

YORK RIVER WILD AND SCENIC STUDY



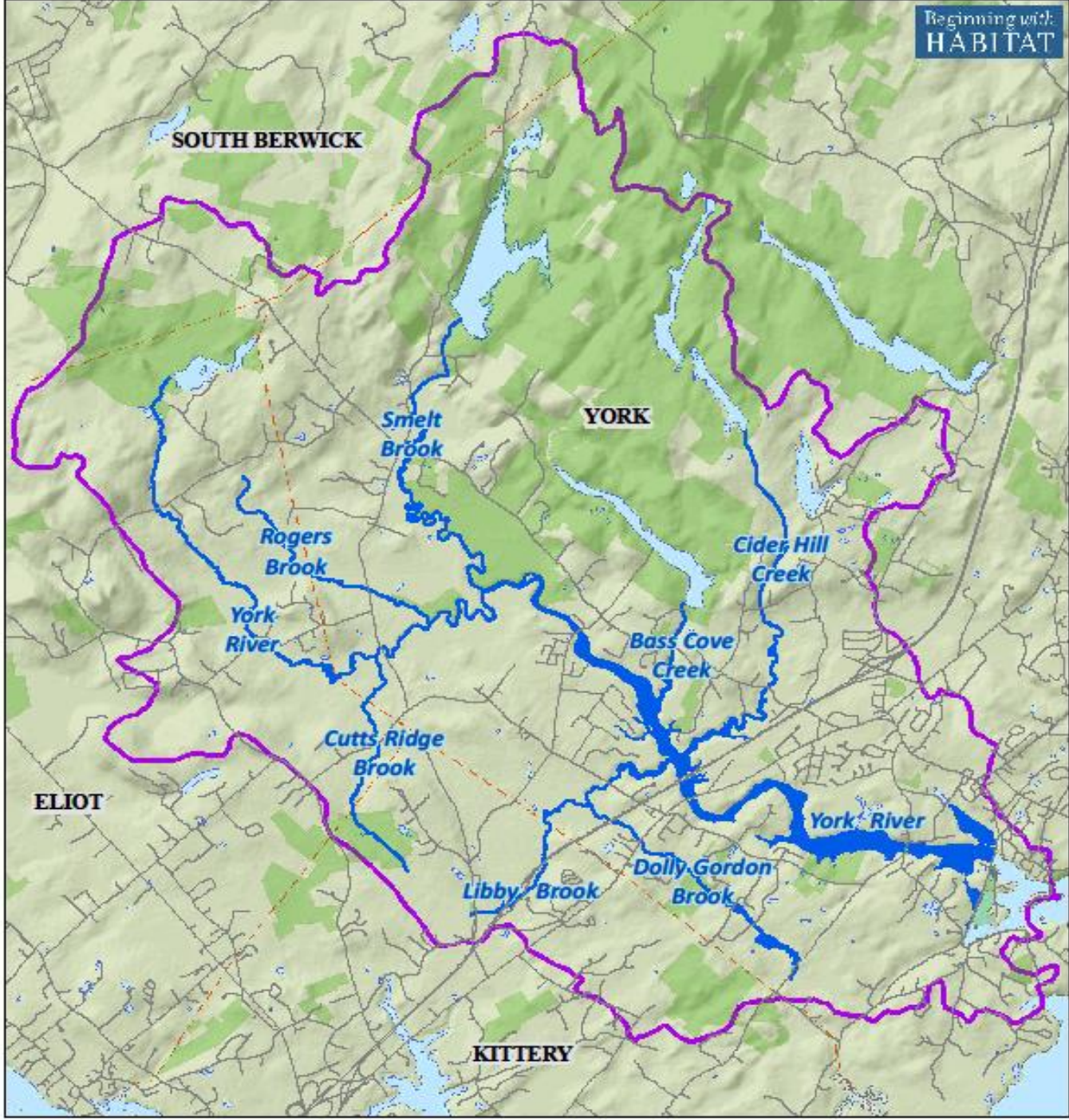
Kittery Land Trust Stewardship Committee meeting
December 3, 2018

www.YorkRiverMaine.org

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- York River watershed
- What is the York River Wild and Scenic Study?
 - What is a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation?
 - Status & next steps
- What's special about the York River?
- Q&A / Discussion





York River Watershed

- 33 square mile area
- Lands in 4 communities
- About 110 miles of rivers and streams
- Population ~7,000

	York	Kittery	Eliot	South Berwick	York River Watershed	York County
Population April 1, 2010	12,529	9,490	6,204	7,220	6,449	197,131
Population July 1, 2017	13,088	9,722	6,594	7,464	7,032	204,191
Population percent change 2010 to 2017	4.5%	2.4%	6.3%	3.8%	9.0%	3.6%

