

Cause to Collaborate
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**Assessing the Role of Regional Conservation Partnerships
in Inter-Municipal Collaboration**

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Abstract

This study employs a qualitative approach to understanding the effect regional conservation partnerships have on inter-municipal collaboration in central Massachusetts. Such voluntary collaborative arrangements retain autonomy to municipal actors while providing capacity for collaborative communication.

Without such efforts, multi-jurisdictional governance approaches face challenges to effective regional planning. Interviews with municipal Open Space Committees were used to discern the configuration, goals and regional outlook of committees working with the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. Part two of the study utilized an analysis of Open Space and Recreation Plans across the 26 town region to assess plan goals against a scale of collaborative communication behaviors.

Although evidence of inter-municipal collaboration is limited, the results support the significance of education, networking to build a foundation for collaborative efforts between organizations, and within municipalities.

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Introduction

The New England region currently has more forested acres than at any point in the last two hundred years, yet today it faces significant ecosystem health threats (Aber et al. 2010). The Wildlands and Woodlands Vision (2010), a Harvard University publication, calls for a renewed effort to safeguard New England's "continental scale habitat corridor" (2) from forest fragmentation due to residential development and the changing ownership patterns of vast timberland holdings (Quabbin to Cardigan Fact Sheet 2011).

The Wildlands and Woodlands Partnership is an overarching network of regional organizations considered to be a model of collaboration (Aber et al. 2010, 25). Under the umbrella of this collaborative consortium, Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCP's) have emerged as an "information resource" and "project catalyst" to fill the recognized planning void for forest stewardship (18). The working definition of a Regional Conservation Partnership has been described as an "informal networks of people representing private and public organizations and agencies who collaborate over time to implement a shared conservation vision" (Highstead 2012, 1).

A positive trend in community-based collaborative approaches is the ability for the efforts to incorporate a complexity of interests on issues at the local level (Steelman 2002, 143). The trend follows the reality that many land-use planning decisions that address habitat loss are also approached locally (Miller et al. 2009; Steelman 2002, 146). However, at the local level also await various boards and

commissions, often working independently of one another while operating over the same locality (Hall 2002).

Many researchers agree that similar to RCP's, horizontal collaborative arrangements that span organizations and communities, stem from the increasingly interconnected nature of today's problems and the often insufficient, agency-led governing structures struggling to address them (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Brunckhorst 2000; Brunner et al. 2002; Innes and Booher 2010; Dukes, Firehock and Birkhoff 2011; Margerum 2011). Operating at a variety of scales and attracting a variety of names, including *community-based collaboratives* (Duke, Firehock and Birkhoff 2011; Walker and Senecah 2011; Curtin 2011), *collaborative environmental management* (Koontz et al. 2000), and *collaborative resource management* (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000); collaborative approaches can take many forms (Mason 2008).

Similarly, collaborative approaches can originate from a variety of different governance structures, such as a community or non-profit driven approach, to those that are heavily influenced or induced by a government agency (Walker and Senecah 2011). With the considerable variation in terminology, Conley and Moote (2003) use an umbrella term of *collaborative natural resource management effort* to describe "multi-party natural resource management projects, programs or decision making processes using a participatory approach and explore the range of evaluation approaches that have been applied to such efforts" (372).

Despite over 39,000 local governments existing in the U.S. in 2002, natural resource management approaches show potential to foster collaborative

approaches to governing beyond jurisdictional borders (Knudson 2011; O’Niell 2007; Warner 2006). From research on peer-to-peer learning and social network building, there is evidence that peer leaders may be the best avenue for engaging municipalities (Highstead 2014, 6). Through the creation of peer networks, it is believed that regional conservation partnerships can build capacity for organizations and governmental structures to achieve their conservation goals (Ibid.).

This thesis study will qualitatively examine the role of the north-central Massachusetts RCP known as the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), and its host organization, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, by exploring their influence on municipalities, and investigating the real and perceived role they play in affecting a range of communication behaviors that can be referred to as inter-municipal collaboration. Through an examination of their efforts to further landscape level conservation goals by engaging with municipalities, this study aims to gain insight into whether such collaborative practices reinforces the capacity for further inter-municipal collaboration among local governments. Surveying the literature on natural resource management collaboratives, the effect of collaborative efforts on local municipalities, as well as network approaches to knowledge exchange, I will address the following research questions in the following Chapter 2:

- What methods of programming are regional conservation partnerships using to engage municipalities and build capacity for inter-municipal collaboration?

- What is *collaboration*?
- How do regional conservation partnerships compare to other natural resource management collaboratives?
- What are the barriers to municipal cooperation and collaboration and in what ways have they been overcome?
- In what ways can peer learning, networking and trust building create capacity for future inter-municipal collaborations?

Chapter 2 | Literature Review

It can be difficult today to identify an environmental initiative that does not attempt some form of collaboration. Although “collaboration” is a buzzword that is readily employed in a variety of governing systems, it has not always been so ubiquitous (Imperial 1999, 449). Rather, collaboration has largely risen in response to an evolution of political, social and environmental trends throughout the twentieth century (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000, 11). This literature review will trace the origins of collaboration in the framework of modern governance, as well as outline typologies of collaborative arrangements. By exploring collaborative efforts from a social and organizational perspective, the following review lends insight into the effect regional conservation partnerships can have on the ability for municipalities to cooperate, coordinate or otherwise communicate on issues that span their jurisdictional bounds.

The Rise of Collaborative Governance

With new demands on natural resources after World War II, coupled with increased mobility among Americans, federal agencies at the time were adopting industrial era, “top-down” strategies to keep up with the changing socio-political landscape (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000, 11). However, these bureaucratic approaches often fell short of addressing complex issues, instead being only “reactive treatments of symptoms,” which were further stymied by the narrow focus of organizational parameters and government guidelines (Brunckhorst 2000, 48;

Margerum 2011). In *Collaboration*, Barbara Gray (1989) recognizes the complexity of conflicting orders and interests, explaining that dynamic situations can make organizations “highly interdependent...creating unwanted consequences...and constraints imposed by others” (1).

