

16 - RURAL NATURE OF NYS

Eco-Regions Open Space Forests Wildlife

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RURAL LANDSCAPE

What is rural? What is wilderness?

- Rural is a term associated with the **countryside**, an area where people live and engage in non-urban activities - as opposed to a city or town that's termed urban or a "**wilderness**" which is a **natural area where no or very few people live**.
- Rural is an area considered "**rustic**" – simple, as opposed to the complex urban areas; **a way of life**.
- Rural is an area associated with **agriculture** and a **farming landscape** - may include forest environments that support a human population.
- Rural is an area of **low population density** - may include exurbia (the urban fringe), where people live on farms but commute to the city.

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WILDERNESS

DEC defines wilderness as:

- an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by people - *where a person is a visitor who does not remain*.
- an area of state land or water having a **primeval character, without significant improvement or an area protected and managed** so as to preserve, enhance and restore (where necessary), its natural conditions.

DEC goes on to say a wilderness:

- *Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the human imprint substantially unnoticeable.*
- *Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.*
- *Has at least 10,000 acres of contiguous land and water or is of sufficient size and character as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and*
- *May contain ecological, geological or other features of values: scientific, educational, scenic or historical.*

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RURAL LANDSCAPE

Rural areas of NYS have seen a changing landscape since the mid-1800s:

- **Movement of people away -- to the cities.**
- **Farm abandonment.**
- **Increase in woodland acreage.**
- **Changes in the size and operation of farms** especially after WWII (late 1940s).
- **Encroachment**, as cities and suburbs grow.
- **Exurbanization**, as city people relocate to rural areas but continue to work in the city.

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RURAL LANDSCAPE


❖ **NYS rural areas are divided into 3 categories:**

- **Farm landscape:** mainly agricultural land (decreasing)
- **Forest landscape:** densely wooded areas; tends to be located in the least accessible areas (increasing)
- **Mixed landscape:** farmland, abandoned farmland, woodland, towns and suburban development (increasing)


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RURAL LANDSCAPE


Forest landscape




Farm landscape



Mixed landscape






Dairy farming has been the main part of Minden's agricultural base and continues to be so today.

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RURAL LANDSCAPE

The Rural Vision Project's most frequently cited issues include:

- ✓ Slow infrastructure development (especially public transportation and high speed internet)
- ✓ High property taxes
- ✓ Land use and planning to combat sprawl and loss of working landscapes
- ✓ Job loss and lack of living wage employment opportunities



A Vision for Rural New York

- ✓ Access to affordable health care
- ✓ Development of a comprehensive, coordinated plan; collaboration between agencies, govts. needed
- ✓ Workforce development and education
- ✓ Agricultural viability
- ✓ Youth flight, out-migration, brain drain
- ✓ Lack of capital and funding

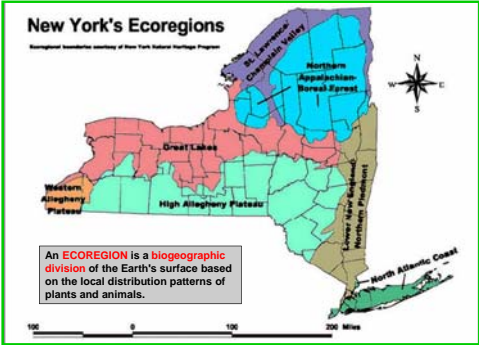
Source: Cornell University Rural Vision Project
<http://icardi.cornell.edu/cals/nyvoc/outreach/cardi/programs/indicators/vp/loader.cfm?c=Module--security/getfile&PageID--207427>

Land Use in NYS/mid-2010's

Land Use	Acreage	% Cover
• Forest	19,533,793	62.8
• Agriculture	7,727,003	24.8
• Residential	1,352,117	4.4
• Water	994,431	3.2
• Wetland	901,990	2.9
• Commercial/Industrial	303,979	1.0
• Parks/golf courses	239,728	0.8
• Barren land	57,857	0.2

A reduction in agricultural land has resulted in an increase in forest cover!