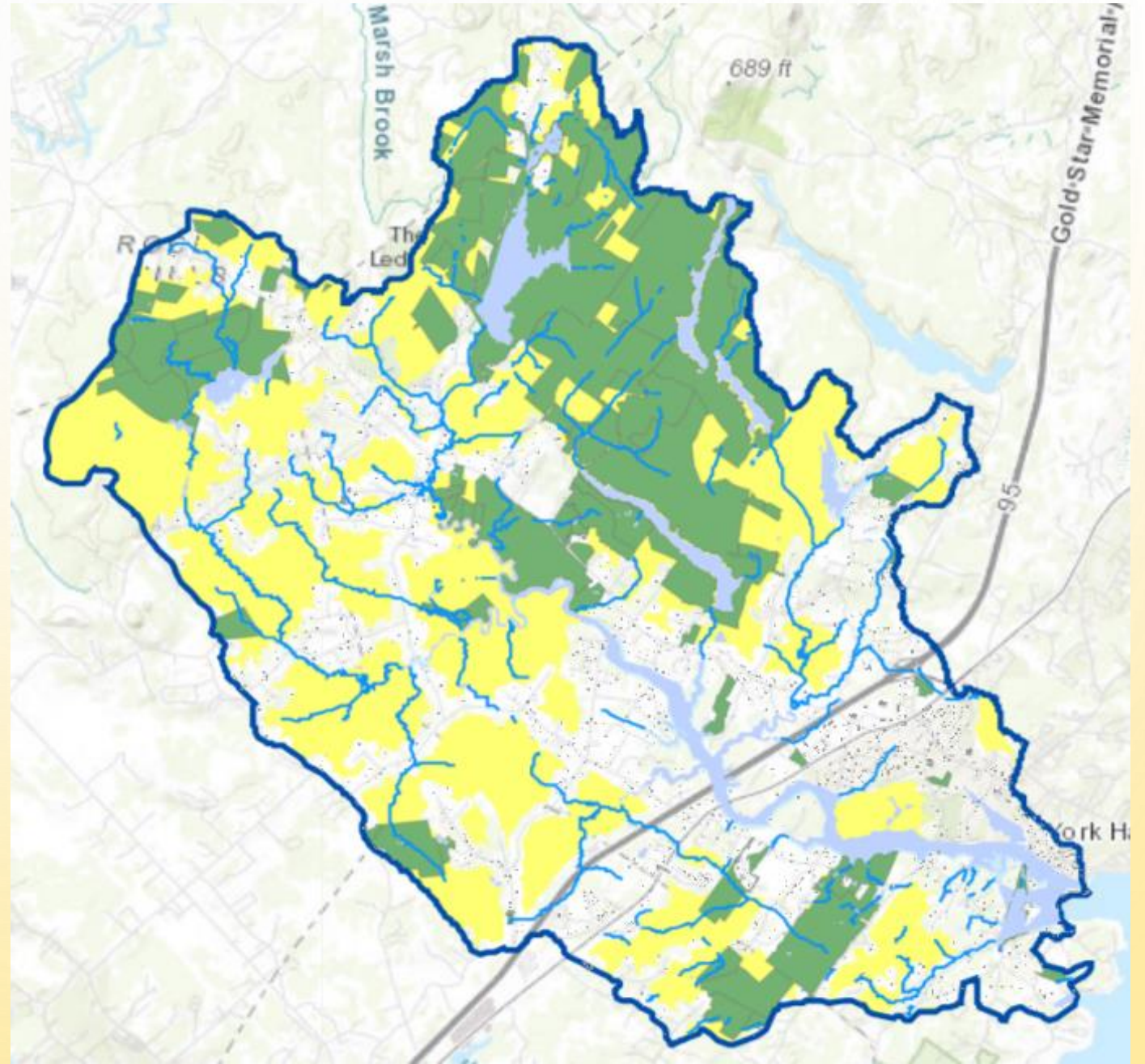


WATERSHED LANDSCAPE

- 11,000 acres (more than 50% of watershed) is in **unfragmented habitat blocks**, including about 5,600 acres of **conservation lands** (26% of watershed area)

