

FAST FACTS

Forests are the natural ecosystem in most of Connecticut. Yet just a tiny portion of Connecticut is preserved for natural processes and biodiversity based on criteria established by US Geological Service Protected Areas Database (US-PAD) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Forests accumulate and store carbon above and below ground for hundreds of years. On Earth Day 2022 President Biden signed Executive Order #14072 to inventory mature and old-growth forests on federal land within a year and develop policies to conserve them:

... Strengthening America's forests ... home to cherished expanses of mature and old-growth forests on Federal lands, is critical to the health, prosperity, and resilience of our communities. ... We go to these special places to hike, camp, hunt, fish, and engage in recreation that revitalizes our souls and connects us to history and nature.

"First Do No Harm" is real. New species and interconnections are still being discovered, especially in old forests and around old trees. Connecticut's forests are still recovering from extensive land clearing by European settlers. Today, "old-growth" forest is far less than 1% of our current forest and has long been listed as a "critical habitat." Forests greater than 100 years are only ~15% of our forests.

Most forests are owned privately: less than 30% are held in the public trust. Our long-term need for and clear commitment to equitable access to nature can be accomplished with dedicated public **"Wildlands"** and **"Community Wilds,"** similar to the successful "Urban Wilds" program in the Boston area since 1977.

INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE

The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC, Sixth Assessment 2022) was clear: we **cannot** stabilize the climate without ecosystem integrity (i.e. loss of functional connectivity from human pressure (development, degradation, agriculture, etc):

"Planetary health is essential for human and societal health and a pre-condition for climate resilient development ... (protecting) all remaining areas with a high degree of naturalness and ecosystem integrity will help protect biodiversity, build ecosystem resilience and ensure essential ecosystem services ... Protection of existing natural forest ecosystems is the highest priority for reducing greenhouse gas emissions." (IPCC, 2022)

Scientists recommend strong protection of 30-50% of land and water by 2030 to address our global crises. In December 2022, 190 countries signed a strong, sweeping commitment at the United Nations biodiversity conference in Montreal, Canada. (<https://www.campaignfornature.org/>). We need to act as soon as possible to preserve fundamental building blocks in Connecticut and work to connect them to regional ecology and migratory corridors.

FIND OUT MORE:

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