Despite early tendencies to silo governing processes, the restrictive forces common in formal agencies began to change with the increasing democratic consciousness in the 1960’s and 70’s (Wondolleck and Yafee 2000, 13). Scientific and technical data, once the sole realm of *rational* decision makers; those who based policy choices on the logical analysis of issues and the comparison of various approaches and outcomes, was becoming more accessible (Innes and Booher 2010, 10). In short, data was increasingly used by organizations and groups outside the government (Wondolleck and Yafee 2000, 13).

Karen Firehock (2011) recognizes the diffusion of both scientific data and the components of systemic problems. From the environmental management perspective, Firehock offers a similar rationale as Barbara Gray on the growth of collaboratives. She cites the rise in collaboration as a symptom of several trends, including: complex public and private ownership patterns; the growth of the American property rights movement; the need to manage multiple objectives across various boundaries; the belief that people should participate in issues of “shared commons;” failure of command and control management; and a growing interest in solutions that reflect community values (4).

Firehock’s explanation of the catalytic forces behind modern collaboration offers a bridge to several themes emerging in the literature regarding the growth of

collaboration in today's framework of governance. One prominent theme is the undercurrent of negotiation theory. In fact, Innes and Booher (2010), in *Planning with Complexity*, regard Fisher and Ury's seminal piece, *Getting to Yes*, as "the most directly influential theory for collaborative dialogues" (28). Innes and Booher address collaborative responses as solutions to the organizational complexity Firehock outlines. Together, the authors put negotiation theory to work, describing a focus on interests rather than positions and invention of options for mutual gain – both cornerstones of collaboration (Ibid.).

Ronald Brunner's (2002) work further highlights negotiation theory's focus on uncovering mutual interests. In *Finding Common Ground*, he refers to the traditional governmental response to complex problems as a "gridlock" among public agencies (36). His interviews with Donald Snow reveal that the "urge to...break gridlock" (Ibid.) grew out of the understanding of mutual interests among competing stakeholders.

While the emerging focus on negotiation unfolded in the 1980's, so did the realization that new and increasingly complex problems were becoming harder to manage. Richard Margerum (2011), in *Beyond Consensus: Improving Collaborative Planning and Management* cites the rise of far reaching problems, as underscoring the need for an increased understanding of the interconnections between human and ecological functions (11). Innes and Booher (2010) frame collaboration as a response to such "wicked problems" in *Planning with Complexity* (1). Similar to Margerum, they draw on the premise that the world is an "open interactive system,"

and that in an age of complexity problems can often lack a definition, never-mind clear goals to be addressed (2).

A third theme, prevalent in the response to the complexity of “wicked problems” (Innes and Booher 2010), is the recognized significance of creating new forms of knowledge and the need for a process that can reflect values and beliefs, as well as facts. Innes and Booher (2010) offer three explanations for the shifting emphasis toward new forms of knowledge in collaborative processes, including: the replacement of formal expertise with an understanding of the non-linear, socially constructed forms of knowledge; an increased focus on lay knowledge to guide policy and planning efforts; and new forms of deliberation, including storytelling and role playing, in which new possibilities and outcomes can be achieved (5-6). Margerum (2010) lends brevity, writing that collaboration has evolved to “address the range of human, societal, and ecological needs” (10).

This integration of local and community knowledge with science-based approaches is central to creating new and adaptive forms of knowledge and learning (Curtin 2011). “Adaptive management,” a concept often associated with collaborative dialogues, is essentially an approach to management that relies on the learning process (Ibid., 21). Just as Margerum suggests the need for ongoing, adaptive approaches to solving complex problems, Charles Curtin, in *Community Based Collaboration*, argues that coupling local and science based knowledge can lead to “over-the-horizon” (20) learning. Such a concept is similar to the “new possibilities and outcomes” Innes and Booher suggest (2010, 5). This type of experience is the product of “learning to learn” (Curtin 2011, 21) or double and

triple loop learning processes (Ibid.). In this sense, Curtin acknowledges that collaboration is an evolving process, and when coupled with a diverse knowledge base, it can lead to a learning experience and the realization of “alternative futures” (21).

Defining Collaboration

Even by narrowing the realm of collaborative activities to natural resource management, the literature is vast, replete with various definitions and terms. *Community-based collaboration; place-based natural resource management; collaborative conservation* and *grassroots environmental management* are just a few of the more prominent terms relating to collaboration (Dukes, Firehock and Birkhoff 2011, 2).

The following definitions include early descriptions of collaboration, to the relatively recent emphasis on natural resource collaboration. In *Collaborating*, Barbara Gray (1989) refers to practice as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited visions” (5). In *Beyond Consensus*, Richard Margerum (2011) builds on Gray’s early definition, however referring to it as an “approach,” rather than a “process” (6). He defines collaboration as an “approach to solving complex problems in which a diverse group of autonomous stakeholders deliberates to build consensus and develop networks for translating consensus into results” (Ibid.).

The inclusion of various parties or stakeholders is crucial to each definition.

Exploration or deliberation are stressed in both definitions as ways to address issues and move beyond their traditional positions.

Margerum (2011) helps to further his definition of collaboration by including it among seven concepts at work in a collaborative approach: communication, consultation, conflict resolution, consensus building, cooperation and coordination (8). Although he considers consensus building a “core concept,” each concept can affect the process and implementation of the collaborative approach (9).

The ubiquitous concept of collaboration has allowed the word to move from an action or verb, to an adjective or noun as the complexity of issues is addressed. Conservation efforts that include both public and private interests require management and collaboration across boundaries (Wondolleck and Yafee 2000, 15). This diversity of stakeholder interests is clear in the definition put forth by the *Community-Based Collaboratives Research Consortium* (2011) By the Consortium’s standards, a community based collaborative (CBC) is a

group convened voluntarily from the local community with a focus on resource management...or planning...whose management impacts the physical, environmental, and/or economic health of the community; was brought together by a shared desire to influence the protection and use of natural resources through recommendation or direct actions that will impact the management of the resource; has membership that includes a broad array of interests...and utilizes a decision-making process that requires participation by local stakeholders (Dukes, Firehock and Birkhoff, 2-3).

