



# *Connecting the Whites to the Ossipees*

*A long-term initiative to conserve critical wildlife habitat in Tamworth and Sandwich*





### One Bold Idea, Many Supporters

A broad swath of land runs north to south through western Tamworth and eastern Sandwich. This rich tapestry of fields and forests, rivers, and marshes supports large and wide-ranging animals like moose, bear, deer, bobcat, otter, fisher, and mink. It connects the wild areas of the White Mountain National Forest's Sandwich Range and Wilderness with the Ossipee Mountains, giving our native wild creatures the space they need to live and breed.

Over the past 40 years, landowners and conservation groups have conserved a few thousand acres in this region. Now there is a new long-term initiative building upon these past successes: the Whites-to-Ossipees Wildlife Connectivity initiative. Many public and private organizations are working with the Tamworth and Sandwich Conservation Commissions and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests to preserve additional parcels, including Audubon Society of New Hampshire, Beacamp Trackers, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, Black Bear Foundation, Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation, Dan Hole Pond Watershed Trust, Green Mountain Conservation Group, Mill Brook Trail Association, NH Fish and Game Department, Northern Forest Center, Ossipee Range Natural Resource Working Group, Tamworth Outing Club, Wonalancet Out Door Club, and Wonalancet Preservation Association.

### Why Connectivity Matters

The Whites-to-Ossipees Wildlife Connectivity initiative emphasizes the important qualities of individual lands within the context of the extended landscape. Large areas of connected open space allow individual creatures to move between populations. Without the Whites-to-Ossipees connectivity, the exchanges that ensure the long-term survival of species are choked off. For the health of these important natural areas and the creatures that depend upon them, this critical landscape must be kept whole.

Human activities, including road use and development, threaten to permanently separate animal populations. A Whites-to-Ossipees connection ensures that the Sandwich Range, White Mountain National Forest, and the Ossipee Mountains remain one large, healthy, and diverse forest block.

### Backed by Science

By using scientific research to identify wildlife patterns and needs, we can conserve land in a targeted fashion, ensuring the most efficient use of resources.

Using the most current aerial photography, research, and GIS mapping, the NH Fish and Game Department developed a *Wildlife Action Plan* – the most comprehensive, science-based overview of wildlife in the state. By highlighting high-priority areas for living creatures, the *Wildlife Action Plan* enables conservation efforts and funds to be focused where they will have the greatest impact.

In the *Wildlife Action Plan*, much of western Tamworth and eastern Sandwich are identified as areas of "highest ranked habitat by ecological condition" in the state. This supports earlier study findings by the Forest Society, NH Audubon,





and The Nature Conservancy, as well as local knowledge and experience. Since 2004 the Bearcamp Trackers have been monitoring the presence and patterns of animals in this rich Whites-to-Ossipees wildlife habitat corridor.

Additional local research has determined that this swath of land currently includes some of the largest unbroken forest blocks in the area and the fewest road crossings between the two mountain ranges. And it extends across a portion of the Ossipee Aquifer, the largest stratified drift aquifer in the state. Land conservation helps protect this water resource.

Currently, this area features a mosaic of working and recreational landscapes as well as tracts of forever-wild lands. Many human activities, such as carefully managed forestry and agriculture, even enhance wildlife habitats.

Laced with paths that invite hikers, hunters, skiers, and others, this corridor has the potential to expand access and recreational opportunities through the creation of new trails.

### **The Impact upon Local Development**

In this area, the connectivity initiative seeks to prevent the

fragmentation of wide, forested areas and wetlands into smaller house lots with paved surfaces that permanently stifle wildlife movement. The goal is to conserve those lands that provide the greatest natural resource benefits.

Conserved land also offers many social and economic benefits. For

### **Supporting Voluntary Land Conservation Efforts**

Working with willing landowners, the Whites-to-Ossipees Wildlife Connectivity initiative develops and helps implement a variety of land conservation strategies that maximize benefits for landowners, area residents, and wildlife.

