International Collaboration to Conserve, Restore and Enhance Landscape Connectivity Across the Northeast Region

- Introductions
- Review NEG/ECP Ecological Connectivity Resolution
- Review Draft Implementation Plan by the NEG/ECP Working Group
- Discuss how to address transportation aspects of resolution

New England Governors & Eastern Canadian Premieres

Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation

NEG GN-A ECP PMEC

40th Annual Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers - Boston Massachusetts 2016

40e Conférence annuelle des gouverneurs de la Nouvelle-Angleterre et des premiers ministres de l'Est du Canada

RESOLUTION 40-3

RESOLUTION ON ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY, ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE, AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

WHEREAS, the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers have shown international leadership through their collective action to address environmental protection and climate change, especially through work to expand use and production of renewable energy and other efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, the region's economy, culture, and identity are closely tied to and dependent upon its forests and water resources; and

WHEREAS, the region's cities and towns, infrastructure, and natural ecosystems are vulnerable to adverse impacts from climate change. Jurisdictions region-wide are taking steps to adapt to a changing climate, by making communities, infrastructure, and public investments more resilient; and

WHEREAS, the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers recognize the inherent connection between the region's forested landscape and its forest products economy, and the important role that private forest landowners play in the health and condition of its forests; and

WHEREAS, the Northern Appalachian-Acadian forest is globally significant as the most intact, contiguous temperate broadleaf forest in the world. The Northeastern coastal forest, including the coastal plain, and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence lowland forest provide a vital link for neotropical migrants of global significance. Boreal forests are globally important for millions of resident and migratory birds, including songbirds which depend on Boreal forests during different stages of their lifecycles. Together, these forests span portions of all six New England states and five eastern Canadian provinces. Global climate change is a prominent threat to the long-term health of these vital ecosystems. The spread of invasive species and wildlife disease, often exacerbated by global climate change, is another key threat; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous people historically have a strong connection to the land, and in the present day continue to recognize the traditional importance of a healthy environment to the social well-being and economic prosperity for future generations; and

WHEREAS, maintaining and restoring ecological connectivity is an important strategy for boosting the resilience of the region's native ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as its economy and human communities. Connected habitats provide the natural pathways necessary for fish, wildlife, and plants to move to meet their life needs and to find suitable habitat as climate conditions change. Intact

Northern Appalachian/Acadian Ecoregion Resolution on Ecological Connectivity

Resolution 40-3: commitments

"The New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers <u>recognize the importance of ecological connectivity</u> for the adaptability and resilience of our region's ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities."

