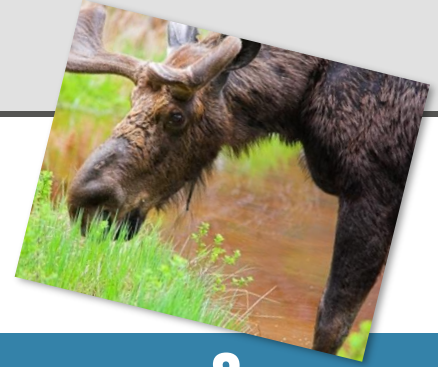


WHAT CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS CAN DO

to Protect Natural Resources in a Changing Climate

New Hampshire's natural resources are facing growing challenges due to the impacts of climate change. This requires local action to protect our critical natural resources, now and into the future. Fortunately, there are a variety of actions communities can take to address these impacts and protect healthy natural resources, with benefits for both people and wildlife.



How will climate change affect natural resources?

Warmer temperatures will contribute to:

- the spread of invasive species, pests, and diseases
- shifting species ranges, resulting in changing species composition and habitat distribution
- shifting phenology and seasonality, altering species relationships (e.g., pollinator activity) and impacting fall foliage and the maple syrup industry
- greater chance of drought and wildfire
- less snowfall in winter, impacting water supplies, wildlife, and winter recreation
- more frequent cyanobacteria blooms in water bodies
- warmer water bodies, especially affecting coldwater fish

Increasing precipitation and more intense storms will cause:

- increased flooding and erosion, potentially causing damage to habitats and ecologically significant areas
- increased runoff into water bodies, which can carry excess nutrients, sediment, and pollutants

Changing precipitation patterns may increase drought, affecting:

- drinking water resources
- wetlands and surface waters, and the fish and wildlife that depend on them
- agriculture and forestry
- water-based recreation

Top 5 Actions Conservation Commissions Can Implement

1. **Encourage landowners to preserve the beneficial functions of natural features**, such as wetlands, riparian buffers, and upland areas providing flood storage
2. **Develop and add climate vulnerability and adaptation benefits to the criteria** used for prioritizing land conservation projects and conservation easements
3. **Control invasive species on town-owned properties** and encourage landowners to do the same
4. **Communicate and build public awareness about climate change** via activities such as local workshops and other events, climate-focused signage, demonstration projects, or high-water mark projects
5. **Incorporate climate change into municipal documents**, e.g., Natural Resource Inventory; land conservation/open space plans; forest and farmland management plans; Master Plan; Hazard Mitigation and Capital Improvement Plans





WHAT ELSE CAN CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS DO?

Land Conservation

- ✓ Assess current and potential future conservation lands for climate resilience and for their ability to protect water resources and store flood waters
- ✓ Pursue funding for conservation and stewardship work, especially in high-risk areas

Management & Restoration

- ✓ Conduct restoration projects to improve habitat and ecosystem health
- ✓ Monitor municipal properties to identify problems (e.g., erosion, invasive species)
- ✓ Implement best practices for land management
- ✓ Identify opportunities to modify culverts and remove barriers to stream flow

Communicating & Educating

- ✓ Host educational workshops and stewardship work sessions in your community
- ✓ Engage students and community groups in monitoring and restoration projects
- ✓ Encourage property owners and businesses to incorporate best available climate science and vulnerability assessments into decision-making
- ✓ Provide information to community members about best practices, flood preparedness, and conservation options
- ✓ Promote water use restrictions during drought
- ✓ Consider implementing a high-water mark project to raise awareness about flooding

Land Use Planning & Regulation

- ✓ Promote municipal regulations that reduce vulnerability and protect ecosystems (e.g., wetland/riparian buffers, elevation of new structures in the floodplain, etc.)
- ✓ Encourage your municipality to consider implementing transfer of development rights and other incentives to acquire or conserve property in high-risk or repetitive loss areas
- ✓ Develop water-efficient landscaping regulations that restrict water uses during droughts