

Woodland Woes

John Aber is co-author of new report that finds New Hampshire losing nearly 5,000 acres of forest every year

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New England has been losing forestland to development at a rate of 65 acres per day, according to a new [report](#) released this week by the Harvard Forest and a [team of authors](#) that includes UNH professor of

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natural resources John Aber. Public funding for land protection has also been steadily declining in all six New England states and is now half what it was at its 2008 peak, with land conservation trends following suit.

New Hampshire loses nearly 5,000 acres of forestland each year to development, according to the report, called Wildlands and Woodlands, Farmlands and Communities. Thirty percent of the state's land area is currently conserved as forest and farmland. Annual land conservation rates in New Hampshire have averaged around 20,000 acres per year for the past 25 years, except for a spike in 2003 when 174,000 acres were conserved. Groups report that private landowners' interest in conserving their land exceeds available resources. The state ranks last in New England in per capita state funding for land conservation at an average of \$1.46 per person per year for 2004 to 2014.

"Here in New Hampshire, we are especially fortunate to have nearly 80 percent of our landscape in woodlands. This is not only an aesthetic and cultural resource, it is one of our prime economic



JOHN ABER, PROFESSOR OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT, CONTRIBUTED TO A MAJOR REPORT THAT DEFINES A REGIONAL VISION FOR CONSERVING NEW ENGLAND'S FORESTS AND FARMLAND.

resources as well,” says Aber, the report’s sole New Hampshire-based author. “The Wildlands and Woodlands concept blends wise use of that resource for tourism and wood products with the preservation of ecosystem services like clean water and air. The fact that it is almost entirely a private initiative continues the long and rich history of citizen involvement in New Hampshire to conserve and value our forested lands.”

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The Wildlands and Woodlands report is the most up-to-date and comprehensive synthesis available describing regional land use trends. It is the third in a series of Wildlands and Woodlands publications led by [Harvard Forest](#) director David Foster and a team of 30 colleagues, including Aber. Previous

reports defined a regional vision that calls for conserving 30 million acres of forest (70 percent of the region’s land area) and all remaining farmland. The vision proposes that most of the conserved forestland should be managed for wood products and other benefits, with 10 percent managed as wildlands. This third report outlines progress toward the vision; links the protection of forests and farms directly to advancing livable urban to rural communities; and articulates a call to action.

A summary of the report is [here](#) ; the complete report is available [here](#) .

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