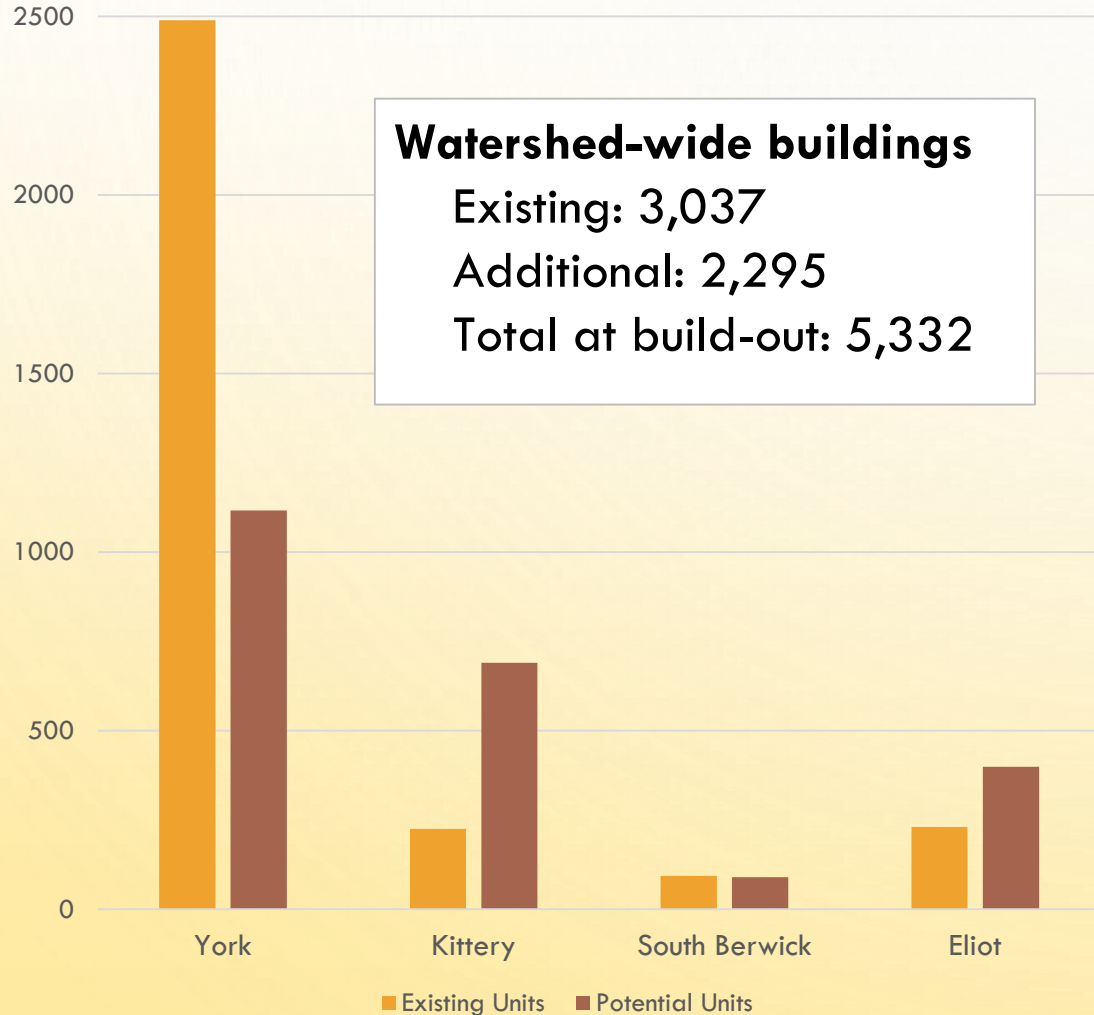
% watershed land area conserved:

- South Berwick: 48%
- York: 29% * includes KWD land
- Kittery: 16%
- Eliot: 13%



RESOURCE THREATS: DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS

Existing and Potential Additional Buildings



- Kittery accounts for ~ 30% of potential new buildings
- Watershed density per acre:
0.14 units/acre current
0.25 units/acre build-out
- Kittery DU/acre increases from 0.11 to 0.46 at buildout

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

- Established in 1968 to protect rivers with ‘outstandingly remarkable values’
- Evolved over time to include **Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers**



20 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP RIVERS

WWW.NPS.GOV/ORGS/1912/PARTNERSHIP-WILD-AND-SCENIC-RIVERS.HTM



Public access – Lamprey (NH)

Photo: Dick Lord



Dam removal – Musconetcong (NJ)



Educating youth
– Maurice (NJ)



Solstice celebration – SuAsCo (MA)



Protecting wildlife
– Wekiva (FL)



Land preservation – Great Egg Harbor (NJ)

Photo: Tim Palmer

YORK RIVER WILD AND SCENIC STUDY

- Congressional authorization
- Local Study Committee
 - Community engagement
 - Identify ORVs
 - Evaluate eligibility and suitability for a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation
 - Develop Stewardship Plan



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



IDENTIFYING ORVS / PWSR ELIGIBILITY

- Compiled and reviewed data
- Convened monthly meetings
- Commissioned new studies