By this definition Dukes, Firehock, and Birkhoff (2011) suggest that the collaborative’s unique aspect is due to the diversity of stakeholder representation,

which can offer “unique perspectives to framing problems and solutions” (Ibid., 2-3).

The above definitions point back to the three themes of collaborative processes discussed earlier. Specifically, the implication that at the core of collaboration are diverse stakeholders convening in a process of consensus searching, which can reveal new possibilities and solutions (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Dukes, Firehock and Birkhoff 2011; Innes and Booher 2010). Although exploration into the theory behind collaboration is vital, understanding how one collaborative arrangement – the Regional Conservation Partnership - can then affect collaboration between municipalities, requires a more robust look at how different collaborative entities situate their efforts within social processes and institutions.

Regional Conservation Partnerships in the Action Arena

Labich, Hamin and Record (2013) define regional conservation partnerships (RCP's) as public-private forms of collaboration involving organizational, municipal, and agency representatives coordinating their “activities to advance the protection of land within a region or to conserve specific natural resources that cross town, county or state boundaries” (1). However, RCPs are only one of many types of environmental management collaboratives (Ibid.). Watershed partnerships, for instance, have grown significantly in the last two decades, sharing several similarities with RCP's, particularly in that they can take on a variety of institutional arrangements, from the more “loosely configured citizen-dominated efforts” to official non-profit organizations and “structured inter-agency agreements”

(Genskow and Born 2006, 53). Moreover, Genskow and Born find that watershed initiatives vary across water management boundaries, while incorporating “shared decision making, collaboration and participatory engagement of a wide array of stakeholders” (Ibid.).

From a focus perspective, both RCP’s and watershed initiatives share overlap with ecosystem-management approaches. These characteristics align with Edward Grumbine’s (1994) early definition of ecosystem management, stating that the process “integrates scientific knowledge of ecological relationships within a complex sociopolitical and values framework toward the general goal of protecting native ecosystem integrity over the long term” (31).

Grumbine’s definition in turn, correlates with the description of “Woodland Council’s,” (Aber et al. 2010, 24) as outlined in the 2010 Wildland and Woodlands report. The councils, which have the flexibility of being arranged in the form of an RCP, are “coalitions of individuals and groups that collaborate to increase the pace of conservation” (Ibid.). Although RCPs do not deal explicitly at the watershed level, they use a similar regional approach to boundary setting. They “develop and implement” (Labich 2015, 2) a conservation vision and are made up of a variety of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders (Ibid.). However, to best understand the potential for collaboration between such diverse stakeholders it is important to note how such groups interact and arrange themselves in what Mark Imperial (1999) calls “action arenas:” the institutional setting in which different efforts reside (455). Understanding how RCP’s interact within their action arena lends clues to their potential to influence municipal collaboration.

Richard Margerum (2011) unpacks the concept of “action arenas,” suggesting that collaboration can be split into three levels of institutional arrangement: the action, organization and policy levels (23). This typology of collaborative efforts can include factors such as geographic scale, scope of membership, organizational participation, and most notably, different levels of decision making along a spectrum of institutional management (Ibid.). Action collaboratives are primarily concerned with “on-the-ground” (24) operations such as implementing projects, education and organizing for community action (Ibid.). Organizational collaboratives tend to focus on the coordination of program and policy efforts, pulling in agencies, municipalities and other organizations to streamline efforts (25). At the highest end of the institutional spectrum are policy collaboratives, which often work with a range of interest groups to develop overarching plans, goals and policies that may then be adopted and implemented at the organizational and action stages (Ibid.).

Elinor Ostrom’s (Imperial 1999) Institutional Analysis and Development framework (IAD) is useful in exploring the forces behind a collaborative’s functioning. Specifically, the IAD framework can shed light on ecosystem-based management approaches, in that it centers on the rules that govern a wide range of social institutions (454). Mark Imperial suggests that a successful collaborative focuses on rules. He specifically notes that how rules are adopted necessitates understanding not only the problem at hand, but the individuals or cultures involved, and the “institutional setting the individuals are embedded within” (455). Imperial (1999) claims that the IAD framework can influence the pattern of

interaction between actors in the action arena in three ways: by the assumptions different actors hold regarding the rules and rule structure that are used to order their relationships; the compatibility of adopted rules with physical and biological constraints, particularly in a setting that allows actors to be flexible in creation and enforcement; and similar to Innes and Booher's focus on local knowledge, the IAD framework argues that "inter-organizational relationships will be influenced by the attributes of the community where the actors are located (454).

The IAD framework's focus on the nesting of different rule sets may be particularly useful in understanding the way regional conservation partnerships can affect inter-municipal collaboration. Mark Imperial (1999) suggests that the interconnected nature of action-arenas and rules means that actors must understand how rules governing the actions of one group can affect the organizational relationships and processes that affect another (Ibid., 455). The implication is that through education about rules and processes, which mirrors some technical assistance offered by regional conservation partnerships, there is potential to affect the success of collaborative efforts. Put simply, opening actors up to seeing themselves in the broader action arena can help them better grasp the rules and processes they operate within (Imperial 1999).

Collaboration and Governance

If today's environmental management practices have largely trended away from the past's "top down" approaches, as Richard Margerum (2011) contends, toward increasingly "cross jurisdictional responses," (10) can the same be said for

municipal governance? The question brings to light the regional, trans-boundary nature of ecosystem management challenges in particular. Brody, Highfield and Carrasco (2004) claim that “inter-organizational collaboration across jurisdictions, agencies and land ownership is often necessary” (34) to address issues that go beyond human boundaries. This apparent need for collaboration goes beyond the borders of the environmental management literature as well. In fact, it is aptly contained in the new regionalism movement thinking, which advocates “cooperation, collaboration and networking, and partnerships among governments and with the private sector to address regional governance problems” (Hamilton, Miller and Paytas 2004, 154).