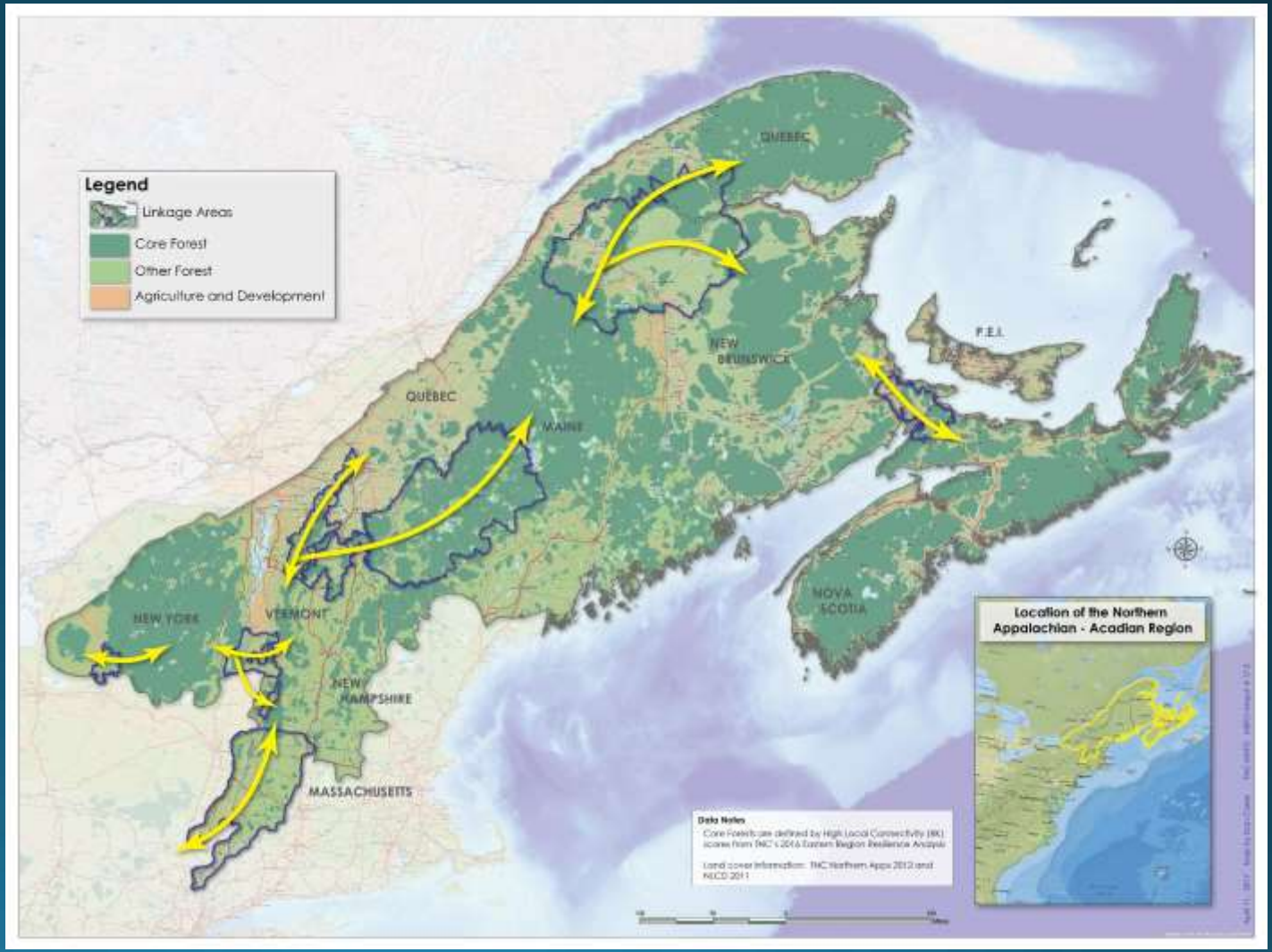
"The need to work across landscapes and borders to advance efforts to restore and maintain ecological connectivity."

Connectivity Resolution in Action

- Transportation
- Land Use Planning
- Land Conservation
- Land Management
- Working Land Economies

