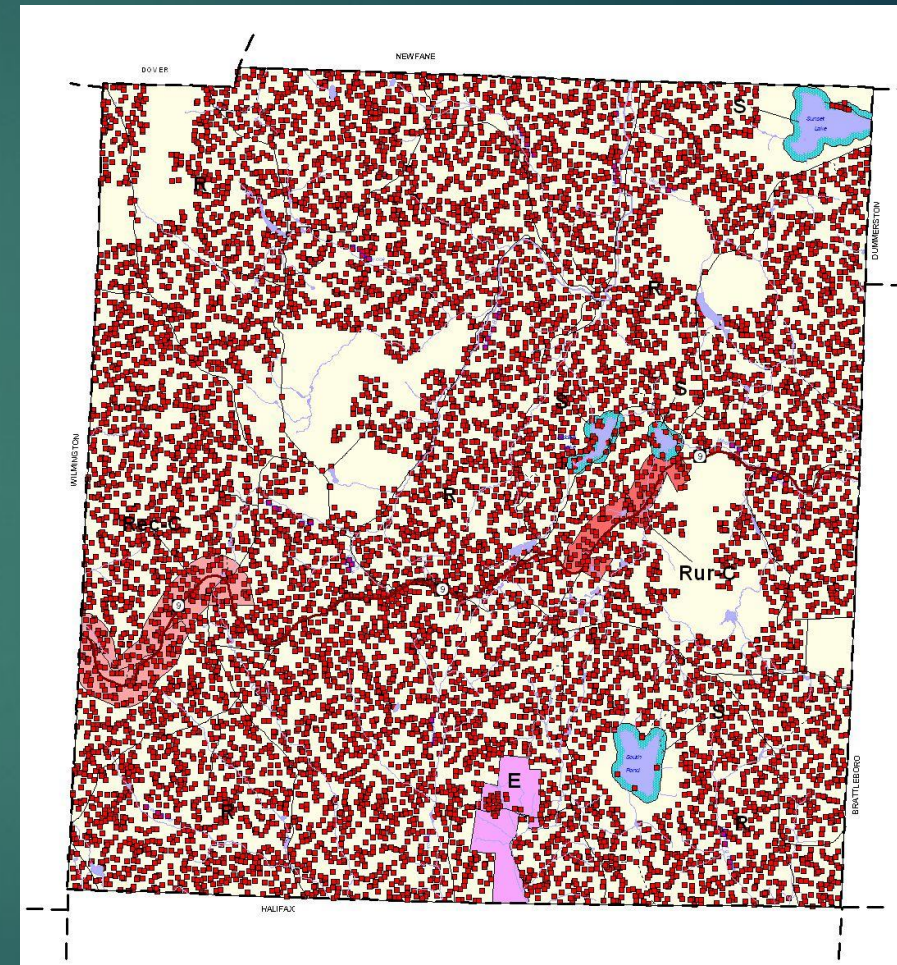
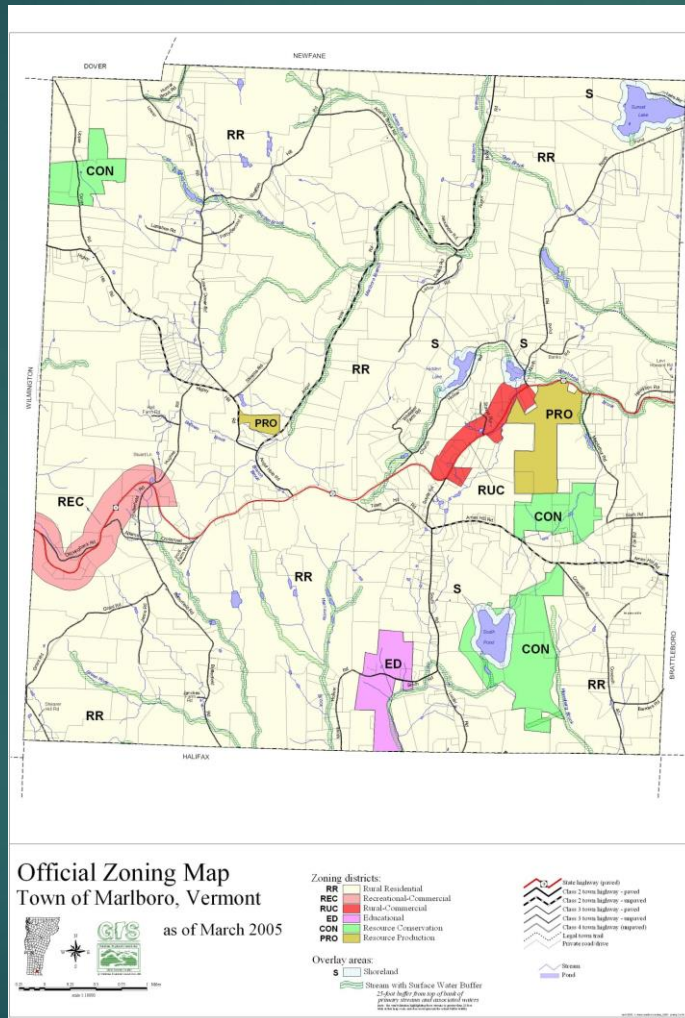


This project overlays stream, river, wetland, and other data, including municipal and state bridge and culvert aquatic and terrestrial organism passage assessments, to inform what corridors may exist and their potential importance. This can help us prioritize field verification, education, outreach, and action.

Local zoning, where it exists, is important, but not a panacea.

Current Zoning

- RR – 2 acres
- RUC – 2 acres
- PRO – 10 acres
- CON – 27 acres
- REC – 2 acres



“Measles map” of what zoning could theoretically allow.

Ability to Achieve Compact Settlement Is a Major Challenge

- On-site systems in existence as of 2007 are “grandfathered,” but small lot sizes and septic-well “shadowing” make any expansion of wastewater or water demands challenging if not impossible.
- In many if not most of the state’s villages without community water or wastewater it would be difficult to add a single new dwelling unit due to small lot sizes and septic-well “shadowing.”
- Similarly, expansion of existing businesses, especially markets, restaurants, inns, etc. is difficult if not impossible.
- Further complicated by frequent proximity of settlements to streams and rivers.
- Takeaway – not only is the expansion of compact settlements difficult, but the retention of EXISTING homes and businesses is at risk.

In the absence of effective policies, regulation, and, critically, infrastructure that is foundational to making compact settlement possible, rural sprawl will continue to be the path of least resistance and the norm.

