This report and associated map provide information about important sites for biodiversity conservation in your area.

This information is intended for conservation planning, and is not intended for use in state regulations.
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Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and The Nature Conservancy’s Massachusetts Program developed BioMap2 to protect the state’s biodiversity in the context of climate change.

BioMap2 combines NHESP’s 30 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). BioMap2 also integrates The Nature Conservancy’s assessment of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems and landscapes across the Commonwealth, incorporating concepts of ecosystem resilience to address anticipated climate change impacts.

Protection and stewardship of BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape is essential to safeguard the diversity of species and their habitats, intact ecosystems, and resilient natural landscapes across Massachusetts.

What Does Status Mean?

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determines a status category for each rare species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, M.G.L. c.131A, and its implementing regulations 321 CMR 10.00. Rare species are categorized as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern according to the following:

• Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range or are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts.

• Threatened species are likely to become Endangered in Massachusetts in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

• Special Concern species have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become Threatened in Massachusetts.

In addition NHESP maintains an unofficial watch list of plants that are tracked due to potential conservation interest or concern, but are not regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or other laws or regulations. Likewise, described natural communities are not regulated by any law or regulations, but they can help to identify...
ecologically important areas that are worthy of protection. The status of natural communities reflects the documented number and acreages of each community type in the state:

- Critically Imperiled communities typically have 5 or fewer documented sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- Imperiled communities typically have 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- Vulnerable communities typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.
- Secure communities typically have over 100 sites or abundant acreage across the state; however, excellent examples are identified as Core Habit to ensure continued protection.

In 2005 the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife completed a comprehensive State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) documenting the status of Massachusetts wildlife and providing recommendations to help guide wildlife conservation decision-making. SWAP includes all the wildlife species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), as well as more than 80 species that need conservation attention but do not meet the requirements for inclusion under MESA. The SWAP document is organized around habitat types in need of conservation within the Commonwealth. While the original BioMap focused primarily on rare species protected under MESA, BioMap2 also addresses other Species of Conservation Concern, their habitats, and the ecosystems that support them to create a spatial representation of most of the elements of SWAP.

BioMap2: One Plan, Two Components

BioMap2 identifies two complementary spatial layers, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape.

Components of Core Habitat

Core Habitat identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Protection of Core Habitats will contribute to the conservation of specific elements of biodiversity.

Critical Natural Landscape identifies large natural Landscape Blocks that are minimally impacted by development. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world. Areas delineated as Critical Natural Landscape also include buffering upland around wetland, coastal, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity.

The long-term persistence of Massachusetts biological resources requires a determined commitment to land and water conservation. Protection and stewardship of both Critical Natural Landscapes and Core Habitats are needed to realize the biodiversity conservation vision of BioMap2.

Rare Species

There are 432 native plant and animal species listed as Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) based on their rarity, population trends, and threats to survival. For
For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).
Species of Conservation Concern, beyond the species and exemplary habitats described above, BioMap2 identifies intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur.

**Components of Critical Natural Landscape**

Critical Natural Landscape identifies intact landscapes in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames.

**Landscape Blocks**

BioMap2 identifies the most intact large areas of predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes.

**Upland Buffers of Wetland and Aquatic Cores**

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers.

**Upland Habitat to Support Coastal Adaptation**

BioMap2 identifies undeveloped lands adjacent to and up to one and a half meters above existing salt marshes as Critical Natural Landscapes with high potential to support inland migration of salt marsh and other coastal habitats over the coming century.

The conservation areas identified by BioMap2 are based on breadth and depth of data, scientific expertise, and understanding of Massachusetts’ biodiversity. The numerous sources of information and analyses used to create Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape are complementary, and outline a comprehensive conservation vision for Massachusetts, from rare species to intact landscapes. In total, these robust analyses define a suite of priority lands and waters that, if permanently protected, will support Massachusetts’ natural systems for generations to come.

