



**It's time to make a
promise to the Valley.**

Lee Halasz, Conservation Manager

Photo: Jamie Malcolm-Brown

A photograph of a forest waterfall. The water flows over several tiers of dark, moss-covered rocks. The surrounding forest is dense with tall, thin trees. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and more moss. The overall atmosphere is misty and serene.

Connecticut River Forests: Western Mass Headwaters Project

(aka “Go Big”)

Goal:

West of the Connecticut River
10,000 acres of forest
(50 landowners x 200 acres)
BioMap was our guide.

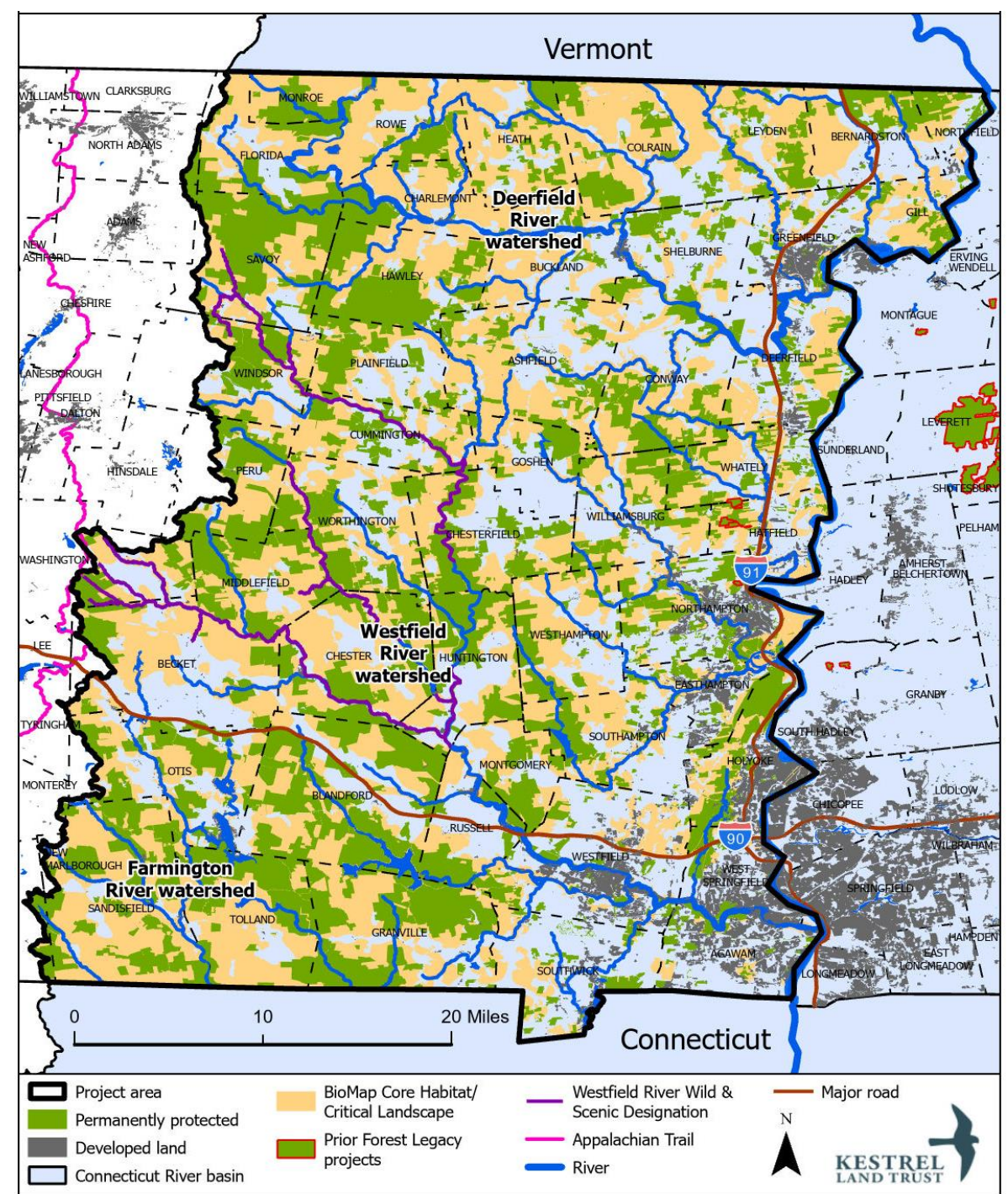
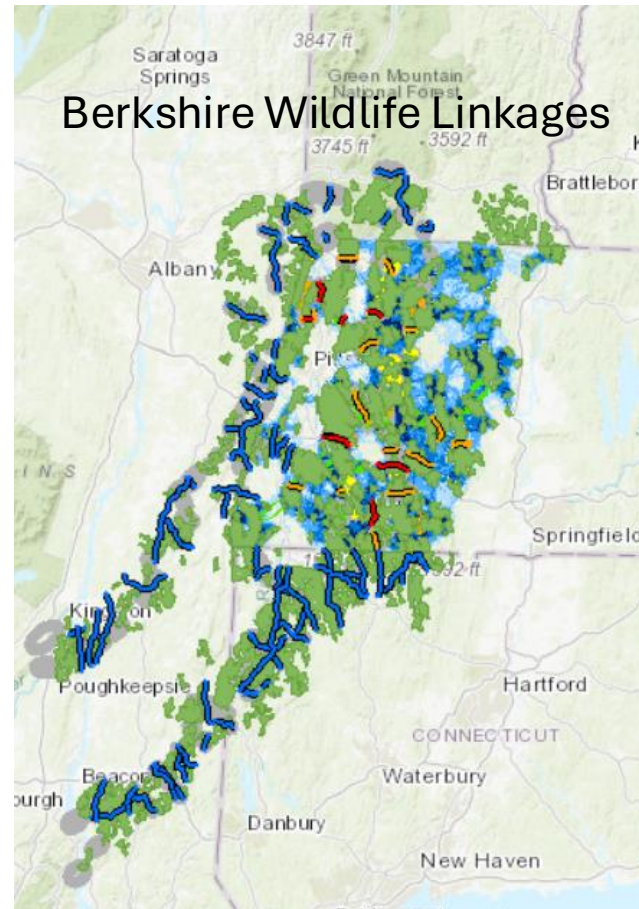


