

CONSERVING NATURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Hudson River Estuary Program

Tools and Resources from the Estuary Program and Partners

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (NYSDEC) Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell University partner with communities to encourage habitat conservation at the local level to sustain the health and resiliency of the entire estuary watershed. By providing technical assistance, information, and training, the Conservation and Land Use Program offers strategies for "smart planning" that support economic growth and quality of life while keeping nature in mind. Visit <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/oceans-estuaries/hudson-river-estuary-program/conservation-and-land-use-program> or <https://hudson.dnr.cals.cornell.edu/> for more information.

Steps for Conserving Habitat and Natural Areas

- Identify resources. (What do you have?)
- Prioritize resources. (What's most important?)
- Plan, protect, and manage resources. (How will you preserve them?)

Local conservation strategies

- Consider habitat conservation *early* in the planning process.
- Use town or regional conservation plans to guide land-use decisions.
- Take a broad perspective to preserve connected habitats and ecosystem services.



*Hundreds of volunteers have been trained to identify significant habitats in planning and project review.
Photo: Laura Heady*

Conservation Planning Guidance

The following publications introduce habitat priorities and conservation approaches in the estuary watershed. A limited number of print copies are available for some publications by request, or visit our website to download a PDF.

Hudson River Estuary Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework

A regional overview of biodiversity resources, Significant Biodiversity Areas, and conservation strategies.

Conserving Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community

A primer for local governments about a range of tools and techniques to conserve important habitats and wildlife.

Creating a Natural Resources Inventory

A guide for local governments and citizens groups about how to create and use a natural resources inventory.

Creating Conservation Overlay Zoning

A guide for local governments on the use of overlay zoning to advance conservation of important natural areas.

Best Practices for Adopting Conservation Inventories and Plans

Best practices for adopting and implementing natural resource and open space inventories, plans, and policy.

Biodiversity Assessment Manual for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor

A habitat assessment manual written by Hudsonia and published by NYSDEC. Visit <https://hudsonia.org/>.

Natural Heritage Conservation Guides

Animal, plant, and community guides from the New York Natural Heritage Program with descriptions, conservation issues, and other information about rare species and natural communities. Visit <https://www.guides.nynhp.org/>.

Maps and Data

Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper

An interactive online map for viewing habitat and water resource data. Visit <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/lakes-rivers/hudson-river/hudson-valley-natural-resource-mapper>

Habitat Summaries

The Conservation and Land Use Program can provide municipalities with a report and maps of documented significant ecological communities, rare plants and animals, and other available natural resource data.

Natural Heritage Important Areas Data

Developed by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP), Important Areas depict lands and waters supporting the continued presence and quality of documented occurrences of rare animals and rare plants, and rare or high-quality examples of ecological communities in the estuary watershed. Visit <https://nynhp.org/important-areas>.

Large Forest Patches and Forest Condition Index

We partnered with NYNHP to map forest patches at least 100 acres and size and a subset of higher quality core forest habitat. NYNHP then assessed each forest according to metrics relating to forest fragmentation, connectivity, stress, ecosystem value, and carbon sequestration. The resulting Forest Condition Index estimates the condition of each forest patch relative to the other forests in the estuary watershed. Visit <https://www.nynhp.org/forest-patches>.

Additional Online Data

NYS Breeding Bird Atlas: <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/birds/breeding-bird-atlas>

NYS Amphibian & Reptile Atlas: <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/amphibians-reptiles/herp-atlas-project>

New York Nature Explorer: A Gateway to Biodiversity Information: <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/biodiversity-species-conservation/biodiversity-mapping/nature-explorer>

Education and Training

Education and training opportunities are available to increase the capacity of conservation advisory councils (CACs), planning boards, and others involved in land-use planning and conservation in the estuary watershed. Programs focus on building understanding of habitats and natural areas and developing skills in using tools and procedures that support conservation of natural resources during municipal land use decision-making.

The **Conservation and Land Use Webinar Training Series** covers topics including biodiversity, conservation principles, best practices, and tools to identify and conserve important habitat and water resources within New York's home rule system. An archive of past webinar recordings is available at <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/oceans-estuaries/hudson-river-estuary-program/conservation-and-land-use-program/webinars>

Funding

Hudson River Estuary Grants are offered periodically and can support projects that foster conservation planning and stewardship of natural areas.

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