**Legal Protection of Biodiversity**

BioMap2 presents a powerful vision of what Massachusetts would look like with full protection of the land most important for supporting the Commonwealth’s biodiversity. While BioMap2 is a planning tool with no regulatory function, all state-listed species enjoy legal protection under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (M.G.L. c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). Wetland habitat of state-listed wildlife is also protected under the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.00). The Natural Heritage Atlas contains maps of Priority Habitats and Estimated Habitats, which are used, respectively, for regulation under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and the Wetlands Protection Act. For more information on rare species regulations, and to view Priority and Estimated Habitat maps, please see the Regulatory Review page at http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review.

BioMap2 is a conservation planning tool that does not, in any way, supplant the Estimated and Priority Habitat Maps which have regulatory significance. Unless and until the BioMap2 vision is fully realized, we must continue to protect our most imperiled species and their habitats.
Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Following the Town Overview, there is a descriptive summary of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape that occurs in your city or town. These summaries highlight some of the outstanding characteristics of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, and will help you learn more about your city or town’s biodiversity. You can find out more information about many of these species and natural communities by looking at specific fact sheets at www.mass.gov/nhesp.

Additional Information

For copies of the full BioMap2 report, the Technical Report, and an interactive mapping tool, visit the BioMap2 website via the Land Protection and Planning tab at www.mass.gov/nhesp. If you have any questions about this report, or if you need help protecting land for biodiversity in your community, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program staff looks forward to working with you.

Contact the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

By phone  508-389-6360
By fax  508-389-7890
By email  natural.heritage@state.ma.us
By Mail  100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230
West Boylston, MA 01583

The GIS datalayers of BioMap2 are available for download from MassGIS at www.mass.gov/mgis.
**Town Overview**

West Boylston lies within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills Ecoregion, an area comprised of plains with a few low hills. Forests are mainly central hardwoods with some transition hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red and white pine. Many major rivers drain this area.

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**West Boylston at a Glance**

- **Total Area**: 8,872 acres (13.9 square miles)
- **Human Population in 2010**: 7,669
- **Open space protected in perpetuity**: 3,621 acres, or 40.8% percent of total area*
- **BioMap2 Core Habitat**: 1,287 acres
- **BioMap2 Core Habitat Protected**: 1,058 acres or 82.2%
- **BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape**: 1,401 acres
- **BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape Protected**: 1,171 acres or 83.6%.

**BioMap2 Components**

**Core Habitat**
- 1 Forest Core
- 3 Aquatic Cores
- 3 Species of Conservation Concern Cores**
  - 2 birds, 1 reptile, 1 insect, 2 plants

**Critical Natural Landscape**
- 2 Landscape Blocks
- 1 Wetland Core Buffer
- 3 Aquatic Core Buffers

* Calculated using MassGIS data layer “Protected and Recreational Open Space—March, 2012”.

** See next pages for complete list of species, natural communities and other biodiversity elements.
BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape in West Boylston

![Map of BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape in West Boylston](image)

- **BioMap2 Core Habitat**
- **BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape**

1 Mile

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at [www.mass.gov/nhspp](http://www.mass.gov/nhspp).
Species of Conservation Concern, Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities, and Other Elements of Biodiversity in West Boylston

Insects

Moths
Orange Sallow Moth, (*Pyrrhia aurantiago*), SC

Reptiles
Eastern Hognose Snake, (*Heterodon platirhinos*), Non-listed SWAP

Birds
Common Loon, (*Gavia immer*), SC
Bald Eagle, (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), T

Plants
Houghton’s Flatsedge, (*Cyperus houghtonii*), E
Dwarf Bulrush, (*Lipocarpha micrantha*), T

Other BioMap2 Components
Forest Core
Aquatic Core
Landscape Block
Aquatic Core Buffer
Wetland Core Buffer

E = Endangered
T = Threatened
SC = Special Concern
S1 = Critically Imperiled communities, typically 5 or fewer documented sites or very few remaining acres in the state.
S2 = Imperiled communities, typically 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.
S3 = Vulnerable communities, typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.
BioMap2 Core Habitat in West Boylston
Core IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.
### Elements of BioMap2 Cores

This section lists all elements of BioMap2 Cores that fall *entirely or partially* within West Boylston. The elements listed here may not occur within the bounds of West Boylston.