USFS Forest Legacy Program

- 🌰 Up to \$20M
- 🌰 75% of project funds
- 🌰 Government holder
- 🌰 Long timeframes

While keeping in
mind other funding
sources

Project Area



Partnership



Berkshire Natural
Resources Council



NORTHEAST

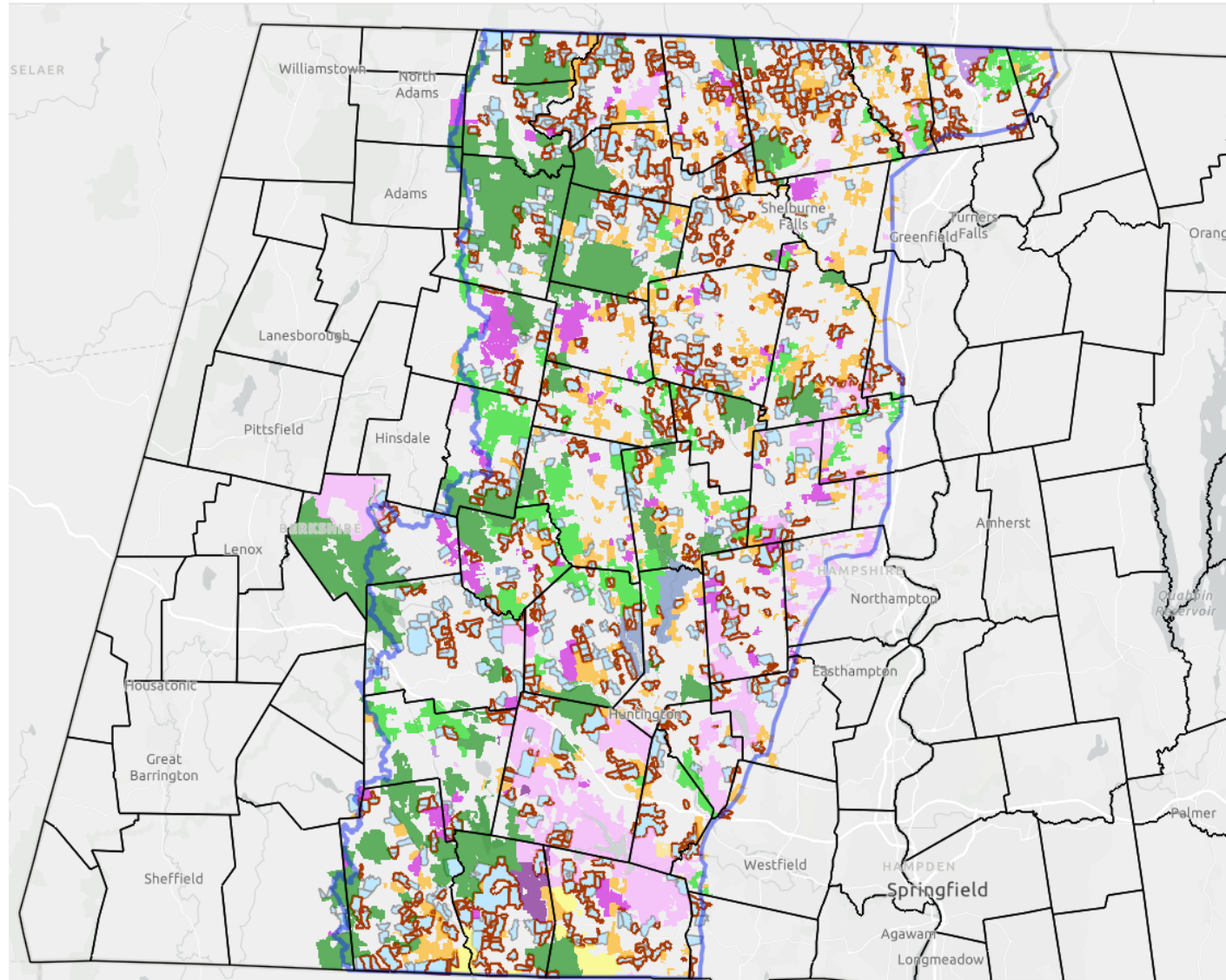


WILDERNESS
TRUST

Connecticut
River
Watershed
Partnership



Parcel identification



Partner input, & landowner allocation

	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	N	O	Q	R	S	U	V	W	Y	Z	A														
1	OWNER	Reason to not cont	Reason to not contact	Lead Partner	DCR Send	DCR Prop	DCR Com	DFG PM Send	DFG PM Prop	DFG PM Com	BNRC Send	BNRC Prop	BNRC Com	MA Send	MA Prop	MA Com	DFG KC Send	DFG KC														
82 M				None - KLT will adopt																												
83 M				None - KLT will adopt																												
84 S				FLT																												
85 S				FLT																												
86 SL		D &		None - KLT will adopt																												
87 SL		D &		None - KLT will adopt																												
88 SL		D &		None - KLT will adopt																												
89 G		ON	Conserving	Red - No letter	Green = Y	Green = Y	Same owner to northwest good habitat values in this whole area. Might not be worth including lots on this side of the road.																									
90 G		ON	Conserving	Red - No letter															Green = Y	Green = Y	Same owner to northwest good habitat values in this area. Might not be worth including lots on this side of the road.											
91 G		ON	Conserving	Red - No letter															Green = Y	Green = Y	Just one landlocked parcel between this and the SF. Also owns land to the south.	Red = No	Green = Kestrel									
92 G		ON	Conserving	Red - No letter															Green = Y	Green = Y	Owens land to the north just one landlocked parcel between this and the SF	Red = No	Green = Kestrel									
93 HE		TRUSTEE	Recent contact	Red - No letter																	Red = No	Red = No										
94 HE		TRUSTEE	Recent contact	Red - No letter				Red = No	Red = No																							
95 HE		TRUSTEE	Recent outreach	Recent contact	Red - No letter			Red = No	Green = Yes					Green = Yes		High Pri																
96 B				None - KLT will adopt																												
97 B				None - KLT will adopt																												
98 IT			FLT said No	Red - No letter																												
99 IT			FLT said No	Red - No letter																												
00 IT			FLT said No	FLT said No - Swift River															Red - No letter													