Woodland Councils, as well as larger RCP’s seem to be operating under a similar framework as new regionalism approaches. Both have tended away from the top down approach, instead relying on networks, peer learning and horizontal collaboration between landowners, organizations and in some cases, municipalities, to build a common vernacular through a bottom-up, voluntary approach (Aber et al., 24). Yet, although RCP’s are described as a “bottom up” they are also partnering with various levels of government agencies to advance land protection (Labich, Hamin and Record 2013, 1). In fact, Labich, Hamin and Record find that similar to the literature of on environmental management, collaboration is a key indicator to success, and in particular, the effective engagement of municipalities (Ibid., 16).

Hamilton, Miller and Paytas (2004) point to this shift toward a collaborative framework, explaining that government structures have given way to “governance” structures (156). The authors describe the metropolitan region as a structure of

“governments at all levels, non-profit organizations and the private sector working together in new partnerships and relationships that blur sectoral, jurisdictional, and geographic lines” (Ibid.). The region becomes the “intersection” between state and local governments (Ibid.).

The above new regionalist ideas of softening the jurisdictional boundaries through inter-sectoral relationships encompasses one of the two prominent veins of thought regarding the effect of local governments on the metropolitan region (Hamilton, Miller and Paytas 2004, 155). The other school of “localists,” or polycentric supporters, argue the opposite - that inter-local competition leads to a competitive environment where goods and services can be allocated more efficiently, and where citizens are allowed to exercise choice in the level of services they need (Ibid.).

Despite evolving regional governance approaches that work to expand inter-jurisdictional collaboration, there is a sense that the traditional American governing system lacks the political structure to deal with issues at a regional level (Calthorpe and Fulton 2001). This is best seen through decisions affecting development patterns, in which various municipal authorities and boards have defined areas of input and authority over various land use regulations (Eerie-Niagara 2006). In the absence of cooperation, pollution, water quality issues, land use disputes, diseconomies of scale and common property resource issues deter regional development (Nunn and Rosentraub 1997; Feiock 2009).

Furthermore, differing concerns across regions that can vary in socio-economic status, combined with a fear of losing autonomy to regional bodies, makes

formal regional governing systems seem unattainable in the near future (Knudson 2011). In this political framework, collaborative decision-making must contend with dynamic agendas affected by elections, as well as the often cited inter-agency turf wars (Mintzberg et al. 1996, 69). Against these difficulties, Knudson (2011) claims that cross-jurisdictional and regional *cooperation* are more realistic avenues to foster “coherence, equity and efficiency” at the regional scale (54).

Despite the literature contending that local governments are not capable of effectively addressing regional issues, Richard Feiock (2009) provides evidence that organized collaboratives, such as RCP’s, may be well positioned to stir collaborative behaviors. Feiock claims that voluntary cooperation is actually common among municipalities. He finds that although not mandated by a central authority, participating in intergovernmental collaborative arrangements can bring “collective” and “selective” benefits by increasing efficiencies and economies of scale when addressing “spillover problems,” and, in some cases, providing career incentives to local leaders (303).

What forms can Inter-Municipal Collaboration Take?

Institutional Collective Action

As relatively diffuse arrangements working within multiple arenas, the literature on Regional Conservation Partnerships and other similar collaboratives suggests they show a strong potential for affecting local level collaboration. For instance, voluntary and self-governing collaborations have been argued to be more effective at resolving collective action issues than centralized approaches (Feiock

2009; Ostrum 1990; Kwon 2007). The literature on “institutional collective action” (ICA) provides a lens to view both the form of collective action, as well as the capacity in each form for collaboration. The ICA perspective attempts to solve local government fragmentation by extending collective action theories from individuals to institutional actors (Feiock 2009, 57). It uses social network and agency concepts to open up a “broad set of collective decisions” to be analyzed (Ibid.). And perhaps most pertinent to regional conservation partnerships, ICA may act as a vehicle for understanding the role of social capital and networks, including their ability to increase regional collaboration. The following brief survey of horizontally arranged ICA approaches illustrates the types of self-organizing institutions that can be used to navigate municipal fragmentation without giving up local autonomy (Kwon 2007).

The most centralized of the ICA approaches are regional authorities (Feiock 2009). Although consolidation of municipal functions is considered by some to be more “rational and efficient,” it has largely failed as a reaction to ICA problems because of political, and transaction costs (Ibid., 361). The creation of special districts, a product of centralized decision making that consolidates certain functions or services across municipal boundaries, has had better success at alleviating problems with horizontal service provision (Ibid.).

Feiock (2009) suggests the superiority of voluntary cooperation by citing mostly unproductive efforts at consolidation. He states that “self organizing institutional solutions” can be more effective than mandated regional cooperation because those solutions preserve the “autonomy of actors in a given arena” (360).

He contends that collaborative groups dealing with information exchange and program coordination can strengthen “collectively reinforced shared understandings and expectations, that although are only socially enforced - are binding” (365).

The potential for self organizing approaches to collaboration is evident in the north quabbin region of Massachusetts. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, host partner of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, delivers six core conservation programs spanning community engagement, farmland preservation and land management and stewardship that may provide a window into local application of ICA approaches (Mount Grace Conservation Trust 2015). However, three programs, the *Americorps Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow (MassLIFT)*, *Community Conservation Program* and *Community Engagement Program* are most applicable to this study due to their combined focus on building support for conservation, increasing regional conservation capacity, and providing conservation services to communities (Ibid.).

The existence of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust’s programming however, does not seem to be directly attributable to the NQRLP. Labich, Hamin and Record suggest that there is no evidence of a governance structure among RCP’s that sets an organizational directive for community engagement and support either within or for communities (2013). Nevertheless, such programming is an important aspect of RCP’s that conserve land (Ibid.). Labich, Hamin and Record (2013) performed a comparative analysis of land conserving RCP’s, finding that common attributes among the group included providing conservation planning services to

municipalities (9), choosing municipal representatives as partners, and developing a “mapped conservation vision with targets” (Ibid.).