Eco-Regions of NYS



New York's EcoRegions
 Biogeographic Inventory of New York Natural Heritage Program

An **ECOREGION** is a biogeographic division of the Earth's surface based on the local distribution patterns of plants and animals.

Ecozones of NYS



Reschke, C. 1990. Ecological Communities of New York State. New York Natural Heritage Program. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Latham, N.Y. 96p. +xl.

Open Space

Extra Credit Exercise 15: Open Space
Optional Exercise 16: Wildlife Management

NYS is a national leader in the preservation of open space.

- In **1990** the **Open Space Conservation Plan** was authorized.
- In **1992** the first **Open Space Conservation Plan** was presented
- In **1993**, the **Environment Protection Fund** was established to buy private land.

Open Space is defined by NYS as "**Land which is not intensely developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use.**"

- **Open Space** can be public or private land.
- **Open Space** can be within an urban area.

Open Space Conservation Plan

The **NYS Open Space Conservation Plan** (current and past) may be accessed at:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/47990.html>

It is updated as needed (+/-5 yrs.) to address changing issues and concerns.

2016 Summary:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/98720.html>

2016 NYS Open Space Final Report (316 pages):
https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/osp_2016final1.pdf



Goals of the Open Space Plan

The list of goals is periodically reassessed to keep the plan relevant to current issues and concerns.

- ✓ To protect water quality.
- ✓ To provide quality outdoor recreation.
- ✓ To protect and enhance scenic, historic and cultural resources that are part of NYS's heritage.
- ✓ To protect habitat for biodiversity, endangered species, and traditional pastimes.
- ✓ To provide places for education and research.
- ✓ To maintain resource-based industries as farming, forestry, fishing and tourism.
- ✓ To preserve open space for the protection and enhancement of air and land quality.
- ✓ To use open space conservation as a tool to both mitigate and adapt to global climate change.

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Focus Goals: through 2020

In addition to the legacy guidelines, the commission aims to focus its attention during the next five years in the following areas:

- ✓ Identifying priority conservation projects
- ✓ Promoting outdoor recreation.
- ✓ Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- ✓ Conserving clean water, air and land.
- ✓ Conserving our natural and cultural heritage.

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Location of Priority Projects

Extra Credit EXERCISE 15 looks at county projects.

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CaRDI

Cornell University Community and Regional Development Institute

CaRDI has 3 focus areas:

1. Community and Economic Development;
2. Agriculture and Food Systems Development;
3. Energy, Land Use and the Environment.

"Through its programs, CaRDI seeks to strengthen the capacity, resiliency and sustainability of rural communities."

Demographics and socio-economic data become an important tool to analyze the geographic nature of development.

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Smart Growth

Smart Growth = thoughtful land use.

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45970.html>

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Smart Growth Program

- Mixed land uses
- Compact, conservation-oriented development
- Strategic farmland/open space preservation
- Historic preservation
- Brownfield re-development
- Vacant property re-use
- "Green" buildings
- Demographics-driven planning for community development
- Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly community design
- Transit-oriented development
- Regional and transportation planning
- Collaborative, public, stakeholder-driven planning processes
- Development using existing infrastructure
- Park creation
- Well-planned public spaces

❖ DEC defines **Smart Growth** as the "sensible, planned growth that integrates economic development and job creation with community quality-of-life by preserving the built and natural environments."

▪ **Seeks to discourage development on open space and farmland while encouraging growth in developed areas with existing infrastructure.**

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/45970.html> Smart Growth Program
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/49210.html> Smart Growth in Adirondacks and Catskills
<https://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/focal-areas/regional-economic-development/state-upstate-ny>
 2011 State of Upstate New York Conference

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NEXT: Forests of NYS

Read the
Forest Cover and Uses handout
on the course home page.

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