01 EN		TRATION INC		FLT/MA	Green = Y	Orange =	Would consider CR if a land trust owns it. Large landowner. Note that it's actually plausible												Orange = Green = Sanctua													
02 EN		TRATION INC		FLT/MA	Green = Y	Orange =	Land landowner, would consider CR if one of the land trusts in the area would own it.												Green = Orange = Sanctua													
03 EN		TRATION INC		FLT/MA	Green = Y	Orange =	Would consider CR if a land trust owns it. Large landowner. Note that it's actually plausible												Orange = Green = Sanctua													
04 EN		TRATION INC		FLT/MA	Green = Y	Orange =	Would consider CR if a land trust owns it. Large landowner. Note that it's actually plausible												Orange = Green = Sanctura													
05 M					FLT																											
06 M				FLT																												
07 BE				FLT																												
08 BE				FLT																												
09 BE				FLT																												
10 ST		C TRUSTEE			None - KLT will adopt																											
11 ST		C TRUSTEE		None - KLT will adopt																												
12 ST		C TRUSTEE		None - KLT will adopt																												
13 ST		C TRUSTEE		None - KLT will adopt																												
14 B		L CAMP		None - KLT will adopt																												
15 B		L CAMP		None - KLT will adopt											Green = Yes		High Pri															
16 VC		Recent outreach	Recent outreach	Red - No letter				Red = No	Green = Yes	FEE, wrote the land owner several times with no response																						
17 VC			Recent outreach	Red - No letter				Red = No	Green = Yes	FEE, wrote the land owner several times with no response																						
18 VC			Recent outreach	Red - No letter				Red = No	Green = Yes	FEE, wrote the land owner several times with no response																						
19 R					None - KLT will adopt	Green = Y	Green = Y	Important for connectivity, perhaps just CR for DCR unless lands to the south are also protected. There is a cell tower on this parcel																								
20 R					None - KLT will adopt	Green = Y	Green = Y	Same owner to the east, good connectivity, and CNL																								
21 TC		ARTIN P.		None - KLT will adopt																												
22 TC		ARTIN P.		None - KLT will adopt																												
23 TC		ARTIN P.		None - KLT will adopt																												
24 TC		ARTIN P.		None - KLT will adopt																												
24 TC		ARTIN P.		None - KLT will adopt																												
	Parcels	Partner tallies	Towns # landowners	Towns # acres	Adds	+																										

