

Two Countries, One Forest: Working Beyond Political Boundaries in the Northern Appalachian/Acadian Forest

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Two Countries, One Forest (2C1Forest) is a collaboration of conservation organizations and researchers committed to the long-term ecological health of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion of the United States and Canada. In our work we are:

- Increasing public awareness of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian region as a single, interconnected ecoregion that spans two countries;
- Promoting landscape-scale conservation as a vital regional goal;
- Providing a forum to enhance collaboration between conservation organizations, policymakers and scientists;
- Packaging and disseminating ecological information to build public understanding and influence conservation policy; and
- Working with partner organizations to design and implement specific conservation strategies.

2C1Forest began in 2001 when a core group of scientists, conservationists, and funders convened in Montreal for an afternoon to address the need to work more closely together to protect and restore the irreplaceable ecological heritage of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian region. More than 50 active participants have worked together since that time to establish a cross-border organization to help win the race against time to protect biodiversity and connected wildlife habitat in a region increasingly threatened by development and pollution.

2C1Forest has three principle roles:

1. Serve as a big picture, cross-border forum to enhance collaboration that includes conservation organizations and scientists at the ecoregional level;
2. Support, encourage, and facilitate the development of science at the ecoregional level; and
3. Promote ecoregional conservation and restoration that is based on science.

2C1Forest has made major advances in creating a forum for scientists, conservation organizations, and foundation funders to work together. 2C1Forest has facilitated the collaboration in a number of science projects that advance the study of the ecoregion and are designed to provide results that will inform the work of conservation organizations

and provide an ecoregional approach useful to them and to foundation funders.

2C1Forest has facilitated collaboration between organizations and researchers to develop science that describes the ecoregion. The first major projects that are now near completion include:

- Mapping the landforms, plants, and animals along with the conservation status of the entire ecoregion for the development of an ecological plan (led by The Nature Conservancy and Nature Conservancy Canada);
- Identifying areas of high biological value and mapping the key connections across the region to identify gaps in conservation for threatened species and ecosystems (led by the Wildlands Project);
- Developing a human footprint analysis for the entire ecoregion (led by the Wildlife Conservation Society Canada); and
- Projecting a future human footprint based on a number of scenarios for development of the ecoregion (led by 2C1Forest).

Building on these studies, 2C1Forest is working to facilitate networking and communication among our members and to support the programs of our member organizations in support of conservation and restoration of the ecoregion.

Networking is supported through a process that begins with facilitating a common vision for the region and supporting that vision with clearly identified conservation priorities. We also work to identify successful strategies and to share them among the partners. Throughout the process there is an effort to expand the network to involve a wider group of participating organizations all supporting the common vision and key conservation priorities for the region.

2C1Forest is leading a communication initiative to increase shared resources among members and to provide support to member organizations. A public launch will be held through an international conference in early spring of 2006. This will center on a presentation of the uniqueness of the ecoregion and be built upon the results of the scientific studies. Efforts will include outreach to governments, industry, international agencies and other institutions. 2C1Forest will work to increase awareness of the ecoregion and the conservation priorities outside the region in order to increase the resources available for this work.

2C1Forest is providing a forum for leadership in conserving and restoring the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion. This effort will be demonstrated by a clear vision and strategy that is shared across the ecoregion; an outreach and education program that promotes the significance of the ecoregion; enhanced networking and support for effective actions by our members; and increasing support for work in this region that brings more resources to this work.

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