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# NEW HAMPSHIRE

Nature is hard at work for New Hampshire. Investing in natural infrastructure, such as lakes, forests, and farms, is critical to supporting New Hampshire's economy. These investments are cost-effective ways to support local livelihoods, preserve working landscapes, and boost community health. With strategic conservation and thoughtful management, New Hampshire's hard-working natural infrastructure can provide even bigger economic benefits in the future.

## HEALTHY FORESTS BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES AND CREATE JOBS.

New Hampshire's economy depends on healthy forests. Forests cover 4.72 million acres, or 82 percent of New Hampshire, and provide the foundation for the forest sector of the State's economy.<sup>1</sup> New Hampshire lost 127,000 acres of forest statewide from 1983 to 2017, largely due to development.<sup>2</sup>

- The forest products sector employs 7,200 workers directly, with labor income of \$363 million.<sup>3</sup>
- It also generates a total value added of \$651.6 million and output of \$1.6 billion.
- When multipliers are considered, the forest projects industry provides 12,800 jobs indirectly, with \$696 million in labor income, \$1.2 billion in value-added, and \$2.5 billion in output.

## INVESTING IN NATURE IS A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO REDUCE RISKS FROM BOTH FLOODING AND DROUGHTS.

**Flooding:** New Hampshire's annual precipitation has been well above average since 2005.<sup>4</sup> Intense rainstorms are likely to occur more frequently, leading to increased flooding, as seen in July 2024.

- Flooding is the most expensive natural hazard in New Hampshire, with total losses of \$200 million from 2000 to 2019.<sup>5</sup>
- Every county in New Hampshire had a disaster declaration during 2011–2021, and seven of them had more than five.<sup>6</sup>

Wetlands (including forested wetlands, floodplain wetlands, and associated lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, marshes, floodplain forests, and peatlands) are critical for flood control by storing and slowing storm runoff.<sup>7</sup>

- The economic value of a single wetland acre is \$150,000 to \$200,000, and the economic value of New Hampshire's remaining wetlands is \$1.2 billion.<sup>8</sup>

**Drought:** Despite increased precipitation, New Hampshire has experienced short-term dry periods, including extreme drought in 2016, 2020, and 2025. Future summer drought conditions will strain water supplies. Farms may be harmed if more hot days and droughts reduce crop yields.<sup>9</sup> Nature-based solutions play a critical role in reducing drought risks.<sup>10</sup> Nature-based solutions include land and water conservation; best management practices for agriculture and forestry; native habitat revegetation and urban tree planting; and floodplain, river, wetland, and riparian restoration.

**Topaz Drive.** Located in Barrington, Topaz Drive is the only road in and out of Emerald Acres Cooperative, a residential community of about 100 homes.<sup>11</sup> The road crossed the Oyster River via an undersized culvert prone to flooding. During the Patriot's Day storm in 2007 the road washed out completely, isolating the community for three days. Partners, including The Nature Conservancy, came together to replace the culvert with a new bridge. The bridge reduces the flood vulnerability along Topaz Drive, restoring safe transportation in and out for residents.

## INVESTING IN NATURE IS A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY.

Protecting New Hampshire's rivers, lakes, and groundwater from pollution is much easier and much less expensive than building costly water treatment facilities. In addition, when natural lands filter pollution, collect and store rainwater, and recharge aquifers, they reduce the operational and treatment costs needed to make water safe to drink. Conserving land within a water supply watershed, aquifer, or wellhead protection area is a longstanding practice in New Hampshire to protect the quality and availability of source water.<sup>12</sup> Land conservation in the Piscataqua-Salmon Falls watershed was estimated to provide over \$40 million in avoided water treatment costs over 10 years.<sup>13</sup>

## INVESTING IN NATURE SUPPORTS OUTDOOR RECREATION, WHICH CREATES JOBS, BOOSTS THE ECONOMY, AND IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE.

Healthy lands, waters, and wildlife are the foundation of New Hampshire's outdoor recreation economy and support quality of life for residents. Over 812,000 (61%) state residents participate in outdoor recreation.<sup>14</sup> In New Hampshire:

- Overall, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$3.86 billion in value added annually and supports 31,917 jobs and \$1.69 billion in wages.<sup>15</sup>
- 60,320 hunters generate \$245 million in spending and support 2,020 jobs.<sup>16</sup>
- 180,400 people participate in fishing, supporting 5,780 jobs and generating \$837 million in spending.<sup>17</sup>

## SPENDING ON CONSERVATION SAVES TAXPAYERS MONEY.

Spending on conservation provides a strong return on investment (ROI) in the form of natural goods and services. It also supports thriving local economies and helps avoid infrastructure costs.<sup>18</sup> A study in New Hampshire found that every \$1 invested in land conservation returns \$11 in economic value in natural goods and services.<sup>19</sup>



For the full report  
*Nature's Dividends: The Economic, Health,  
and Safety Benefits of Investing in Nature.*



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