Parcels

Partner tallies

Towns # landowners

Towns # acres

Adds

+

:

◀

Landowner outreach

February 6, 2024

Dear Landowner,

As a landowner in western Massachusetts, you probably appreciate this forested region for many reasons. Forests support pristine waters, abundant wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, forest products, climate resilience, natural beauty, and rural character. These tremendous public benefits are provided in large part thanks to individuals and families like yours who own and care for many acres of forestlands.

Did you know that the hilltowns west of the Connecticut River contain one of the largest remaining areas of continuous forest in Massachusetts?

You and the lands you own play a crucial role in the health and well-being of this special region. The decisions that you, your family, and your neighbors make about the future of your lands has a profound impact on the landscape.

A collaboration of private land trusts and public conservation organizations is currently coordinating efforts to identify landowners who may be interested in conserving their lands.

Your land includes forest with especially high ecological values. So, we wanted to reach out to you and offer the opportunity to learn more about the potential for conserving your forest.

A growing amount of public and private funding for landowners has become available for forest conservation. In early 2024, we are looking for 50 willing landowners in western Massachusetts who each own more than 100 acres and would like to be considered for this opportunity.

This effort will provide interested landowners like you a way to secure the future of their forested land through several substantial funding sources including the US Forest Legacy program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, other state funding sources, and grants.



These funding opportunities financially compensate landowners to either:

- **retain private ownership** of their land as well as the ability to manage their forests, but to sell the rights to develop the land, via a Conservation Restriction (a legal document that ensures that land will remain forested into the future and not be developed); or
- **sell all or a portion of their land to a public or private conservation organization**, who will continue to care for the forest for public benefit.

We recognize that decisions regarding the future of your land can be challenging and deeply personal. We understand that you must consider your own and your family's goals and needs, including your financial security. These considerations are always part of the conservation process, and it's also why we treat all conversations confidentially.

If you are interested in being part of this forest conservation effort, please let us know by **March 31, 2024**, by returning the enclosed form, or contacting Lee Halasz, Conservation Manager at Kestrel Land Trust: 413-239-4363 or lee@kestreltrust.org.

