

## COMMUNITIES TAKING ACTION FOR CLIMATE!

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New Hampshire's wildlife habitats and the species they support could be significantly altered if the effects of climate change are not addressed - and NH communities are an important part of the solution! More frequent and heavier rain events resulting in extensive flooding, earlier ice outs on our lakes, more variable stream flows, milder winters and hotter, drier summers....all these factors affect the state's wildlife populations as well as ourselves. So what's a community to do? Here are a few strategies from the [2013 Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Ecosystems and Wildlife](#) that communities can work on to help make a difference for wildlife, while also providing protection for people and property.



Protect buffers along shorelines.

Photo by Amanda Stone

**Be proactive in your community planning.** You can include climate and wildlife considerations (such as habitat, flood control, drinking water and stormwater management) into all aspects of community planning - natural resources inventories, open space and conservation plans, master plans, hazard mitigation plans, town ordinances, capital improvement plans, etc.

**Protecting land and connecting habitats** is one of the most effective ways to protect wildlife and their habitats as climate conditions change. Permanent land conservation that protects large unfragmented areas with several different habitat types can help to ensure the long term viability of wildlife populations. Protecting land adjacent to certain habitats, such as salt marshes, allows for migration of those habitats. Connecting habitats with travel corridors helps with safe migration of species and provides ways for them to move across the landscape as climate conditions change. Protecting wetlands, stream and river corridors and the adjacent uplands allows habitats to recover after extreme weather conditions, such as flooding or drought.

**Protecting floodplain areas** is important for both flood control (preventing damage to and loss of properties), and providing valuable habitat for a number of species, such as wood turtles and migratory birds in spring.

**Managing and restoring habitats can help to maintain diversity.** While habitats are likely to change over time (some plant species may change), there are actions communities can take that can help wildlife populations to adapt to these changes. Maintaining "working landscapes", such as forest and timberlands, by using management practices that support wildlife are key to reducing or avoiding habitat loss.

**Installing larger culverts** that allow for both passage of storm flows and aquatic wildlife will be less likely to blow out during heavy rains and will protect both infrastructure (roads and adjacent property) and wildlife habitat. Undersized culverts can exacerbate storm damage by restricting heavy, fast moving flows of water, resulting in significant damage.

**By protecting the upland areas (buffers) along shorelines** (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands), you can protect wildlife habitat and important wildlife travel corridors, while also reducing the risks associated with flooding AND protect water quality. Multiple benefits are good! This can be done by restoring and protecting natural vegetation along shorelines, designating buffers that are of sufficient width to protect wildlife in sensitive areas, and protecting areas in floodplains.

**Control Invasive Species!** Many invasive species, such as upland and aquatic plants and forest pests, are likely to expand northward into New Hampshire as a result of climate change. Invasive species are aggressive by nature and can significantly modify natural habitats to the detriment of wildlife. Communities can monitor areas prone to invasive plants and remove them where possible. Keep an eye on [The Stewardship Network: New England website](#) for updates on volunteer programs to pull invasive species – such as the upcoming [Garlic Mustard Challenge](#) in April-May 2014.