



CLIMATE RESILIENCY

The Saco River and its floodplain provide crucial protection to adjacent land because it is able to absorb and mitigate flooding impacts from more frequent and intense storm events associated with climate change.

Conservation is key to maintain the Saco River watershed as it exists today and will make it more resilient to a changing climate in the future. Building resiliency ensures a healthy watershed for the future. Important properties of a resilient landscape include variability of habitats and adaptability to be able to adjust to changes in climate norms such as increased rainfall.

Two specific habitats that play a crucial role in the overall resiliency of the Saco River Watershed are flood plain forests and the estuary at the mouth of the river. Both of these ecosystems are easily impacted by humans which thereby affects the overall resiliency of the watershed.



LAND CONSERVATION

Increasingly intense rain events threaten communities with flooding, and drinking water supplies with polluted stormwater runoff. Conservation of wetlands, forests and floodplains protects the ability of the watershed to absorb and moderate the impacts of both flooding and erosion. A national model of the importance of conservation is the White Mountains National Forest, created over 100 years ago to protect the headwaters of the Saco Watershed. A climate resilient landscape includes working farms and forests and conserved lands where nature can protect homes and businesses from flooding and polluted runoff. Conservation or low impact development, designed to maximize natural areas, minimize pavement and hard surfaces, and protect vegetated buffers along waterways, contributes to a resilience landscape with added benefits for wildlife and human well-being. The Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, and local land trusts support landowner efforts to create resilient landscapes in the Saco Watershed.



WATER QUALITY

Paddling beneath a shady tree canopy on a hot summer day, fishing for trout in the headwaters and strippers in the estuary, and turning on the tap for reliable, safe drinking water are the rewards of land stewardship that produces clean high-quality water. These treasured experiences of the Saco Watershed are the result of individual and collective action to protect every stream, brook and tributary of the Saco River from pollution.



People acted to restore the Saco from an industrial history of pollution from mills and factories. People acted to capture and treat sewage and polluted runoff from cities to reverse decades of pollution and bring long absent fish like the sturgeon back to the Saco. Vigilance, through scientific measurement of water quality, is one of the ways members of the Saco Watershed Collaborative work to protect the treasured qualities of the most important drinking water source in southern Maine. Providing the best available science about water conditions and levels of pollution, in formats that people can understand and use, informs the decisions of local landowners about how to maintain their land while protecting water quality.

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SACO WATERSHED COLLABORATIVE

The Saco Watershed Collaborative was formed in 2016 with four major goals:

1. Engage and inspire governments, organizations and citizens to take action to sustain water in the Saco Watershed.
2. Protect water quality through pollution prevention and restoration of degraded waters in the Saco Watershed.
3. Support land conservation and stewardship to protect water quality in the Saco Watershed.
4. Promote and enforce Low Impact Development strategies, stormwater and wastewater best management practices, and land use development that protects water.

The Collaborative consist of a dedicated group of professionals, community members and scientists working to protect the Saco River Watershed. The Saco River currently provides drinking water for over 40,000 people across southern Maine. Nevertheless, the Saco River has the capacity to provide drinking water for populations in Southern Maine and the New Hampshire Seacoast.



www.sustainthesaco.org



DAM SAFETY

Dams on the Saco River provide renewable energy for communities and businesses within the watershed. These dams are licensed and regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

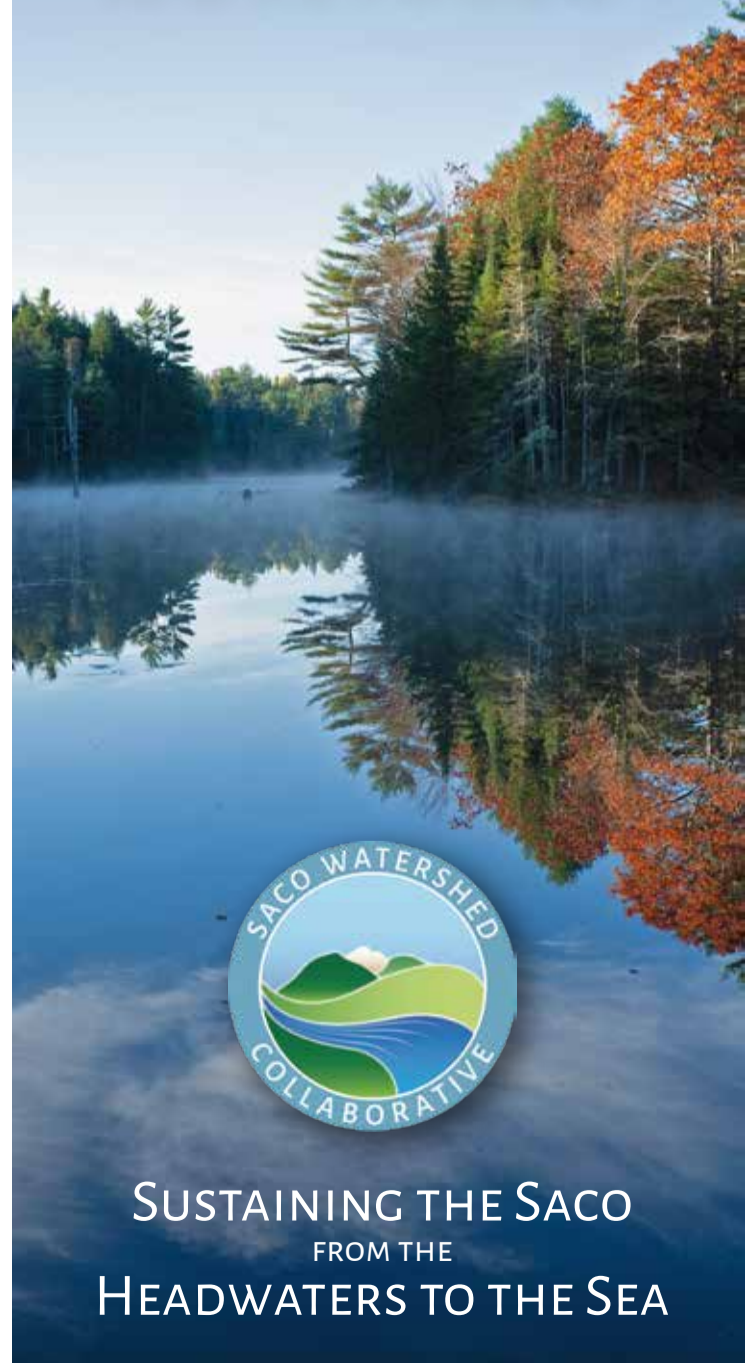


As part of their license to operate, these run-of-river dams provide recreation areas, fish passage methods, biological studies, safety standards, and licensed elevations and flows levels.

FERC determines the hydro stations boundaries, including shoreline lands and waters. For adjacent landowners and recreational users, warning signs, sounds and barriers provide important safety information around the dams. Please respect all warning lights, sirens, signs, buoys, booms, barriers, and fences. Water levels may rise very fast. More information can be obtained from FERC and the Saco River Corridor Commission (srcc-maine.org).



The Saco River Watershed



SUSTAINING THE SACO
FROM THE
HEADWATERS TO THE SEA