NELF Lunch Chat Notes
Sept 29, 2020

Takeaways
1. Revisit Scenario Signals - How will COVID-19 influence the scenarios and the future of the land?
    a. Explore labeling the signals to note the "degree" of the influence - how durable is the influence? What is the scale, duration, and magnitude?
2. Add articles about impacts of COVID-19 on New England land use, natural resources, government, and economy to our ongoing [Scenario Signals compilation here](#).
3. Important topic right now: How can we make communities in New England more equitable and resilient, taking into account COVID-19 and climate change?
4. NELF team is available to meet with groups interested in using scenarios and/or NELF for land use planning, such as regional planning agencies. Send contacts to Lucy and Marissa.

Discussion Summary
1. How will COVID-19 influence the scenarios and the future of the land?
    a. Example from Maine - housing market has jumped 17% in price, and housing availability has dropped. Maine has been trying to keep young people from leaving but a growing affordability problem isn't going to help.

2. Inquiry about NELF resources for teaching. How to layer COVID onto scenarios.

3. Where to find demographic data on new trends associated with the pandemic?

4. Interest in a NELF resource - a place to exchange information in a commons for online accessible learning experiences.

5. Factors to consider - how do scenarios interact with: Invasives? Increased flooding? Severe drought? The whole northeast is in a severe drought right now.

6. Both climate change and COVID are increasing the disparities. The "haves" can adapt. The have-nots are falling further behind. What will happen when the eviction moratorium expires?

7. In VT: Eviction moratorium expected to be extended. Real estate is going nuts. Less concern about fragmentation right now because people want to move quickly, into existing homes. The next wave will be land fragmentation. Regulations in VT make it hard and expensive to develop, but with increasing demand there is increasing pressure.

8. Increased housing demand in VT is pricing out local residents.

9. Changing coastlines / sea level rise, not reflected in NELF maps, but this is happening on the landscape.

10. Policies to keep an eye on: Green New Deal, THRIVE agenda. But state budgets are in deep trouble.

11. Updates to VT ACT 250 program (https://nrb.vermont.gov/act250-program), a key legal structure for preventing forest fragmentation. Changes intended to make the permitting process more efficient have reduced opportunities for people to weigh in. The intended part about land use planning didn't come to be.

12. Revisit scenario signals. Update with new information, consider the degree of severity of each signal, and the duration of impact.
    a. Info from tourist seasons in New England? This was a big concern going into summer.
    b. VT foliage season is the biggest season by far, and there will be big losses.

13. NELF is a great tool for public presentations. Should be used more in the conservation commissions. Would be great to start a conversation in a new town that hasn't looked at concerns about the future of the land. Towns that have largely been shielded from development are largely not feeling the pressure, not seeing a threat. It can be hard to start conversations about what a different future might look like.
    a. Action item: NELF Team to reach out to regional planning agencies, about presentations via Zoom.

14. Message to some communities can be to keep an eye on what is happening in the broader region and how that is relevant to where you are.

15. Conservation trends in VT: Instead of speeding up, it is slowing down. Most of the funding is gone. Unless there is new funding, it will continue to slow down. Where to get new funding? Carbon credits? How to engage philanthropy in a more purposeful way? Accelerating the pace of conservation isn't happening. Trying to keep up the current pace is a struggle.