Western Connecticut
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Natural Floodplain Functions Plan

Executive Summary for the WestCOG Planning Region

FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) is a credit-based flood resilience incentive program. Communities that meet the established requirements in this tiered program receive discounts on their Flood Insurance Policies for property owners within the flood zones. WestCOG's Regional CRS Program supports communities to enter FEMA's CRS program, stay active in the program, and develop resources to provide CRS credits regionally. The WestCOG Natural Floodplain Functions Plan (NFP) is one of the developed resources, as it provides 1/5 of necessary credits to earn an additional 5% discount on flood insurance premiums.

A Natural Floodplain Functions Plan (NFP) is a plan designed to preserve and restore floodplain areas so that they can best provide important functions to humans. The plan must include an inventory of species and habitats, identify areas which warrant protection or preservation, and provide a restoration plan for any species present. The plan must provide a list of strategies to restore, preserve, and protect natural resources within the floodplain for each community. The NFP follows the model of a restoration plan by providing an inventory of species in need of protection, the impacts of new development on the habitat, and actions that could be taken to protect the habitat.

To identify the inventory of threatened species an overlay analysis was performed reviewing species distribution, habitat distribution, and where they overlap with flood zones. A second analysis was performed to prioritize parcels for protection within the Western Connecticut Planning Region (the Region). This analysis combined parcel, habitat, species diversity, presence of wetland and floodways, critical habitat, and climate resilience data to create an irreplaceability value for all parcels within the flood zone. The resulting plan aims to create a connected network of protected land important to a variety of habitat survival, wildlife corridors and bolstering climate resilience. The irreplaceability values represent a combination of factors which are integral to maintaining the natural floodplain functions and therefore can assist communities to prioritize efforts in protecting natural resources within the flood zone. Below, a map displays the regional results of parcels and their irreplaceability scores. The irreplaceability values helped derive the following recommendations:

1. Focus on purchasing properties or conservation easements based on irreplaceability values within the flood zone

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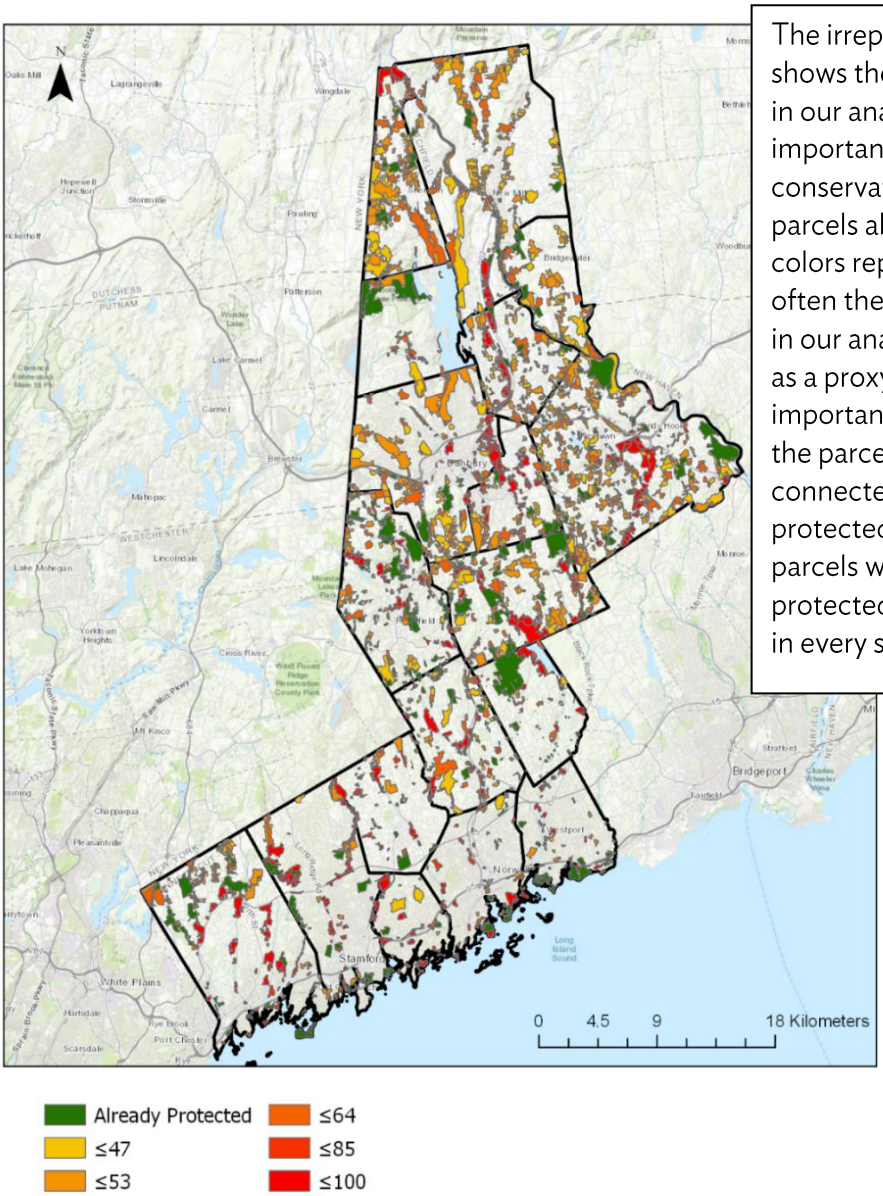
2. Coordinate and update the comprehensive inventory and assessment of natural resources and publish this document for public and private agencies to utilize when making land-use decisions
3. Establish regulations to limit impervious lot coverage and reduce site hydrology for all new construction on residential properties to reduce and manage runoff

These recommendations are expanded for each community (found in the recommendations section of the NFP).

Irreplaceability of Flood Zone Parcels



The irreplaceability map shows the tax parcels used in our analysis of highest importance for conservation, such as tax parcels above 5 acres. The colors represent how often they were selected in our analysis, using this as a proxy for the importance of protecting the parcel as part of a connected network of protected land. Green parcels were already protected and are present in every solution.