**FINDING: YORK RIVER MEETS
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

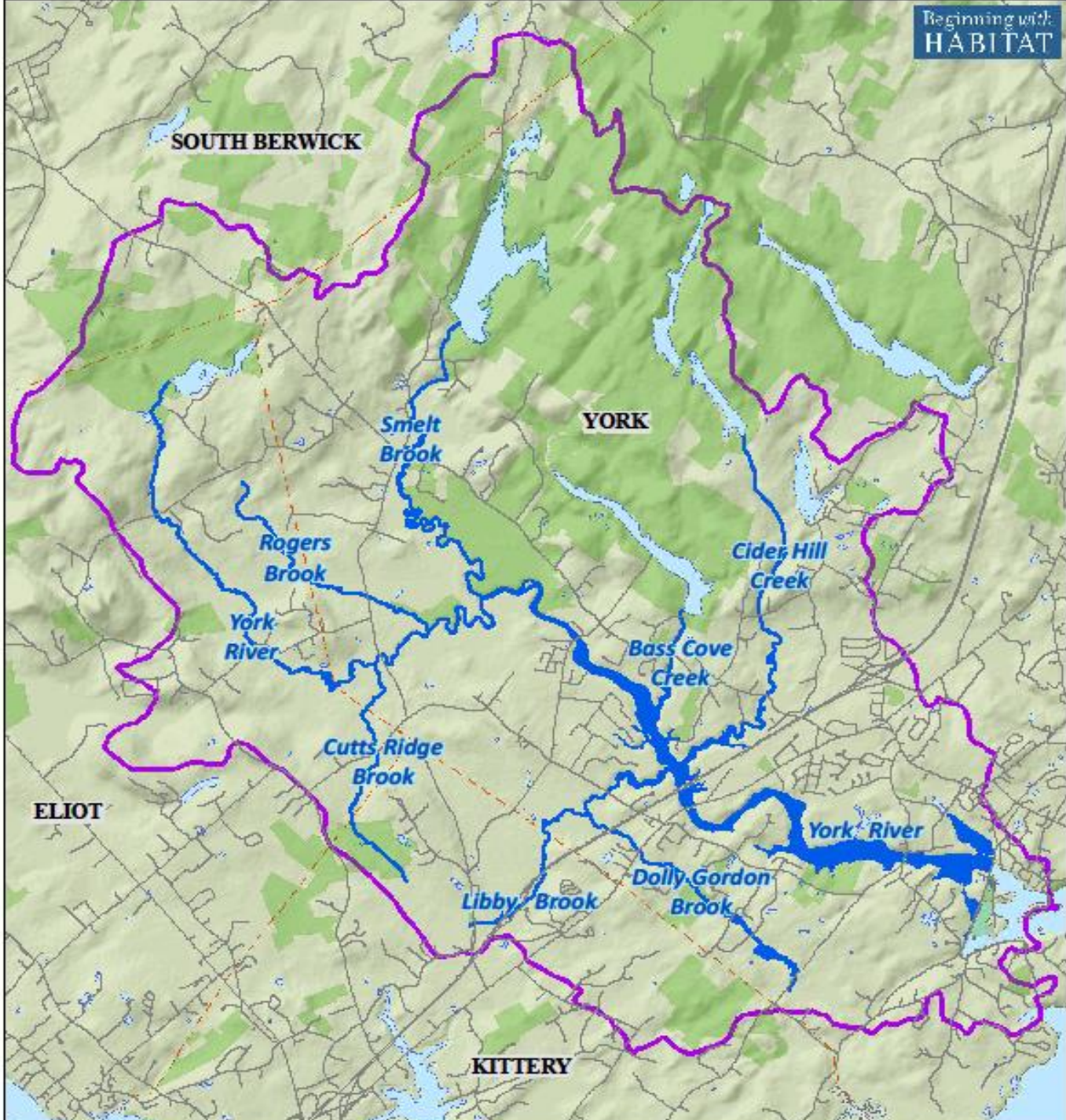


PWSR SUITABILITY

- Town comprehensive plans & open space plans
- Ordinances and zoning review
- Community support for river conservation

**FINDING: YORK RIVER MEETS
SUITABILITY CRITERIA**





PWSR DESIGNATION

YRSC RECOMMENDATION: A Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation will help communities continue to protect the many river-related values and resources in the York River watershed that are important to the region's character, quality of life, and economy.