Once we hear from you, we will set up a phone call, an in-person meeting, or Zoom call with a local land conservation professional. They can help you understand your conservation options and explore how these funding opportunities could apply to your land.

Thank you for all you do to steward your forest and sustain the many benefits that your land provides to the entire region. We hope that you will consider this opportunity to create a legacy for the forest and for future generations. We look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Lee Halasz
Conservation Manager, Kestrel Land Trust



Landowner responses

	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
1	Responded?	Potential for FL? Acres		Fee/CR?	Likely govt partner?	Own Notes	Lead Org	Lead person	Appraisal?	Pre-acquire?	Watershed	L/O letter	gov-ho Owner			Plan B	Land in	House, etc
14	Previous contact	Yes	90	CR	DFG?	Fran Thelma	FLT	Alain		No							Plainfield	No?
15	Yes - email	Yes	117	Fee, poss. CR	DFG	Robi Family	HLT	Sally	Ordered-CR	No	Westfield						Worthington	No
16		Yes	334	Fee	DFG???	Arlo letters	KLT	Wayne				Yes					Washington & Hinsdale	
17	Previous contact	Yes	615	CR	DCR	Reticer	DCR	Jennifer Howard									Peru	
18	Previous contact	Yes	78	Fee & CR	DFG	Levin Abuts	FLT	Alain	Ordered-fee	Yes, ideally.							Rowe	Yes
19	Previous contact	Yes	107	Fee	DFG	jerryhinkle1	KLT	Lee	O'Connor doing	Yes?	Mill River						Westhampton	Yes
20	Yes - phone call	Yes	297	Fee	DFG	202- Talked	FLT	Liam			North River						Trust Adm Colrain & Heath	
21	For sale	Yes	185	Fee	Town???	Tom Je	KLT	Wayne/Tom J		Yes?							Flows, Inc. Granville	
22	Previous contact	Yes	125	Fee	DFG	KLT & Unenc	KLT	Kristin		No	Mill River						arris) Westhampton	No
23	Previous contact	Yes	140	Fee	DFG	KLT & Unenc	KLT	Kristin		No	Mill River						arafin) Westhampton	No
24	Previous contact	Yes	60	Fee	DFG	KLT & Unenc	KLT	Kristin		No							Webber) Westhampton	No
25	Previous contact	Yes	156	Fee	DCR	Desper	MA	Dave R	Ordered-fee - 1	Yes							Florida	Yes
26	Previous contact	Yes	150	Fee	Town???	DFG???	HLT with Town fee sale	HLT	Sally	Helpful, not a h	Not needed						Conserv Westhampton	No
27	Previous contact	Yes	85	Fee	DFG???	Town???	Ann Lee me	KLT	Lee		Mill River						Williamsburg	Yes
28	Previous contact	Yes	450	CR	No, KLT			KLT	Kristin		Mill River						Westhampton	Yes
29	Yes-phone call	Yes	130	Fee	DCR			DCR	Nick		Swift River						rch Ashfield	
30	Yes - phone	Yes	100	Fee	DFG			KLT	Kristin	Ordered-CR	Not needed	Mill River					Williamsburg	No
31	Yes - form	Yes	108	Fee	DFG???	Town???	Rich Land w	KLT	Wayne	Ordered-fee	Yes		Yes				Westhampton	No
32	Yes - email	Yes	180	CR	Town	Cass Proper	FLT	Liam			Swift River	Yes	Yes				Ashfield	Yes
33	Previous contact	Yes	225	Fee	DFG			DFG	Kevin	Yes?	Yes	Mill River					family Non Westhampton and Willia	
34	Yes - phone	Yes	158	Fee	DFG	John Some l	KLT	Christina	Ordered-CR	Yes?		Yes					ily Real E Windsor	No
35	Yes - phone	Yes	342	Fee	DFG	Scot Likely t	KLT	Christina	Ordered-fee - tl	Yes?		Yes					Hawley	Yes
36	Extra	Yes	115	CR	DFG???	via Christina	KLT	Lee	Yes			Yes					Huntington &	No



10,087 acres!