In another example, the Keen New Hampshire based regional land trust, the Monadnock Conservancy (2015), a partner in the Quabbin to Cardigan Initiative of which NQRLP is also a partner in, notes on its website that collaboration with area municipalities is a key focus of its work (Ibid.). The organization specifies that it works “toward establishing a collaborative vision and outlining actions” to shape regional outcomes, noting its work to engage community members, “strengthen local leaders,” identify conservation priorities and increase the understanding of the role land plays within the community’s quality of life among others (Ibid.). The actions of regional land trusts such as the Monadnock Conservancy and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust seem in line with Richard Feiock’s (2009) ICA research, in that voluntary “self organizing solutions” can preserve the type of autonomous relationship that Labich points to, while still delivering programs that can strengthen “collectively reinforced shared understandings,” and in turn extend collective action to “institutional actors” (360-365).

Regional organizations, such as transportation focused metropolitan planning organizations, councils of government, and regional partnerships aimed at economic development typically fall into the category of semi-voluntary forms of ICA, as often their function relies on federal money (Feiock 2009). However, relying on federal grants does not necessarily preclude collaborative behavior. In her research of regional marketing partnerships, Jennifer Nelles (2010) finds that although they do not eliminate competition, the act of cooperating for regional

economic development purposes reveals relatively few barriers (8). Using the regional organization or partnership as a vehicle for collective action allows some of the transaction costs, including disparities between socioeconomic statuses of neighboring regions and the measurement and specificity of service delivery, to be internalized (Ibid.).

Internalizing transaction costs pops up in a study of watershed partnerships as well. Lubell (2002) found that partnerships were more likely to form when the transaction costs of building and maintaining new institutions are outweighed by the relative ease of partnering (Ibid., 2; Feiock 2009). Against the proverbial iron hand of municipal consolidation, Warner (2006) argues the practice of cooperation retains positive public support in that it “enables municipalities to retain their independent identities” while maintaining the sense of fiscal efficiency (224-225). Together this research suggests that the idea of respecting autonomy seems central to the RCP strategy when operating among the checkerboard of local New England municipalities. By focusing on the voluntary nature of involvement in arrangements such as woodland councils or technical assistance workshops, it seems plausible that knowledge can be created and transmitted without the fear of losing local control.

Collaboration vs. Cooperation

The difference between the literature on inter-municipal “cooperation” and “collaboration” is more than an exercise in semantics. Not only does the distinction help link the arrangement of regional conservation partnerships with their potential

collaborative effects, but the words also offer a fork between two paths of the literature (Agranoff and McGuire 2003). If collaboration stresses the effects born from the arrangement of certain actors, inter-municipal cooperation is more a product of that arrangement.

A significant theme in the inter-municipal cooperation literature focuses on the delivery of public services as the main reason for cooperation. In fact, the literature on cooperation seems to point more toward a response to a specific need or service. Cooperation is essentially concerned with “working jointly with others to some end;” differing from collaboration in that it is a “purposive” relationship (Agranoff and McGuire 2003, 4). The literature on inter-municipal cooperation, collaboration and agreement all point toward a frequent use of voluntary arrangements, especially for economic development and service delivery. However, the form of specific agreements and the impetus for their adoption can vary (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Warner 2006; Andrew 2009; Nelles 2010; Kwon 2007).

Simon Andrew (2009) finds that inter-jurisdictional agreements can be both formal and informal, as well as voluntary and mandated formal arrangements can be created by regional organizations and authorities, which initiate their creation for a specific purpose (2). However, more voluntary and self-organizing approaches to institutional collective action, such as contract networks, “link local governments in legally binding agreements” and service contracts, yet offer minimal loss of autonomy and the opportunity for improved regional relationships (Feiock 2009, 364). Such arrangements often include boundary agreements, memoranda of

understanding, and mutual aid agreements, which can be negotiated based on the needs and concerns of the governments involved (Ibid.). Behind privatization and public production, cooperation between municipalities has been a relatively common form of achieving economies of scale for the provision of public services (Warner 2006).

According to Agranoff and McGuire (2003), in *Collaborative Public Management*, collaboration describes the “process of facilitating or operating in multi-organizational arrangements” to solve problems that are difficult to address for one actor alone (4). Much like the definitions put forth in the environmental management literature, collaboration is considered a problem solving tool for “discovering” solutions under various sets of constraints (Ibid.).

Aber et al. (2010) and Labich, Hamlin and Record’s (2013) descriptions of regional conservation partnerships suggest that they are arranged in a similar pattern of public management as described above by Agranoff and McGuire. However, since the services RCP’s are providing to municipalities, such as technical assistance, network linking, and capacity building differ from finite service delivery contracts, how can their affect on the potential for inter-municipal collaboration be understood? Agranoff and McGuire (2003) suggest that effectiveness cannot be captured solely through the examination of the definition of collaboration. Rather they contend that collaborative management - strategizing to “manage interdependencies” - is the most collaborative arrangement (64). Specifically, the authors state that jurisdiction-based collaborative management, similar to setups such as the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, Franklin Regional

Council of Governments and other collaboratives with various partners, “induce leadership by forging strategic design...around dozens of horizontal and vertical consultations (Ibid.).

Digging more into the functionality of collaborative arrangements, Frey et al. (2006) studied multiple frameworks for identifying levels of collaboration, including Teresa Hogue’s scale of community linkages, in order to describe the forms of collaborative activity, rather than focus on any one inter-municipal arrangement. Broken down by “purpose,” “structure,” and “process,” the researchers describe the five levels of community linkages as networking, cooperation or alliance, coordination or partnership, coalition and collaboration (386). At the base of the scale is networking, with a purpose of creating “dialogue and common understanding,” as well as creating a “base of support” (Hogue 1994). Collaboration lies at the highest end of the spectrum, where accomplishing a “shared vision” and building “interdependent systems” to reach goals is the main purpose (Ibid). As the host organization for the NQRLP, Mount Grace Conservation Trust has demonstrated an approach that would aim for at least the networking end of Hogue’s scale. In an NQRLP e-newsletter (2011), an announcement for an “Open Space Conference” in Greenfield, Massachusetts, specifically reaches out to municipal Open Space Committees, which are common volunteer committees in the region. The free conference advertises ways to learn about writing an “open space and recreation plan,” build capacity for land protection projects, find funding, engage the community in preservation efforts, and take policy action within a municipality, such as passing the Community Preservation Act (Ibid.). The subject

matter and intended audience of the conference suggests the same focus on “dialogue and shared understanding” which Hogue’s scale details (1994), suggesting there is at least potential for building a “base of support” (Ibid.). Moreover, technical assistance described in the newsletter fits with Feiock (2009) and Lubell’s (2002) research on the importance of maintaining autonomy, meaning that the Open Space Conference may not be aimed at creating the contractual infrastructure of collaboration that could prematurely threaten a municipality’s autonomy, but rather functioning as a starting point to move up on the scale’s spectrum.