PWSR DESIGNATION BENEFITS:

- Coordination among four communities: best approach for resource protection
- Annual federal funding
- Local stewardship plan
- Local committee to decide priorities
- Creates partnerships and leverages additional financial and technical resources

YORK RIVER WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PLAN

- Characterizes resources, threats, stewardship objectives and wide range of recommendations for consideration
 - Consistent with towns' comp plans
- Documents eligibility and suitability for a PWSR designation
- Advisory, guidance document



York River Watershed Stewardship Plan

Prepared by the York River Study Committee – August 2018

STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

STATUS: Community Support for PWSR Designation

- Eliot: Ballot question on November 6 – 73% voter approval
- York: Ballot question on November 6 – 63% voter approval
- Kittery: Council approval November 26 (7-0 endorsement)
- South Berwick: First reading of resolution on November 27, vote pending

York River Study Committee continues / assists with transition

NEXT STEPS:

- Congressional Bill introduction and authorization
- NPS Study Report to Congress
- Designation of York River as a PWSR – annual funding awarded
- York River Stewardship Committee to form



YORK RIVER WATERSHED OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES (ORVS)



- CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES
- NATURAL RESOURCES:
 - HABITATS AND WILDLIFE
 - SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER
 - WATER QUALITY
 - COASTAL RESILIENCE

YORK RIVER WATERSHED OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES (ORVS)



- WORKING WATERFRONT
- ECONOMIC VALUE
- RECREATIONAL RESOURCES
- SCENIC BEAUTY

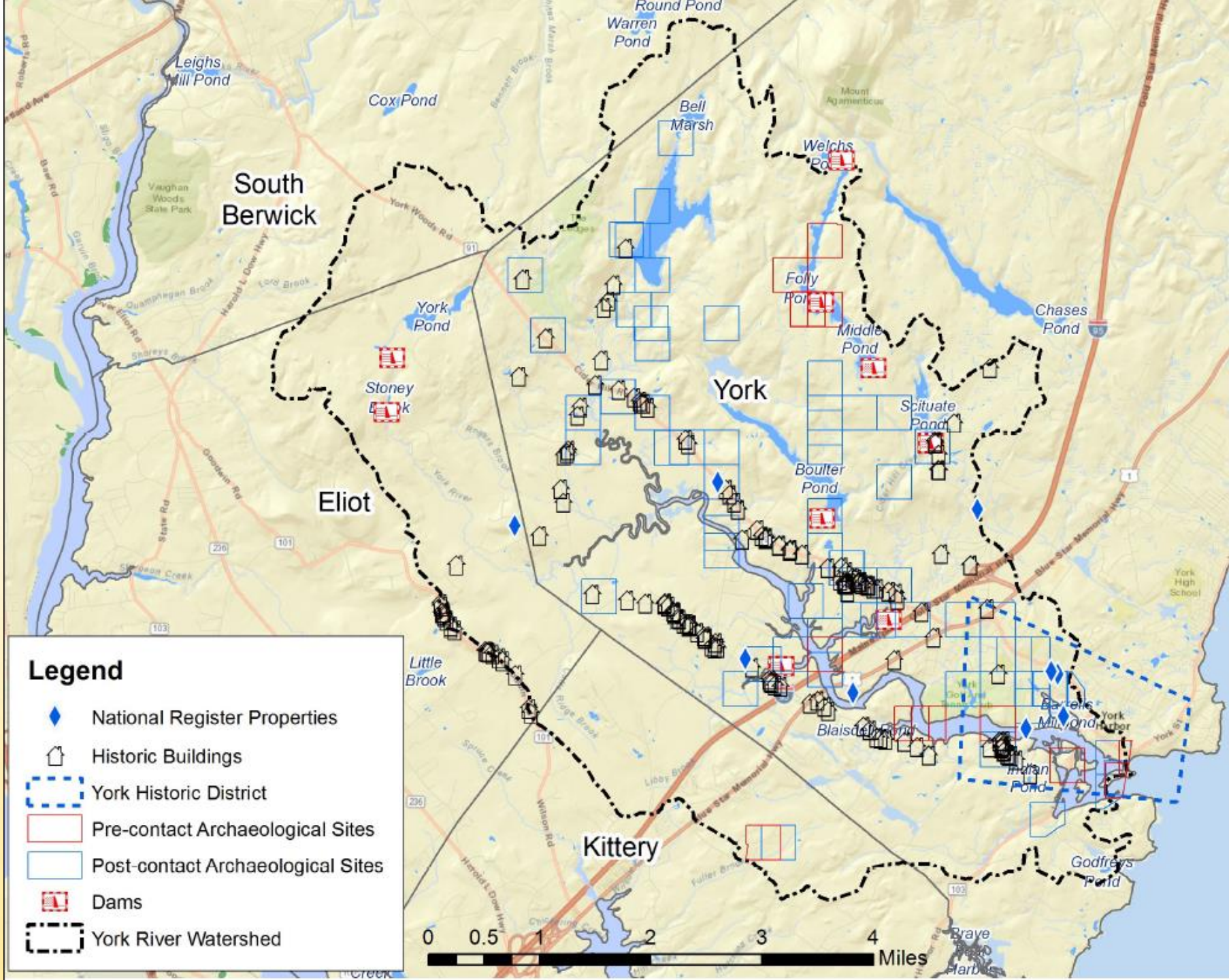
CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

- 9 National Register sites
- ~100 archaeological sites
- Hundreds of historic buildings and structures
- Bridges
- Cultural landscapes



17:—Sewall's Bridge, York, Maine.





HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEYS

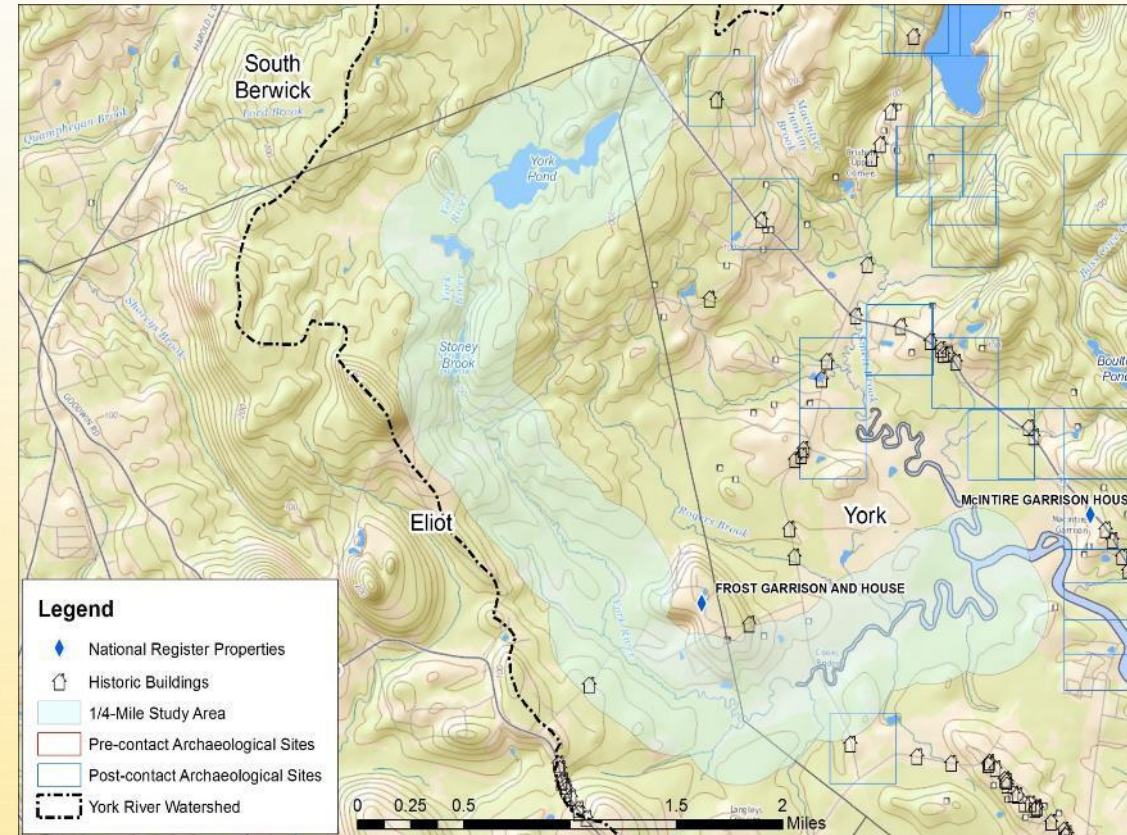
- Archaeology survey
 - 4-day public dig at 9 areas, including 28 volunteers
 - 6 new pre-contact Native American sites discovered
 - 6 historic Euroamerican sites investigated
- Architectural history survey: 26 structures documented



“Small Stemmed Tradition”
5,000-4,500 BP



Staffordshire Slipware, 1665-1770



YORK RIVER WATERSHED – NATURAL RESOURCES

Regional and statewide ecological significance:

