

# Open Space Institute

## Resilient Landscapes Initiative

### Middle Connecticut River — Massachusetts and Vermont

#### Facts

**Total Acres:** 488,047

**Total Conserved Acres:** 94,209

**Resilient Acres:** 416,040

**Important Geology Types:**

Limestone and moderately limestone

**Noteworthy species:** Atlantic salmon, southern bog lemming, bobcat, black bear and Jefferson salamander

**Key Rivers:** Deerfield, Westfield, West Rivers



*Southern bog lemming; Photo: Wikipedia.*

#### Contact

**Middle Connecticut River — Massachusetts and Vermont**

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*The West River in Jamaica, Vermont; Photo: Jerry Monkman.*

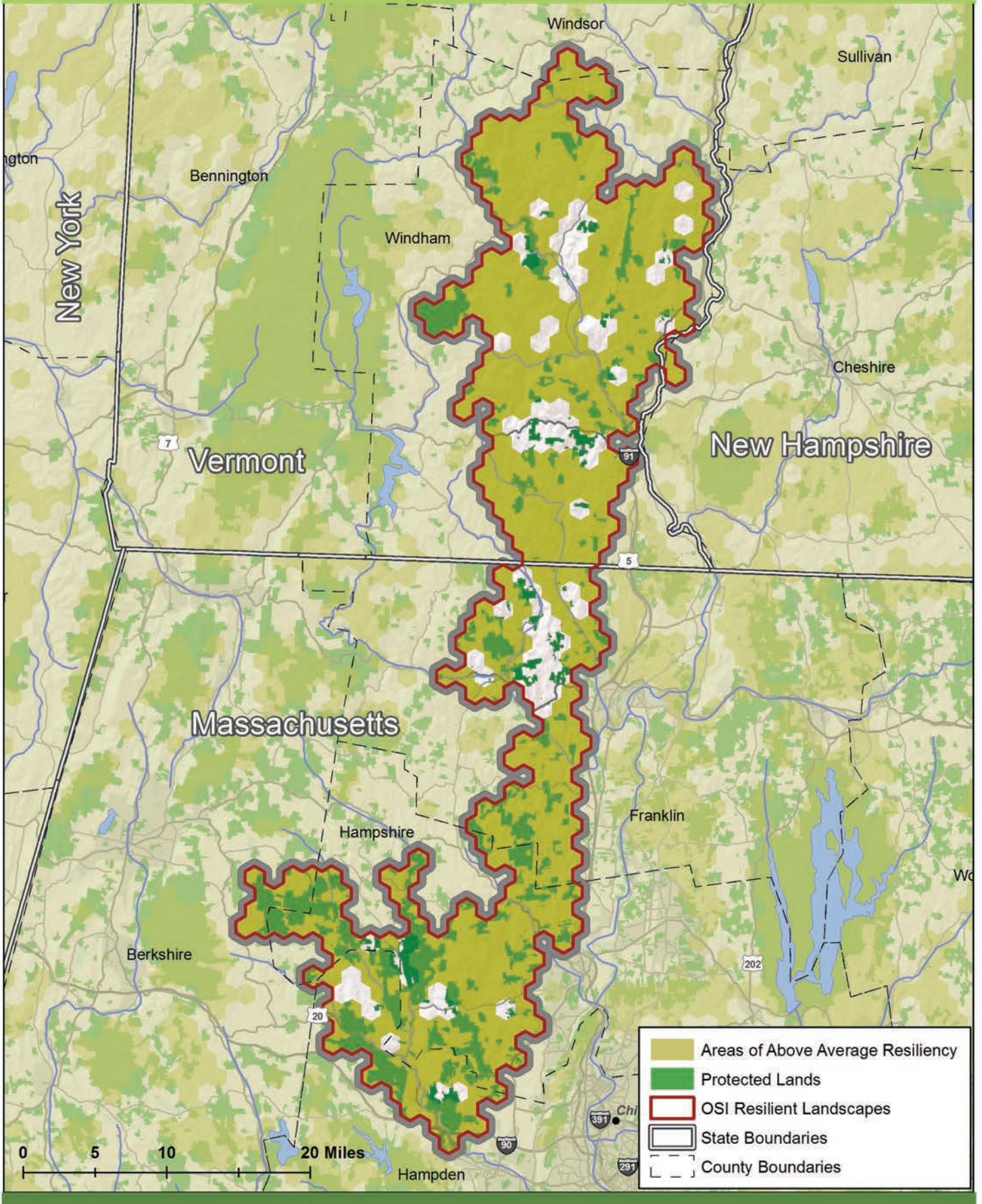
The Middle Connecticut River region is one of four landscapes across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic that are strongly positioned to facilitate wildlife adaptation to climate change, according to the Open Space Institute's analysis based on data from The Nature Conservancy's *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation*. Resilient landscapes are natural strongholds that are potentially resistant to drought, flooding, rising temperatures and other threats associated with climate change, providing habitat for a variety of plants and animals and benefits, such as clean water, for humans.