In fact, Teresa Hogue’s (1994) scale seems to adequately contain the range of collaborative effects at work even in this specific NQRLP example, as the networking and relationship building may eventually lead to more collaborative behavior such as building “shared vision” (Ibid.) at the more progressive end of the scale. However, the question remains as to how those relationships can bridge themselves across municipalities and further across disciplines.

Paul Knudson’s (2011) case study approach of collaborative efficiency differs from Teresa Hogue’s instrumental technique, in that Knudson’s method allows for an understanding of how the relationships between municipalities engaged in land use matters are forged. Scenic Hudson, a group studied by Knudson, offers technical and planning assistance and education to communities regarding the regional impacts and consequences of different development and planning projects (Ibid.). Although the group, at times, simply tries to shine a light on the natural assets each town retains to grow appreciation among the community, Scenic Hudson also has to be mindful of the way they introduce themselves to municipalities they wish to

work with, paying homage both to network theory and trust building, as well as a respect for autonomy seen in earlier institutional collective action examples (59). For instance, in one case, Scenic Hudson first built relationships with the Mayor of one village in order to gain a better “rapport” with the town at large (59). In this way, Scenic Hudson is trying to attain its broad goals of land and waterfront preservation by building relationships and educating local town commissions around regional issues (Ibid.).

How Can Regional Conservation Partnerships Affect Inter-Municipal Collaboration?

Bioregional Impulses:

One way to understand the capacity for collaboration between municipalities is by unpacking the theory of “regional impulses” (Foster 1997). Kathryn Foster (1997) explains that there are two types of regional government behavior, often exuding the same characteristics at different scales (376). The first involves the larger region, where it focuses on its outward identity and “external relations” with other regions; a characteristic perspective often observed among regional economic development initiatives. The second involves the “internal relations,” in respect to localities within a region that “forge administrative, political, economic, social or other ties to create regional outcomes” (Ibid.). Despite their operation at different scales, Foster explains that they often deal with the same issues of power sharing, competition and mutual benefit (Ibid).

Foster's (1997) explanation on regional "impulse" and identity fits into the understanding of Regional Conservation Partnerships. Labich, Hamin and Record found that of the RCP's that conserved land within six years of formation, the creation of governance structures, such as steering committees, seem to be a prominent factor (16) In fact, their study found that of the RCP's that had protected land by 2009, forty percent had worked directly with municipalities; ninety percent had created and mapped a conservation vision and sixty percent of land protecting RCP's had created additional governance structures to provide the decision making infrastructure for regional conservation success (Ibid.).

Moreover, a growing body of research suggests that natural resource issues can "facilitate and build regional ties," by serving as a regional link which can improve communications and relationship building (Foster 1997; Knudson 2011; O'Niell 2007). O'Niell's (2007) research on watershed conservation finds that although there are different perceptions of issues in both rural and urban resident's lived space, proponents of watershed approaches believe the process can "identify local needs" and that "processes for decision making can be adjusted to suit local participants" (249).

Geography, it appears, can be the foundational infrastructure for fostering collaboration. While O'Niell (2007) stresses the importance of incorporating local knowledge into the process of outreach (250), Foster (1997) sees the large natural barriers, such as mountain ranges, being a hindrance to collaborative efforts, whereas localities that share a common landscape; that "flow seamlessly" into one another, may be better equipped to collaborate (377). Furthermore, Foster states

that the shared nature of natural resources offers a valuable rationale for regional cooperation (Ibid.).

In practice, the focus on natural and cultural resources as common identifiers across jurisdictions is a sturdy concept. In Michigan, the Land Information Access Association or LIAA, launched a successful initiative called “Partnership for Change” to spur inter-municipal collaboration (2016). The Partnership for Change initiative used community organizing, training and educational services to deliver on a variety of priorities aimed at improving land use policy across multi-jurisdictional regions sharing a common natural resource or economic base (6).

East-central Massachusetts’s 495 Compact Plan (2012), prepared by a variety of collaborative organizations, regional planning agencies and conservation organizations approached multi-jurisdictional efforts in a similar manner. Although the 495 region was defined less on natural resource characteristics alone, and rather with a blend of spatial, economic and demographic indicators, the use of mapping and visioning was a prominent focus of the project (21). Local points of interest, including regional transportation project sites, unprotected open space sites and large developments were mapped out by the service providers and presented to the participating communities (23). Regional forums tied the similar issues and opportunities to the larger regional framework, giving municipal officials a chance to literally see the priority development and conservation areas, including areas of important groundwater resources, within their community as well as just across its boundaries (Ibid.). Although not focused on a comprehensive economic and land use growth model, successful Regional Conservation Partnerships were

found by Labich, Hamin and Record (2013) to use similar mapping and visioning tactics (15). The literature on the topic seems to suggest that the focus on shared natural resources in of itself may be enough to spur further collaboration.

Knowledge of conservation issues among municipal actors may be effective at creating ties due to the nature of the relationships they help strengthen and the ability to create new outcomes and shared understandings through the collaborative process (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Knudson 2011). One case study in the Malpai Borderland region in the Southwest U.S., documents managers that were able to incorporate local knowledge, gradually build trust, and expand the rigor of the science behind rangeland management in that region (Curtin 2011). While natural resources in the above example, in the Partnership for Change and in the 495 Development Compact play a prominent role, there may be more to spurring collaboration than simply focusing on the right issues. Regional Conservation Partnerships, both through the use of peer dominated Woodland Councils and through the technical assistance and education they provide to municipalities, also focus on the human element of collaboration (Aber et al. 2010). That human element is the network.