42 landowners

10.5% response rate

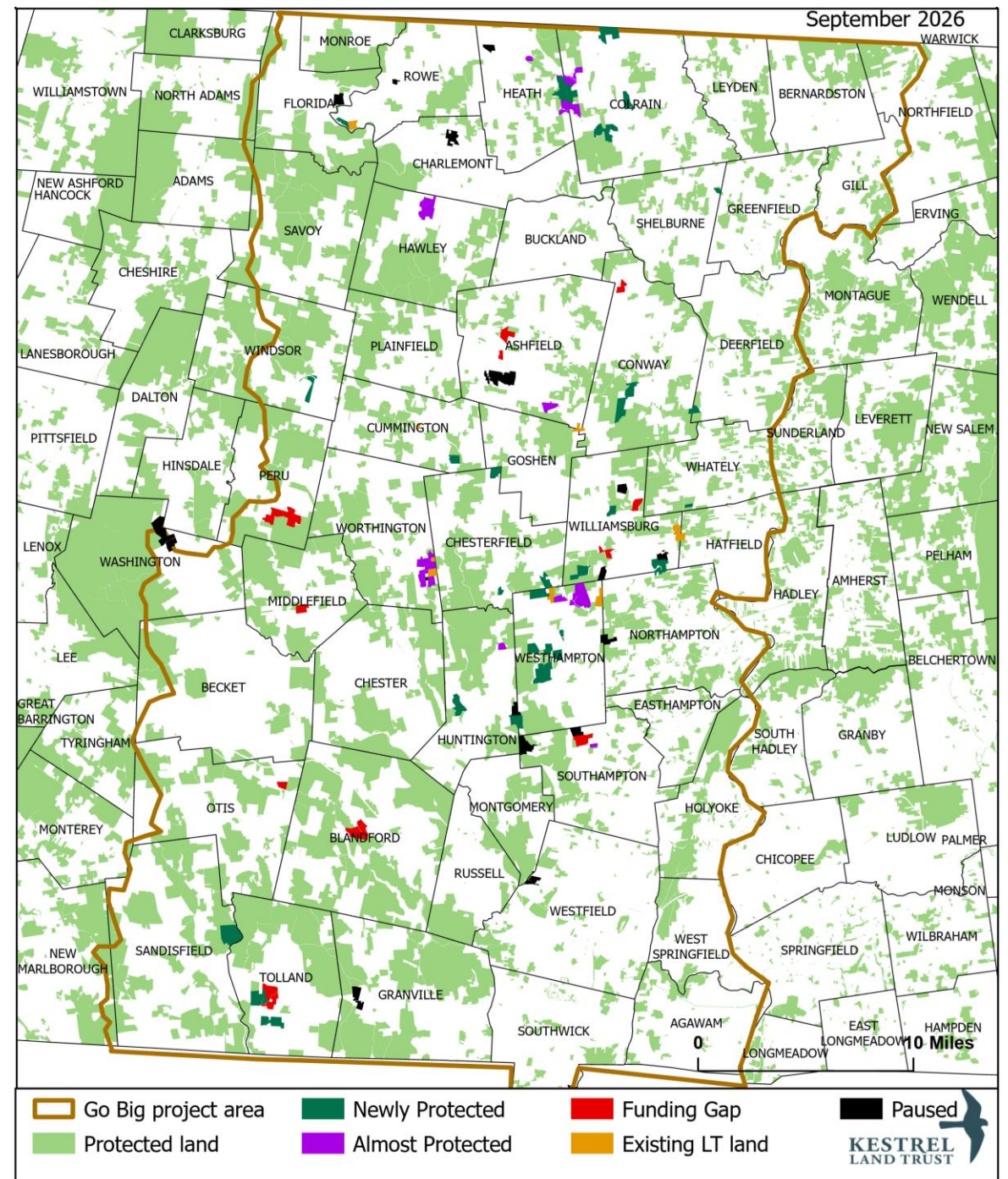
43% of acres are BioMap Core
92% of acres are BioMap Core &/or Critical
Natural Landscape.

The Go Big Forest Legacy Program
application was submitted in Sept.
2024, & again in Sept. 2025...

So, onto Plan B...