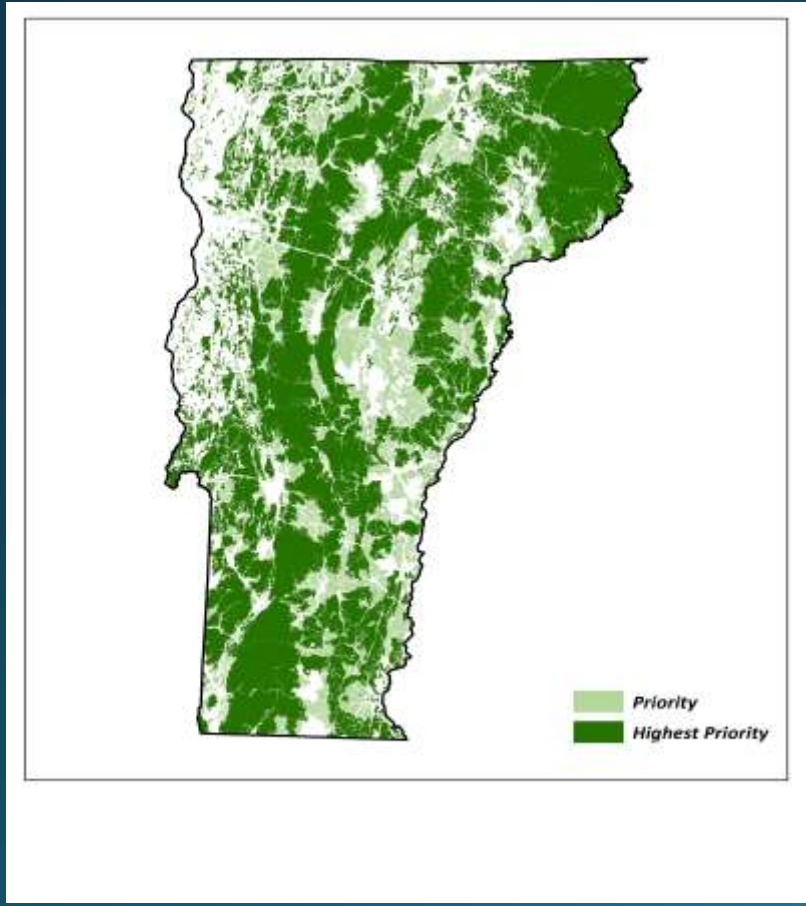
This shall be accomplished through regional collaboration across all political borders

- Identify and define the region's connected landscape
- This includes both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems

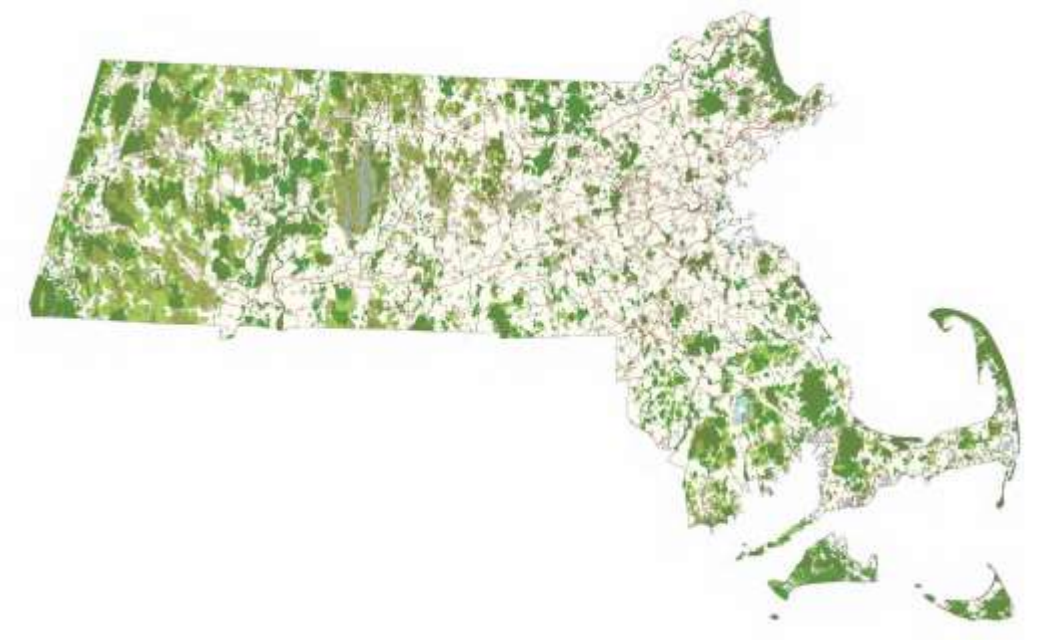


Landscape Scale Science

Vermont Conservation Design – Ecological Connectivity Analysis at the State-level