Networks:

Social networks are now a ubiquitous term in the digital age of popular culture, yet they command attention for good reason. A variety of disciplines including economic development (Agranoff and McGuire 2003), business entrepreneurship (Beisheim 2007), natural resource management (Margerum

2011) and sustainable agriculture (Shaw, Lubell, Ohmart 2011) have consulted network theory to understand the nature of collaborative relationships. Innes and Booher (2010) draw on networks in their discussion of collaborative rationality, finding that “networks may primarily improve information-sharing or they may serve as forums for public policy deliberation, decision making and implementation” (209).

Margerum (2011) writes that social networks represent interpersonal networks of friends, associates, colleagues and acquaintances, which are built through interaction in formal and informal settings (182). The literature on networks often draws on the concept of “social capital” for definition. In Robert Putnam’s (2000) seminal piece, *Bowling Alone*, he writes that the “core idea of social capital theory is that networks have value,” referring to the “norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (21). He expands the definition to include “bonding” social capital, which strengthens ties internally among a network, whereas “bridging” social capital describes networks that are “outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages” (22). Ohno, Tanaki and Sakagami draw on Uphoff’s concept of cognitive social capital – the “norms, values and beliefs,” (306) and structural social capital – the “roles, rules and networks” to portray the various definitions of social capital in the literature (Ibid.).

Davidson-Hunt’s (2006) research on Quebec Canada’s Anishinaabe tribe considers network theory as a way to study “social-ecological networks” that link individual actors through processes and relationships (598). His exploration draws on the “clustering” of individuals of a particular identity, but goes beyond the

definitions of vertical and horizontal linkages explained by Agranoff and McGuire (Ibid.). Although Davidson-Hunt recognizes that network theory can be applied to organizations, agencies and governments, he focuses his attention on the individual actor due to their ability to bridge different scales of organizations, thereby increasing the complexity of relationships (599). While he acknowledges the ability of network relationships to produce local knowledge, Davidson-Hunt warns that understanding the distribution of power within the network is critical (600).

Margerum (2011) also touches on the issue of power, outlining three important themes related to social network theory that shed light on the ability of networks to overcome collective action issues: social norms, interlinked fates, and interpersonal communication and trust (183-184). Likening the themes' effect to "peer-pressure," he cites social norms as a way networks can help citizens overcome collective problems by helping to direct behavior (184). Knowledge of interlinked fates fostered among networks can lead to awareness of the affect of one's actions on others, as well as lead to further civic engagement (Ibid.). In describing interpersonal communication and trust, Margerum says that "networks are the pathways for information and ideas to be distributed, and because they are based on personal relationships, the receiver is more likely to listen to the information" (185).

In a study of the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative (KWC) in the Upper Midwest of the United States, Mark Rickenbach (2009) found the land trust played a crucial role in the spread of information (598). Rickenbach found that many members of the landowner cooperative access their only link to professional assistance through professionals that have been vetted by KWC staff (Ibid.). He notes that the

cooperative has been able to attract participants previously uninvolved in programs and often lacking in management experience (Ibid.). Although he found participants to be talking with others outside their egocentric networks, the study was not specific enough to uncover who those contacts were and whether or not they contributed to management decisions (Ibid.). Despite the uncertain impact on management decisions, Rickenbach's study highlights Robert Putnam's (2000) idea of "bridging" social capital, in that the relationships in the Kickapoo Woodland study were being built across networks. The finding leans into the complex effects that Regional Conservation Partnerships, and similar collaborative arrangements, may have on the "impulses" (Foster 1997) for inter-municipal communication and relationship building. The host organization of an RCP, such as NQRLP, may be similar to the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative, acting as a transmission belt of regional information and an organization with staff that can bridge social municipal networks. It seems plausible that if trust is placed in the staff of an RCP host organization, then the potential for an RCP to act as a catalyst for inter-municipal collaboration may not lie solely in the tangible realm of securing joint service contracts or developing joint policies, but rather as a stage setter for further knowledge sharing; a vehicle for disseminating regional information in a package that is both useful and trusting. If Rickenbach's (2009) study is transferrable, it suggests that a land trust, such as Mount Grace, may strengthen the same networks that regional council's of government in the region are engaging with on a more purposive collaborative mission. RCP's may simply help create the infrastructure needed for municipalities to collaborate.

Conclusion

Evidenced by the literature, regional conservation partnerships are well positioned to stimulate further inter-municipal collaboration. Involving a wide cross section of governing and non-governing stakeholders, RCP's can weave together knowledge and influence from each of the three action arenas. As a seeming response to complexity and-cross jurisdictional "wicked problems," (Innes and Booher 2010, 1) RCP's seem grounded in the bottom up approach to knowledge sharing; evolving from diffuse arrangements born from decentralized institutional collective action approaches of environmental management collaboratives.

Regional conservation partnerships have arranged geographically too (Aber et al. 2010), strengthening the focus on network theory and attempting to forge the same local appeal as described in the Institutional Analysis and Development framework literature. Taken together RCP's appear to be at once an advocate for local approaches to cross boundary governance and a product of it.

Chapter 3 | Organizational Background

The North Quabbin Region Regional Landscape Partnership And Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Established in 1998, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP) is a voluntary collection of public and private organizations, agencies and landowners in north central Massachusetts working to conserve land, as well as the region's rural lifestyle (Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust 2015). From its early years, NQRLP has evolved from a region defined by its host partner, Mount Grace Conservation Trust, to a slightly larger geographic scope (Ibid.). Anchored by large areas of protected open space around the Quabbin Reservoir, which provides drinking water to metropolitan Boston, the 560,000 acre NQRLP region is defined by large roadless areas interspersed among a patchwork of farms and forests covering the rolling hills of central Massachusetts (NQRLP Climate Conservation Planning Pilot Project 2014).