Go Big Status

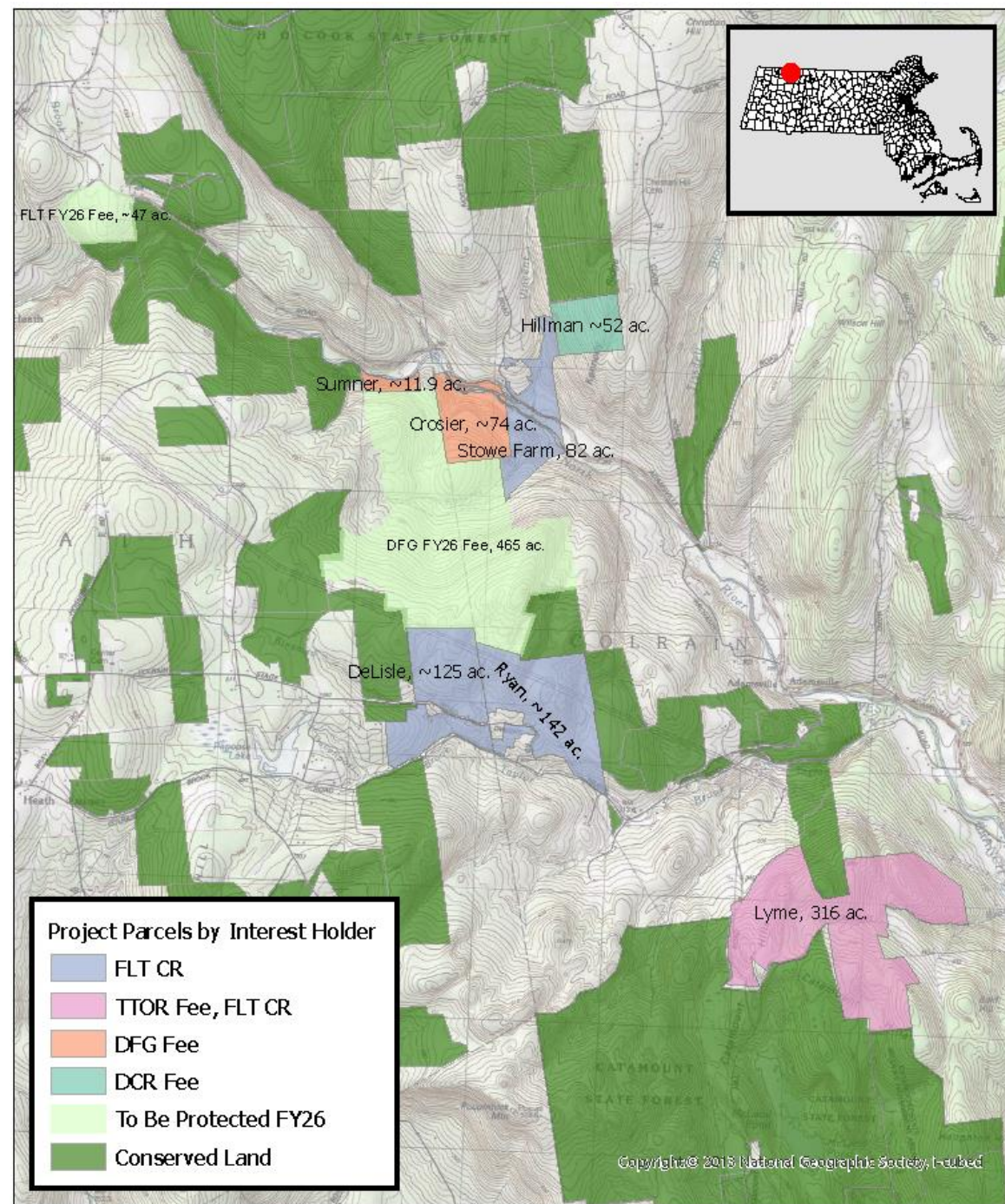
- 8000 acres are protected
- 2000 acres have a funding gap
- 2500 acres are paused
- 500 acres of LT land



Stone Mountain LPG (& more) (Colrain-Heath)

Franklin LT,
MassWildlife,
The Trustees,
DCR,
Mass Audubon

1315 acres



State – Land Trust collaboration

- Pay for appraisals and due diligence from private funds.
- Pre-acquisitions via Mass Audubon's 30x30 Catalyst Fund.
- Know each other's modes of operation, interests and priorities.
- Coordinate grant funding applications.
- Making work more rewarding and fun!
- Protecting more land than we would alone.

Gearing up to do a new round of outreach.

Thanks for listening.

Happy to talk.

lee@kestreltrust.org