**Core 1747**
- Species of Conservation Concern
  - Orange Sallow Moth: *Pyrrhia aurantiago* SC

**Core 1861**
- Species of Conservation Concern
  - Houghton’s Flatsedge: *Cyperus houghtonii* E

**Core 1894**
- Aquatic Core

**Core 1958**
- Aquatic Core
  - Species of Conservation Concern
    - Dwarf Bulrush: *Lipocarpha micrantha* T
    - Orange Sallow Moth: *Pyrrhia aurantiago* SC
    - Eastern Hognose Snake: *Heterodon platirhinos* Non-listed SWAP
    - Bald Eagle: *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* T
    - Common Loon: *Gavia immer* SC

**Core 2021**
- Forest Core
  - Aquatic Core
  - Wetland Core
  - Species of Conservation Concern
    - Brook Snaketail: *Ophiogomphus aspersus* SC
    - Spring Salamander: *Gyrinophilus porphyriticus* Non-listed SWAP
    - Wood Turtle: *Glyptemys insculpta* SC
Core Habitat Summaries

Core 1747
A 186-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.
Orange Sallow Moths inhabit dry, open oak woodlands on rocky uplands. Their eggs are laid on false foxgloves (Aureolaria spp.) where the larvae feed on the flowers and developing seeds.

Core 1861
A 9-acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern.
Unlike most flatsedges, which prefer shores of ponds and rivers and moist ground, Houghton’s Flatsedge prefers dry soil conditions. Habitats in Massachusetts include dry, open, rocky summits, the exposed fine sand of a large esker with heavily eroded sand gullies, and a broad, gently sloping sandplain.

Core 1894
A 41-acre Core Habitat featuring Aquatic Core.
Aquatic Cores are intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern.

Core 1958
A 5,214-acre Core Habitat featuring Aquatic Core and Species of Conservation Concern.
Aquatic Cores are intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern.

Dwarf Bulrush is a tiny, wiry, annual sedge, which inhabits sandy to peaty shores of low-nutrient ponds and lakes.
Orange Sallow Moths inhabit dry, open oak woodlands on rocky uplands. Their eggs are laid on false foxgloves (Aureolaria spp.) where the larvae feed on the flowers and developing seeds.
Eastern Hognose Snakes are shy, slow-moving, thick-bodied snakes that specialize in feeding on toads, although they eat other amphibians or other small animals as well. They require sandy soils in their habitat; both wooded and open habitats are known.
Bald Eagles nest in tall trees along large lakes and rivers. The bulk of their diet consists of fish. Large lakes and rivers also support important winter congregations of Bald Eagles.
Common Loons rely upon large, clear lakes as breeding habitat. They only leave the water to tend to their nests, which are either placed in shoreline vegetation, or upon specially designed nesting platforms.
built for them by conservationists. Their diet consists primarily of fish, and Common Loons have been shown to be particularly vulnerable to human disturbance and toxins, especially mercury.

Core 2021

A 2,962-acre Core Habitat featuring Forest Core, Wetland Core, Aquatic Core, and Species of Conservation Concern.

Forest Cores are the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development. Forest Cores support many bird species sensitive to the impacts of roads and development and help maintain ecological processes found only in unfragmented forest patches.

This 1,701-acre Forest Core is the seventh largest in the ecoregion, is clustered with two other relatively large Forest Cores, and all three are relatively well protected, primarily as drinking water supply.

Wetland Cores are the least disturbed wetlands in the state within undeveloped landscapes—those with intact buffers and little fragmentation or other stressors associated with development. These wetlands are most likely to support critical wetland functions (i.e., natural hydrologic conditions, diverse plant and animal habitats, etc.) and are most likely to maintain these functions into the future.

Aquatic Cores are intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern.

Brook Snaketails are dragonflies whose nymphs can be found in clear, sand-bottomed streams with intermittent rapids, often flowing through dense woodland.