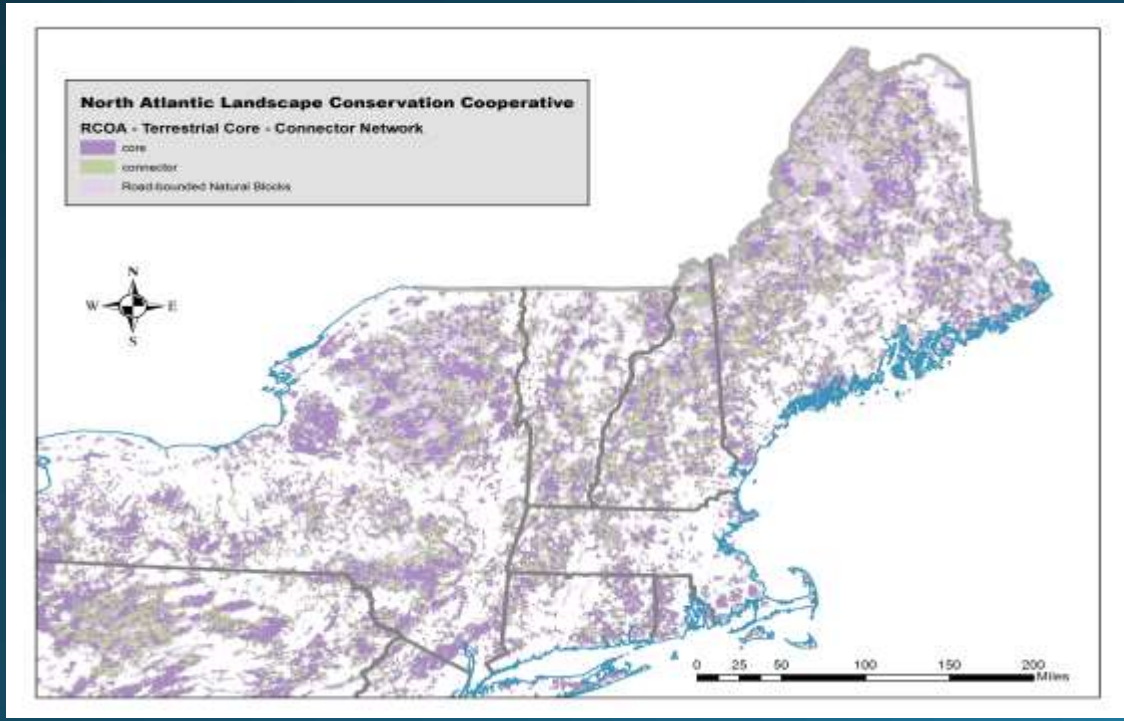
Massachussetts BioMap

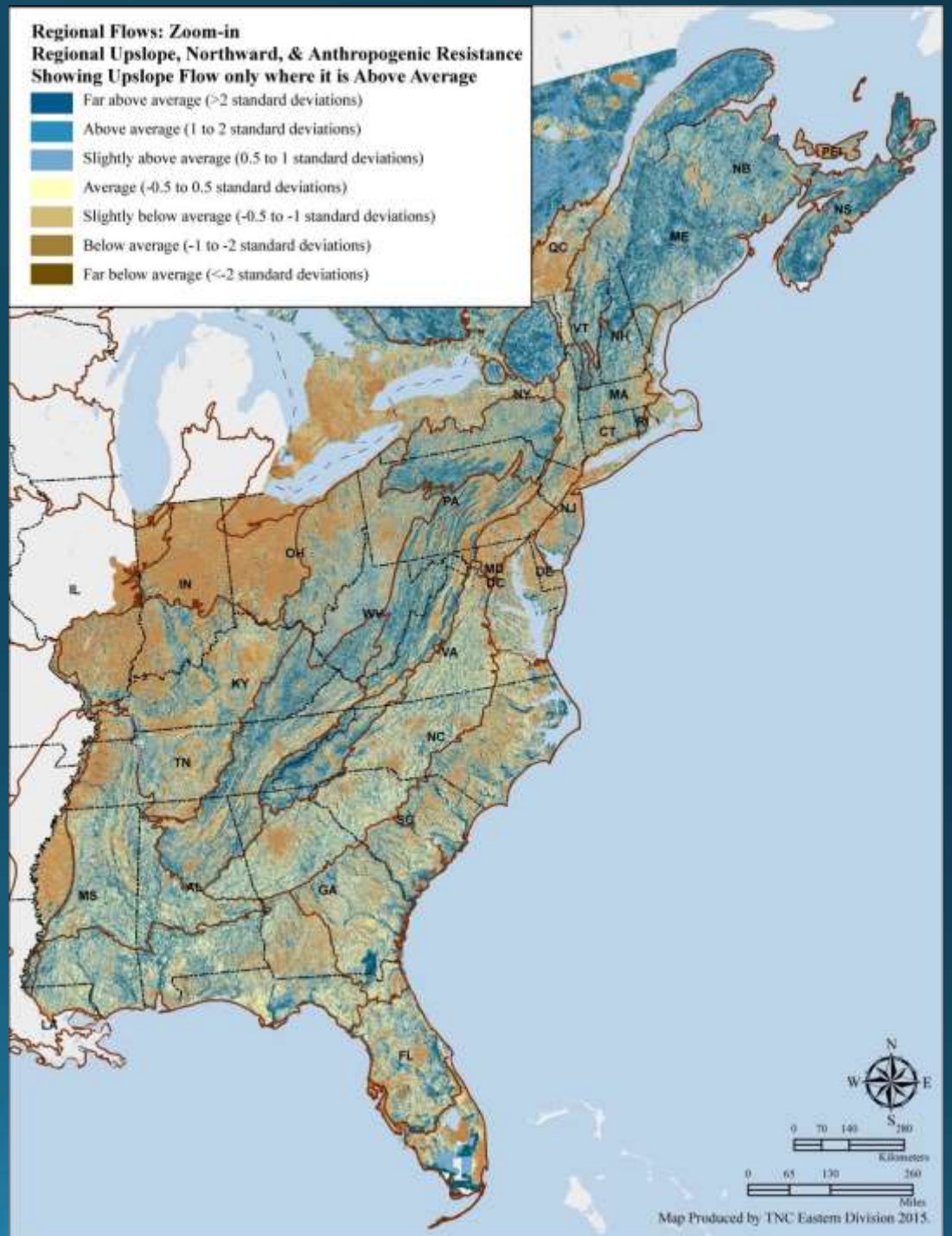


Regional Scale Connectivity Science

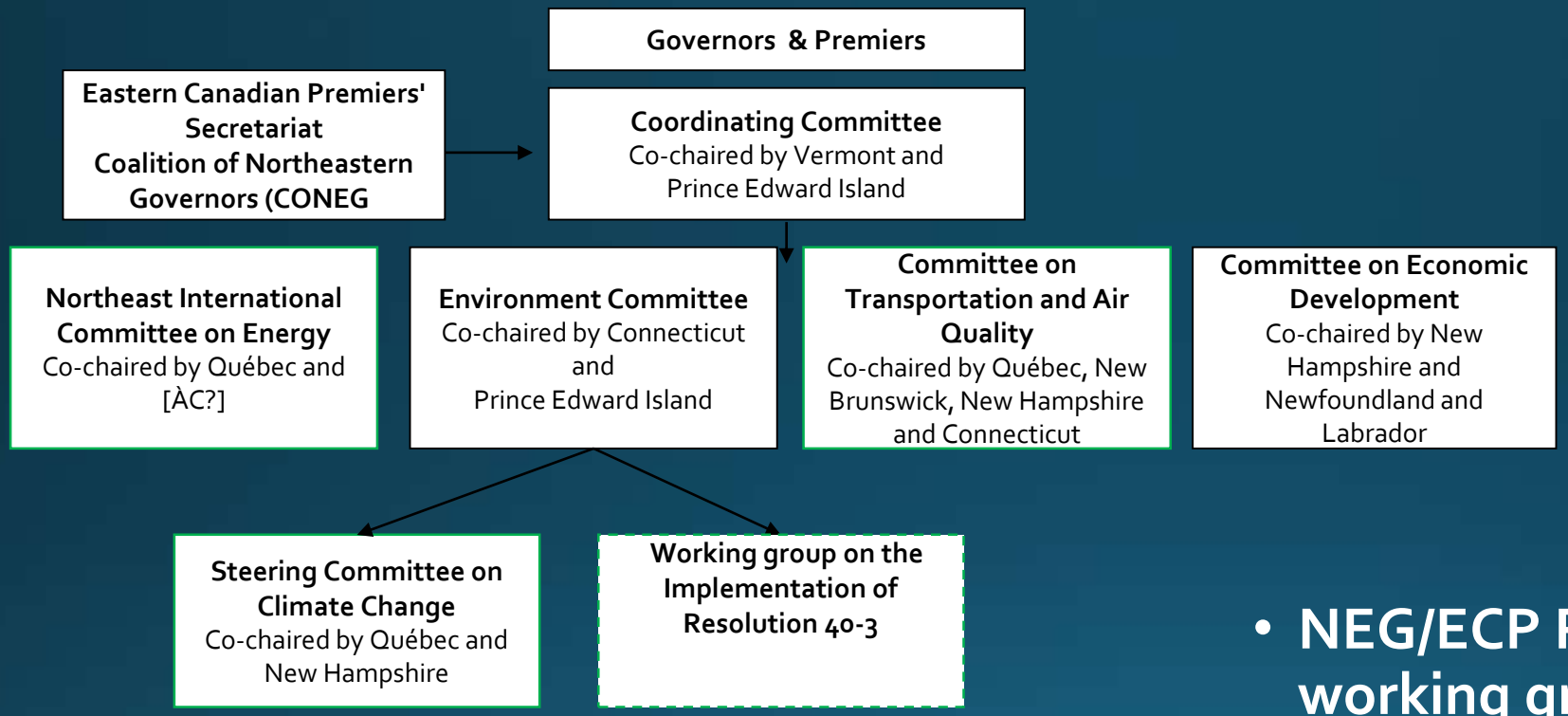
The Nature Conservancy

Resilient and Connected Landscapes for Terrestrial Conservation





Implementation of Resolution 40-3



- **NEG/ECP Resolution establishes a <u>working group</u>**
- **Deadline 2020**

Transportation Connections

"Transportation infrastructure, essential to the region's economic growth, can be designed and sited to ensure habitat connectivity for both terrestrial and aquatic species."

Transportation and natural resource agencies are instructed to:

- develop, modify and expand federal, state, and provincial transportation enhancement and designation programs to improve habitat connectivity;
- identify the appropriate design and size of transportation infrastructure for movement of terrestrial and aquatic species.

Turning Policy into Action

- Develop a coordination network between transportation and natural resource agencies to ensure that ecological connectivity science, information, and conservation strategies are incorporated into transportation project review, design and development.

- Development of Best Management Practices for all states and provinces in the region.

Questions for Small Groups

- How can transportation agencies best collaborate with natural resource, land use planning, land protection and other partners?
- What are the institutional changes needed within transportation agencies better accept and implement ecological connectivity?

Questions for Small Groups

- What do transportation departments need in order to implement these goals and initiatives? How can we achieve culture change and best practices in these departments to better integrate ecological connectivity?

- Much of the work in road ecology is focused at the individual project scale and yet, the Resolution talks about an entire network of connectivity across the region. What needs to happen to bring us from individual road ecology projects to an entire network of ecological connectivity?

- What have we missed? What other questions come up for you in how this Resolution might be implemented with respect to transportation?