

THE NEW YORK BIOSCAPE INITIATIVE: A COLLABORATIVE STUDY OF ECOLOGY AND HEALTH

In the New York City Metropolitan Region, sprawl and development are eroding the ecological foundation necessary for biodiversity and health. Despite the well-intentioned efforts of many conservationists, increasing numbers of plants and animals are at risk, and human health seems increasingly to be in jeopardy from environmental causes. To reverse these unhealthy trends, we believe that ultimately a practice of sustainable living that protects both biodiversity and human health must be adopted and embraced by area residents. We suggest that a key step toward this end is for regional scientists, health professionals, resource managers, and citizens to better understand together the connections between biodiversity, health, and natural resource management. In 2002, Wildlife Trust launched a collaborative program in the New York City Metropolitan Region: The New York Bioscape Initiative. In May 2004, the group included 36 individuals from 16 regional institutions. The Initiative's objectives are to: (1) assemble a transdisciplinary team to study ecology and health; (2) bring the new discipline of Conservation Medicine to the area; (3) demonstrate links between human-induced environmental change, biodiversity, and the health of all living things; (4) help conserve biodiversity and habitats; and (5) influence environmental policy, ecosystem management, and citizen behavior. It is also our intent to strengthen regional conservation thinking by offering a people-oriented, health approach that unites biodiversity, health, sustainability, and sense of place. Objectives will be realized through a series of interrelated projects and synergistic activities conducted by the team.

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