*Whites-to-Ossipees Connectivity maximizes the benefits of land conservation efforts by focusing on lands of highest ecological value and helping direct appropriate development in surrounding areas.*

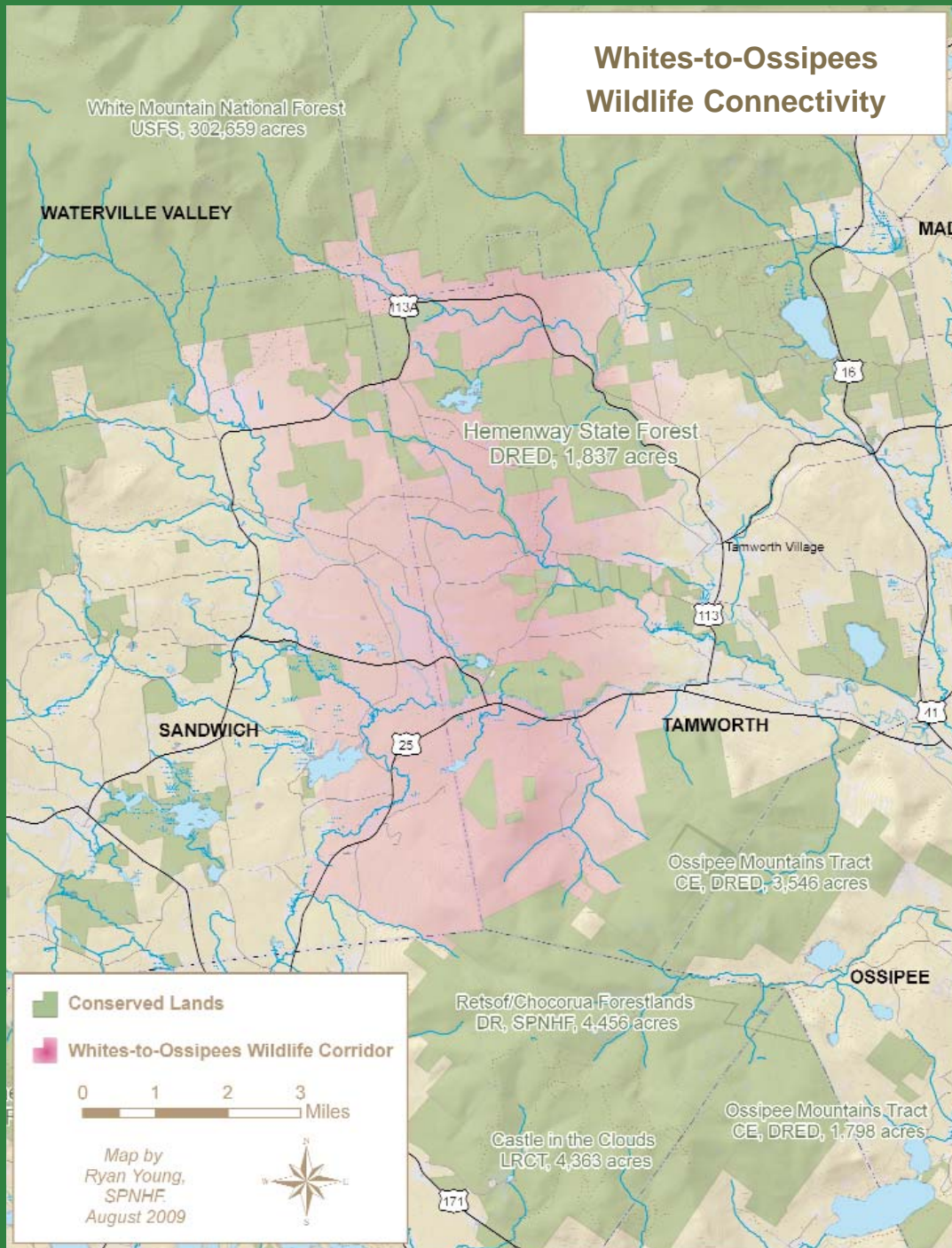
example, a privately owned parcel protected with a conservation easement generally provides more in tax revenue to the town than it costs in town services. The new master plans of Tamworth and Sandwich have formally adopted this approach, urging development in village centers and near existing structures while preserving large working landscapes and wild lands. The Whites-to-Ossipees Wildlife Connectivity initiative supports these goals by using voluntary land conservation strategies.

### **For More Information:**

Tamworth Conservation Commission  
84 Main Street  
Tamworth, NH 03886  
[TamworthConservationCommission.org](http://TamworthConservationCommission.org)

Sandwich Conservation Commission  
P. O. Box 194  
Sandwich, NH 03227  
<http://town.sandwich.nh.us/conservation/index.html>

# Keeping the Connection



*The Whites-to-Ossipees corridor is part of an area of "highest ranked habitat by ecological condition" in New Hampshire.*