Decision-makers can use this resiliency science to identify places to conserve today that will likely support a diversity of plants and animals tomorrow as the climate changes. The four landscapes, chosen from among a dozen that OSI evaluated using this new data, contain unprotected climate resilient habitat, strong nonprofit capacity and potential matching funds for conservation. All four areas are eligible for land protection grants and technical assistance through OSI's \$6 million Resilient Landscapes Initiative.

#### What is a Resilient Landscape?

Based on more than a decade of research, TNC has found that sustaining species diversity across the landscape depends on the geology types below ground and the complexity of associated landforms above ground. The more complex the site, the more species will be able to take advantage of the micro-climates available among the slopes, cliffs, valleys, ravines, caves and lowlands of a complex landscape. Local connectivity — or absence of roads, buildings and other infrastructure — is also important since species need to be able to access the complex features. Together landform complexity and local connectivity indicate the most resilient examples of each geology type. At its heart, this science is based on the idea that while we cannot predict exactly how species and habitats will respond to climate change, we can identify places that provide the greatest climatic options for the greatest number of species.









West River, Vermont; Photo: The Conservation Fund

## Why the Middle Connecticut River?

Lying entirely within the watershed of the Connecticut River – America’s first National Blueway – the area boasts rich hardwood forests and clean, cold water streams. This region, spanning the border of Massachusetts and Vermont, lies on the western side of the Connecticut and includes portions of the West, Deerfield and Westfield River drainages. Although development and agriculture fragment the landscape closer to the Connecticut River, much of the larger region remains forested and rural. The area contains significant forest blocks, many important mapped natural communities and several focus areas designated by the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge because of their critical terrestrial and aquatic species. Protected areas are largely comprised of state forests and privately held conservation easements and preserves. Both states are actively engaged in conserving land with an eye to climate change and conservation groups have significant capacity.

A full 85% of the region includes above average resilient sites. Over 40% of the region contains exemplary resilient limestone geology types at varying elevations. This rich soil type, combined with diversity of landforms, is expected to provide refuge to species over time. As elsewhere, these fertile soils attract a mix of land uses, including farming, forest management, and development. Despite these other land uses, 50% of the landscape remains well connected, retaining ability for species movement across the region.



Vermont Forest; Photo: The Conservation Fund

# Resilient Landscapes Initiative

## Advisory Committee

### **Susan Arnold**

*Vice President, Conservation  
Appalachian Mountain Club*

### **Andrew Milliken**

*North Atlantic Landscape  
Conservation Coordinator  
US Fish and Wildlife Service*

### **George Fenwick**

*President  
American Bird Conservancy*

### **Dennis Davidson**

*Former Director (Retired)  
New Jersey Department of  
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### **Dr. Joshua Ginsberg**

*Senior Vice President, Global  
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### **Bill Rawlyk**

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### **Yasemin Unal-Rodriguez**

*Administrative Assistant*

### **Abigail Weinberg**

*Director of Research*



## OSI Resilient Landscapes Initiative Capital Grants

Through the Resilient Landscapes Initiative, OSI will provide \$5.5 million in capital grants within four targeted areas. OSI will award matching grants to projects that permanently protect resilient habitat through the acquisition of land or easements. OSI will solicit grant proposals through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) and, with help of an Advisory Committee, review applications against ecological and transactional criteria. OSI announced the initial RFP in June 2013 and additional rounds will be announced approximately every six to nine months through September 2015. Please go to OSI's website for more information: [www.osiny.org/ResilientLandscape](http://www.osiny.org/ResilientLandscape).

## Outreach and Education

OSI will further enhance the capacity of land trusts and public agencies to respond to climate change through focused outreach and education efforts. We will provide data on resilience and make grants to land trusts and provide technical assistance to public agencies in focus areas to integrate resiliency science into conservation plans. Grants will be made by invitation.

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The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and sustain communities. Founded in 1974 to protect significant landscapes in New York State, OSI has been a partner in the protection of nearly 2.2 million acres in North America.

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