

## **Bio NEMO Panel**

**Monday, October 20, 2008, 2:30 pm.**

### **Putting Biodiversity on the Map**

*Laura T. Heady*

*Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator, Hudson River Estuary Program*

*Hudson River (NY) NEMO*

If asked to draw a map of municipal resources, a typical local leader would likely include roads, sewers, and other systems; historical resources and farms; and possibly the town's development centers. A savvy leader may even include wetlands and streams. But often, elements of "green infrastructure" such as forest, vernal pool, and grassland habitats are not considered in a town's more traditional view of its infrastructure. And despite the essential ecosystem services they provide, these important biodiversity resources are often excluded during decisions about land use and future development.

For the last decade, outreach staff at the Hudson River Estuary Program at the NY Department of Environmental Conservation have been working throughout the watershed to put biodiversity on the map. Through technical assistance, data sharing, and training, the Estuary Program is partnering with communities to encourage biodiversity conservation at the local level local to sustain the health and resiliency of the entire estuary watershed.

### **Habitat Priority Planner Tool Demonstration**

*Danielle Bamford, NOAA Coastal Services Center*

The Habitat Priority Planner (HPP) was designed with the local planner, coastal conservation group, and the coastal manager in mind. HPP is a spatial decision support tool designed to assist users in prioritizing important areas in the landscape or seascape for conservation or restoration action. What makes this tool unique is the ease with which the scenarios can be displayed and changed, making this a helpful companion when working with a group. In addition to the scenarios, the tool also generates pertinent reports, maps, and data tables.

### **Habitat-Based Management Planning for Town Open Space**

*Juliana Barrett, CT Sea Grant/NEMO and John Rozum, CT NEMO*

Many municipalities have acquired large portfolios of properties that are now permanently protected. Even though the land is protected from future development, surrounding land use pressures, invasive species or natural succession may cause drastic changes to these properties. Management of these areas is often necessary to maintain or improve particular habitats or to manage for specific species. In this workshop, we offer a habitat-based management planning approach as the critical next step, after acquisition, in protecting the ecological value of these lands. This workshop focuses on the identification and management of common habitats found throughout the United States. With this

information, towns can develop realistic land management plans based on the ecological characteristics and values of the landscape. In Connecticut, freely available GIS tools (the Community Resource Inventory (CRI)) will be described that can significantly aid in the identification of habitats and the development of the management plan.

### **WaterWise Municipalities-- (Forests + NEMO) = FREMO**

*Emma Melvin, VT NEMO*

Vermont NEMO is taking the NEMO Network fundamental principle of *do not reinvent the wheel just modify it* literally with its new WaterWise Municipalities project. Vermont NEMO and the University of Vermont Extension Urban and Community Forests Program have joined forces to transform the Urban Watershed Forestry Manual into a digestible set of workshop modules. These modules will be designed to target appropriate decision makers for each topic (ex. development review commission—reviewing site plans); be either stand alone or a workshops series; and be modifiable for other states. Vermont's forest, like other states, has experienced increased parcelization and forest conversion due to population growth, especially in rural areas, and rising property values combined with inadequate land use planning and regulation, which has led to poor watershed health in many areas. By educating local officials on the link between forest conversion and impaired watersheds, and how to apply land use planning and conservation tools at the municipal level, we can limit future impact to our forests and waterways. As part of the project, we have created a working group consisting of two regional planners, the UVM Extension Forester, the Urban and Community State Coordinator, the State Watershed Forester, State stormwater department staff and Vermont League of Cities and Towns water quality regulations technical assistant staff. To enhance our education efforts, we will be conducting a train the trainer workshop with regional planners to provide them with the tools necessary to educate their towns on these issues.