Spring Salamander adults inhabit clean, cold, high-gradient brooks and headwater seeps in forest habitat, usually at elevation >100 m. Larvae are entirely aquatic and largely nocturnal, spending daylight hours buried below the streambed or hidden under stones. Adults are semi-aquatic and spend most of their time under cover objects along the margins of brooks, springs, and seeps; however, they will venture into upland forest during rainy weather.

Wood Turtle habitat is streams and rivers, preferably with long corridors of undeveloped, connected uplands. They also use fields and early successional habitat extending up to 500 meters on both sides of the waterways. Mowing and roads are the primary causes of mortality. Collection is also a conservation concern.
BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape in West Boylston

Critical Natural Landscape IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.
Elements of BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscapes

This section lists all elements of BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscapes that fall entirely or partially within West Boylston. The elements listed here may not occur within the bounds of West Boylston.

CNL 927
Aquatic Core Buffer

CNL 956
Aquatic Core Buffer
Landscape Block

CNL 1000
Aquatic Core Buffer
Landscape Block
Wetland Core Buffer
Critical Natural Landscape Summaries

**CNL 927**

A 110-acre Critical Natural Landscape featuring Aquatic Core Buffer.

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers. One, the variable width buffers methodology, included the most intact areas around each wetland and river, by extending deeper into surrounding unfragmented habitats than into developed areas adjacent to each wetland. Other upland buffers were identified through the rare species habitat analysis. In this way, the conservation of wetland buffers will support the habitats and functionality of each wetland, and also include adjacent uplands that are important for many species that move between habitat types.

**CNL 956**

A 6,156-acre Critical Natural Landscape featuring Aquatic Core Buffer and Landscape Block.

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers. One, the variable width buffers methodology, included the most intact areas around each wetland and river, by extending deeper into surrounding unfragmented habitats than into developed areas adjacent to each wetland. Other upland buffers were identified through the rare species habitat analysis. In this way, the conservation of wetland buffers will support the habitats and functionality of each wetland, and also include adjacent uplands that are important for many species that move between habitat types.

Landscape Blocks, the primary component of Critical Natural Landscapes, are large areas of intact predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes. Pastures and power-line rights-of-way, which are less intensively altered than most developed areas, were also included since they provide habitat and connectivity for many species. Collectively, these natural cover types total 3.6 million acres across the state. An Ecological Integrity assessment was used to identify the most intact and least fragmented areas. These large Landscape Blocks are most likely to maintain dynamic ecological processes such as buffering, connectivity, natural disturbance, and hydrological regimes, all of which help to support wide-ranging wildlife species and many other elements of biodiversity.

In order to identify critical Landscape Blocks in each ecoregion, different Ecological Integrity thresholds were used to select the largest intact landscape patches in each ecoregion while avoiding altered habitat as much as possible. This ecoregional representation accomplishes a key goal of BioMap2 to protect the ecological stages that support a broad suite of biodiversity in the context of climate change. Blocks were defined by major roads, and minimum size thresholds differed among ecoregions to ensure that BioMap2 includes the best of the best in each ecoregion.

This 5,949-acre Landscape Block is the seventh largest of 62 Blocks in the ecoregion. Unlike Landscape Blocks in much of the state that are dominated by upland forests, the upland forest in this Block is complemented by the vast expanse of open water of the Wachusett Reservoir.
CNL 1000

A 6,794-acre Critical Natural Landscape featuring Aquatic Core Buffer, Wetland Core Buffer and Landscape Block.

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers. One, the variable width buffers methodology, included the most intact areas around each wetland and river, by extending deeper into surrounding unfragmented habitats than into developed areas adjacent to each wetland. Other upland buffers were identified through the rare species habitat analysis. In this way, the conservation of wetland buffers will support the habitats and functionality of each wetland, and also include adjacent uplands that are important for many species that move between habitat types.

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This mostly forested 5,943-acre Landscape Block is the eighth largest of 62 Blocks in the ecoregion.
Help Save Endangered Wildlife!

Please contribute on your Massachusetts income tax form or directly to the

Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species Fund

To learn more about the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and the Commonwealth’s rare species, visit our web site at www.mass.gov/nhesp.