- York River Headwaters Focus Area
- Mount Agamenticus Focus Area

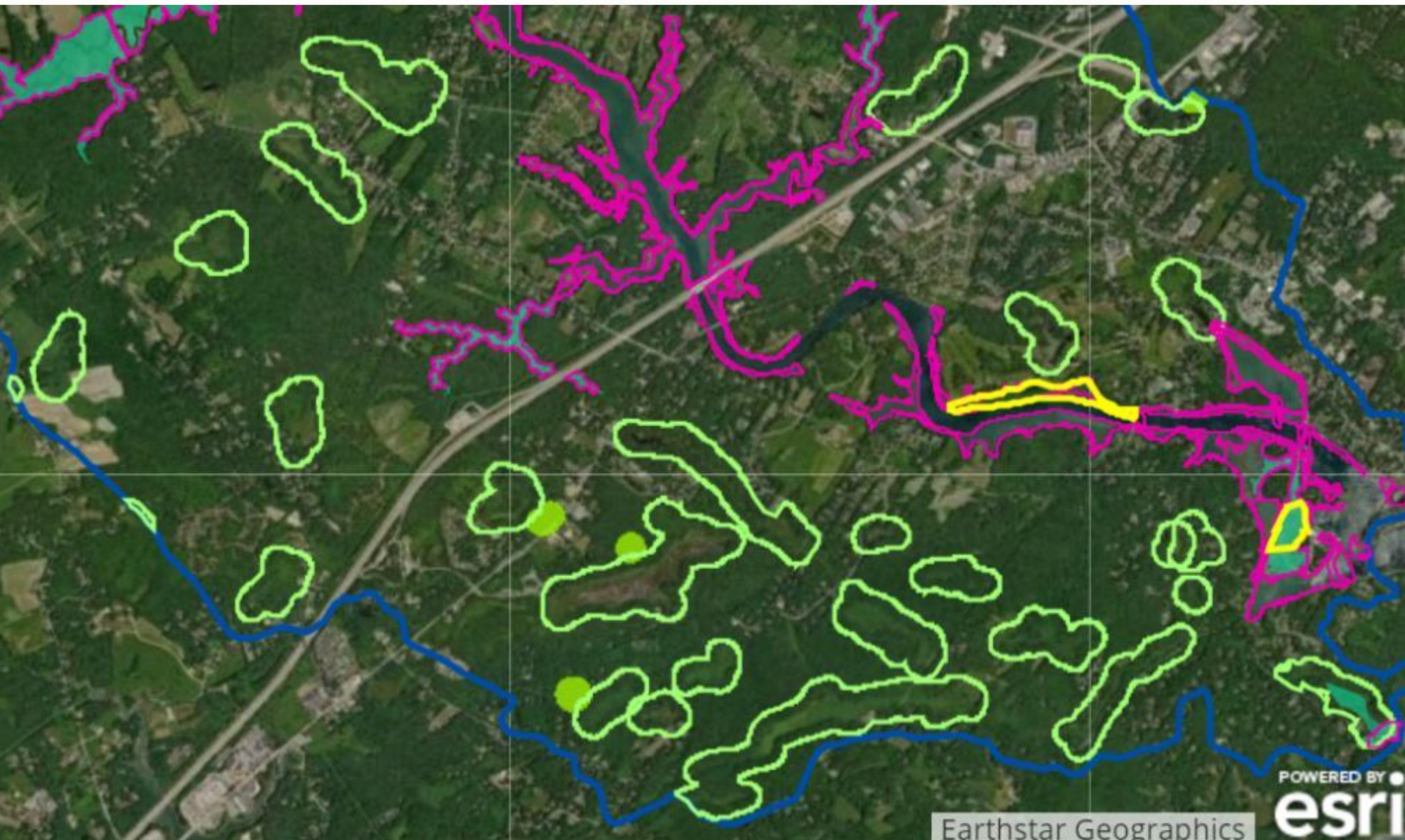
York River estuary is “one of the least disturbed marsh-estuarine ecosystems and may be the most ecologically diverse coastal drainage for its size in the Gulf of Maine” - Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife



IMPORTANT HABITATS

- Salt marshes
- Wading bird and waterfowl habitat
- Deer wintering areas
- Shorebird feeding and roosting areas
- Vernal pools





Tidal Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat



Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat



Vernal Pools



Tidal Marshes



BIODIVERSITY



- MORE DIFFERENT **THREATENED** AND **ENDANGERED SPECIES** THAN ANY OTHER REGION IN MAINE

Examples:

- Blanding's turtle
- New England cottontail
- Ringed boghaunter dragonfly
- Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow



FISH AND FISH HABITAT

York River tidal streams support over 25 different fish species

Rainbow Smelt



Brook Trout



Alewife



2017 FISH SURVEY

- Focus on diadromous fish
 - 4 tributary sites / 10 weeks
- Documented healthy runs of alewife and smelt
- Quality spawning habitat for diadromous fish, especially smelt



WATER RESOURCES

- Very good water quality supports
 - Swimming
 - Fishing
 - Shellfish harvesting
 - Quality aquatic habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife
- DEP studied York River as a ‘reference water’ with high water quality compared to more impaired waters in Southern Maine



