

# HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

The size of unfragmented habitat blocks directly affects the distribution of species, and is critical to maintaining biological diversity and ecosystem function. Habitat fragmentation occurs when a large region of habitat is split into a collection of smaller areas. Fragmentation can cause, among other things, changes in species diversity, composition, population size, and community function.

The Eightmile River Watershed currently is substantially unfragmented—26% of the unfragmented blocks are greater than 500 acres in size, 15% are greater than 1,000 acres in size and 5% are greater than 2,500 acres in size.

## Recommended Management Tool

### *Open Space Conservation*

- ◆ Work with willing private landowners on a voluntary basis to conserve important habitat areas.
- ◆ Identify remaining unfragmented habitat blocks as high priority for open space conservation in town planning documents such as the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Open Space Plan.
- ◆ Establish a land protection goal for each community and the watershed as a whole, and seek federal funding assistance for land protection as part of Wild & Scenic designation.
- ◆ Commit to working with other partners, such as local land trusts, the Nature Conservancy and the State to leverage resources and collaborate when opportunities arise to protect priority lands.

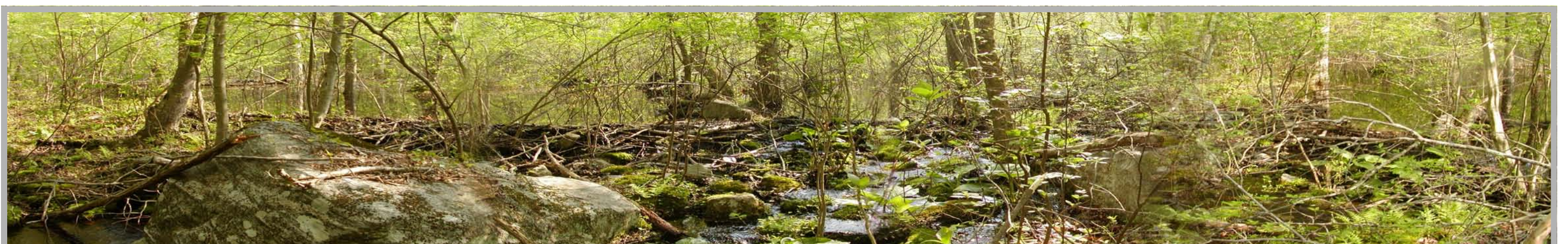


Photo: L. Bierley