



# NEWS RELEASE\*\*

CONTACT: GILLIAN WOOLMER: (1-416-850-9038 x24; [gwoolmer@wcs.org](mailto:gwoolmer@wcs.org))  
JUSTINA RAY: (1-416-850-9038 x222; [jray@wcs.org](mailto:jray@wcs.org))

## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY FINDS A HEAVY HUMAN FOOTPRINT IN NORTHERN APPALACHIA AND ACADIA

**TORONTO (August 6, 2008)**— More than 99 percent of the land in the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada—including many areas that are considered to be naturally pristine—is directly influenced by human activities, according to a recent analysis of the landscape by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The assessment is the most recent application of the “Human Footprint,” a research model that analyzes the extent and intensity of human influence on the natural world and appears in the most recent edition of *Landscape and Urban Planning*.

This map, according to authors, can help planners create core areas of natural habitat connected by corridors to help ensure adequate habitat – particularly in the face of a changing climate – for fauna and flora such as moose, black bears, Canada lynx, marten, white pine, spruce fir, and northern hardwoods maintain viable populations in this highly diverse eco-region.

“People should not be discouraged by the extent of human impact shown by this map,” said Gillian Woolmer, Assistant Director for WCS-Canada and lead researcher on the study. “Rather, the map can help identify opportunities for conservation and guide decision-makers as to how we use these lands so that we can keep both wildlife and wild places connected and close to home.”

The famed Appalachian Mountains form the spine of this region spanning the United States and Canadian borders. It is known to conservationists as the Northern Appalachia/Acadian Ecoregion. This eco-region covers some 330,000-square kilometers in area, extending from the Tug Hill Plateau and Adirondack Mountains in the west, eastward across the Green Mountains of Vermont, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, to the north woods of Maine, then north to include the portion of Quebec that lies east of the St Lawrence River and all of the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The region is home to approximately 3.8 million people. It includes cities such: Augusta, Maine; Fredericton, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. It is crisscrossed by a network of 325,000 kilometers of highways and roads, including the I -95 and the Trans-Canada Highway.

Also identified in the “Human Footprint” analysis of the region are wild lands—covering approximately 16 percent of the area—that include: Tug Hill and the Adirondacks; the White Mountains; Central and Northern Maine; the Gaspé Peninsula; Central and Northern New Brunswick; and Southern and Eastern Nova Scotia. These largely wild places are fragmented and are becoming increasingly isolated from each other by zones of more intense human uses such as new rural and urban development that includes new subdivisions, strip malls and associated new roads. However, a third of these wild lands is currently bordering existing natural reserves and could be protected with little impact on current land uses.

The study provides additional detail to the Northern Appalachian/Acadian Ecoregion first covered in the initial “Human Footprint” analysis completed by the Wildlife Conservation Society in 2002. Factors used to construct the map include those related to human population (population and dwelling densities), human access (roads, rails), land-use (urban areas, agriculture, forestry, mining, large dams), and electrical/power infrastructure (utility corridors).

“This new map provides the detailed picture of the human landscape that planners and conservationists need to develop effective strategies to help us reduce the intensity of the ‘Human Footprint’ and to ensure that nature persists for the benefit of both wildlife and people in this ecoregion,” added Woolmer.

The map of the Human Footprint is now available to the public through an interactive map interface developed by WCS at:

[http://atlas.2c1forest.org/maps.html?m=human\\_footprint&g=Human\\_Footprint](http://atlas.2c1forest.org/maps.html?m=human_footprint&g=Human_Footprint)

This study is part of a major cross-border scientific initiative under the umbrella of ‘Two Countries, One Forest’ ([www.2c1forest.org](http://www.2c1forest.org)) to conserve the lands and wildlife of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian Ecoregion.

**The Wildlife Conservation Society Canada** conserves wildlife and wild places by understanding critical issues, developing science-based solutions, and working with others to carry out conservation actions.