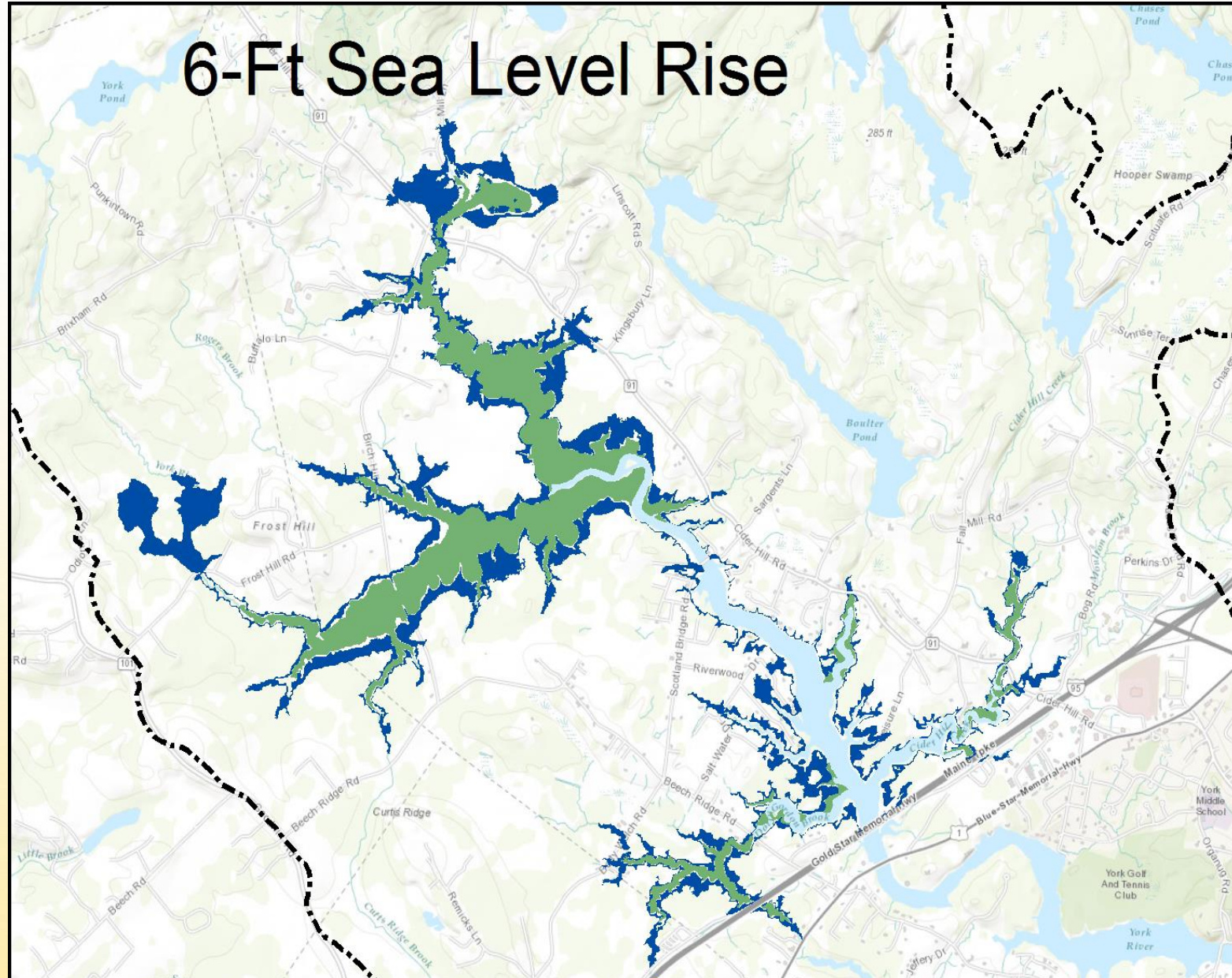
WATER RESOURCES

- Upper watershed ponds provide important drinking water supply
 - 5,500 customers in Kittery, parts of York and Eliot (including Portsmouth Naval Shipyard)



WATERSHED RESILIENCE

- York River watershed: significant potential for marsh migration under different scenarios of sea level rise
- A 2017 report from The Nature Conservancy, [Resilient Coastal Sites for Conservation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic US](#), found that the York River's salt marshes and tidal habitats were in *the top 1 percent of over 1,500 northeastern coastal sites surveyed for resiliency* – that is, most likely to support biological diversity and ecological functions under extreme scenarios of sea level rise.



WATERSHED RESILIENCE

Continued conservation and protection will preserve the York River watershed's ability to be resilient into the future

- Undeveloped natural areas
- High quality habitat
- Water quality conditions
- Marsh migration areas



Increasingly intense coastal storms underscore the value of preserving features that make the York River resilient to damage from flooding and coastal storm surge

WORKING WATERFRONT

- Important to economy and community character
- Mix of public and private infrastructure

Lobster landings

2016: 900,000 lbs (over \$4m)

2017: 720,000 lbs (over \$3.5m)



RECREATIONAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES



YORK RIVER WILD AND SCENIC STUDY

Website: www.YorkRiverMaine.org

Stewardship Plan: website, town halls & libraries

'Story Map' / online tour: <https://arcg.is/njfP9>

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Q&A / DISCUSSION

- Opportunities to use data
- Opportunities to use Stewardship Plan
- How to stay engaged and involved



York River Watershed Stewardship Plan

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