Visit: [www.wcscanada.org](http://www.wcscanada.org)

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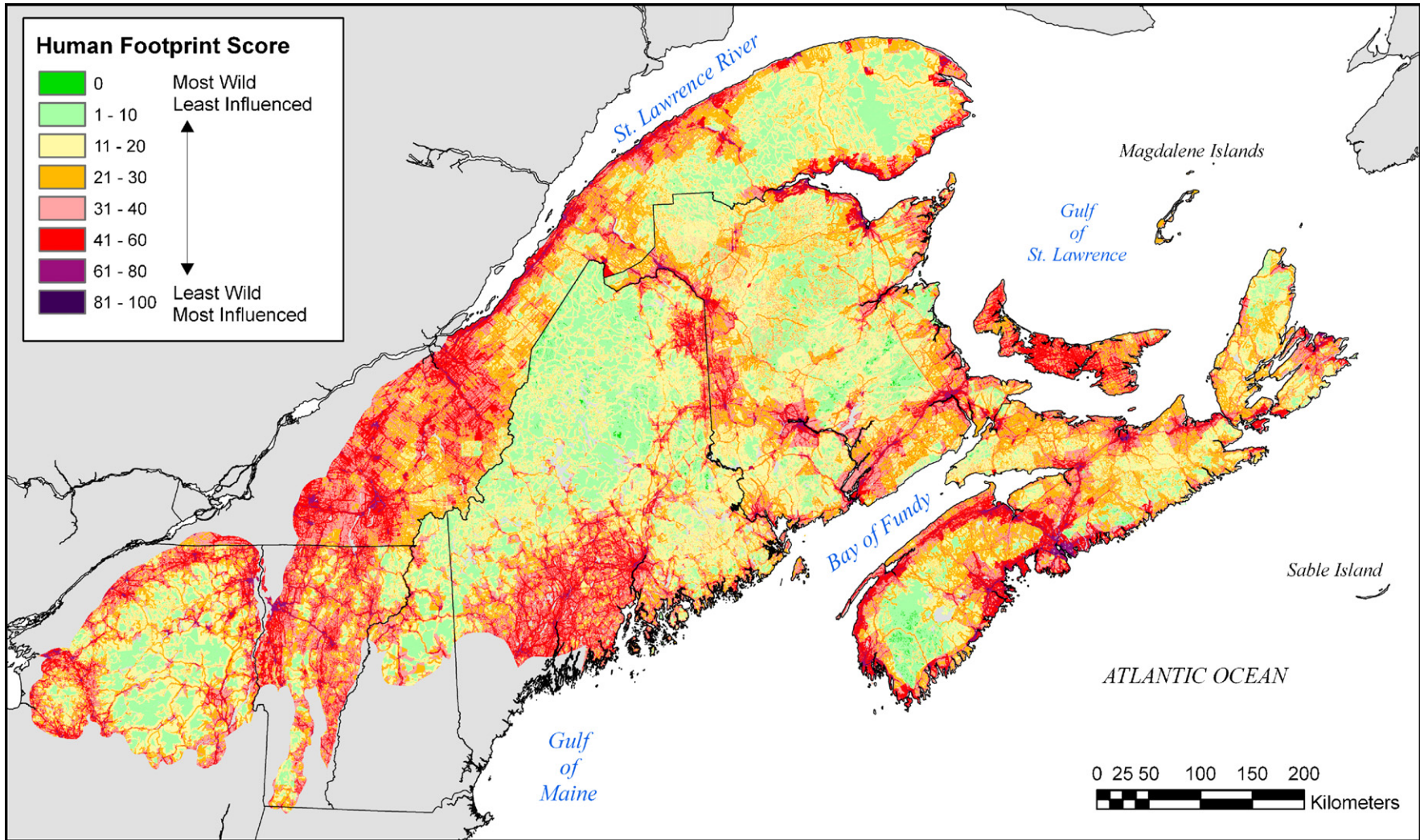
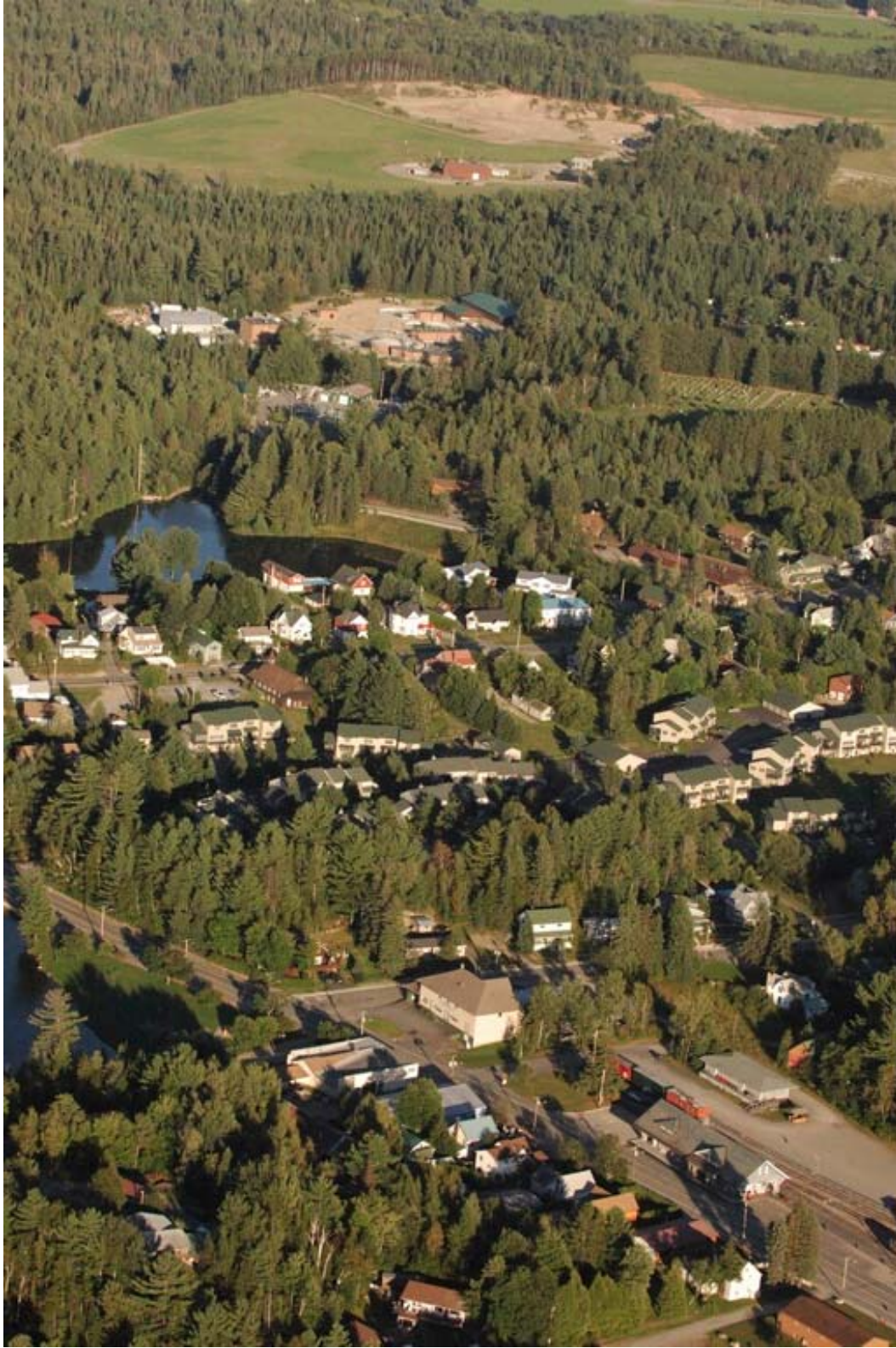


Fig. 2. The Human Footprint of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion.





Credit: Leslie Karasin  
Appalachian Forest



Credit: Wildlife Conservation Society  
Rural development in the Northern Appalachians





Credit: Susan Morse  
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