Despite the finite bounds of the NQRLP landscape, the partnership's website suggests their involvement with other initiatives, such as acting as the southern anchor for a nearly 2 million acre RCP known as the Quabbin to Cardigan Initiative and the focal point of the Quabbin to Wachusset Initiative as well (Mount Grace 2015; Highstead 2014). Figure 1 depicts the NQRLP region, the boundaries of applicable regional planning commissions, as well as the specific municipalities interviewed as part of this study.

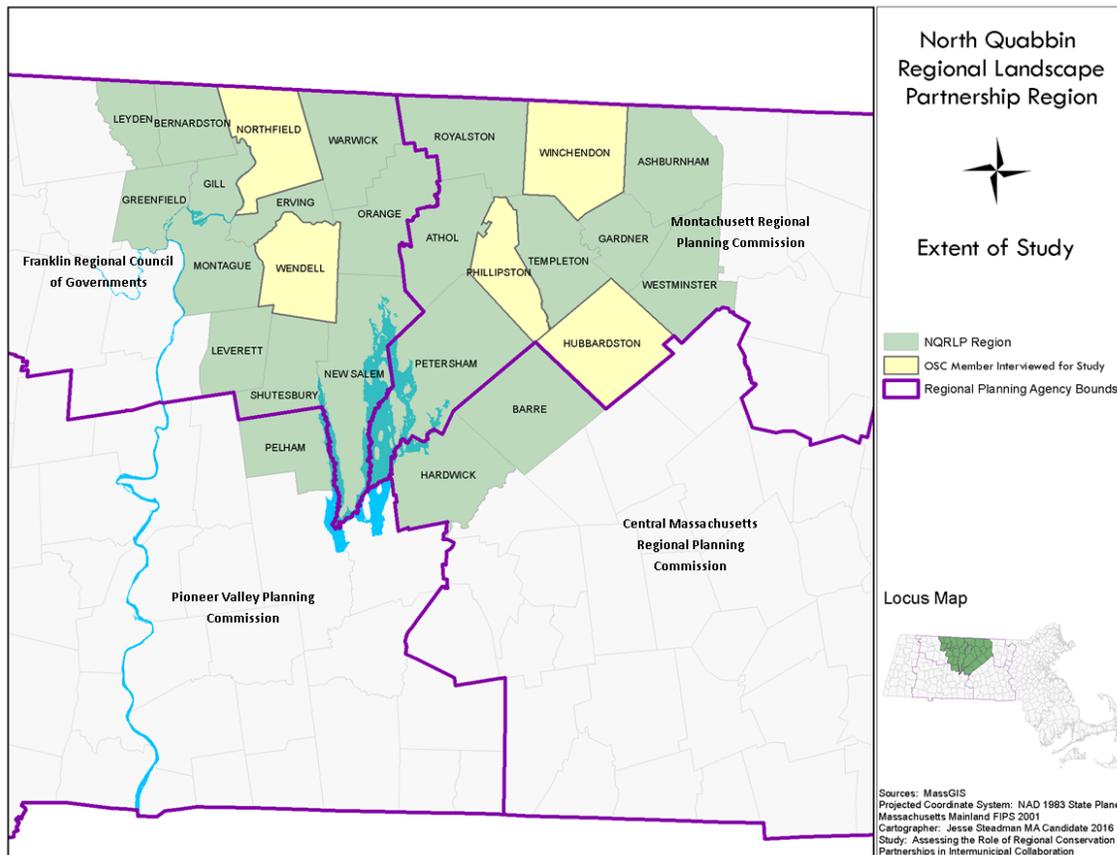


Figure 1. North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

Labich, Hamin and Record (2013) find that RCP's often rely on the staffing capacity and expertise of host organizations to coordinate the conservation effort (Ibid.). From descriptions on their website, it appears Mount Grace Conservation Trust initiated and now hosts NQRLP (Mount Grace 2015). A list on its website notes Mount Grace staff dedicated to the partnership's coordination – a practice of host partners Labich, Hamin and Record (2013) find to be common. In fact, the researchers find that 80% of RCP's utilize regional land trusts as partners (Ibid.) Beyond regional land trusts, Labich, Hamin and Record find that there are a total of

seven categories of partners that makeup membership of RCP's in their study (9), including:

- Regional land trusts
- Statewide conservation organizations
- National conservation organizations
- State chapters of international organizations
- Watershed/River associations
- Local land trusts
- State agencies (Ibid.)

With the exception of state chapters of an international organization, NQRLP's website partner list contains most of the identified typologies (Mount Grace 2015).

Table 1. North Quabbin Region Jurisdictional and Organizational Makeup

Conservation Organizations and Land Trusts	University Affiliations	Government Agencies	Towns	Regional Planning Agencies
Ashburnham Conservation Trust	Harvard University (Wildlands and Woodlands)	MA Division of Conservation Resources	Ashburnham	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Athol Bird and Nature Club/Millers River Environmental Center	University of Massachusetts	MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Athol	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
East Quabbin Land Trust		MassWildlife (Division of Fisheries and Wildlife)	Barre	
Franklin Land Trust		National Park Service's Rivers and Trails and Conservation Assistance Program	Bernardston	
Kestrel Trust		U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Tully Lake	Erving	
Massachusetts Audubon Society		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Gardner	
Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust			Gill	
Nashua River			Greenfield	

Watershed Association				
New England Forestry Foundation			Hardwicke	
North County Land Trust			Hubbardston	
Quabbin to Cardigan			Leverett	
Rattlesnake Gutter Trust			Leydon	
Trustees of Reservations			Montague	
Wildlands and Woodlands			New Salem	
			Northfield	
			Orange	
			Pelham	
			Petersham	
			Phillipston	
			Royalston	
			Shutesbury	
			Templeton	
			Warwick	
			Wendell	
			Westminster	
			Winchendon	

Of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust’s six core conservation programs described on their website (2015), three stand out as applicable to this study due to their combined focus on building support for conservation, increasing regional conservation capacity, and providing conservation services to communities, including *Americorps Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow (MassLIFT)*, *Community Conservation Program* and *Community Engagement Program* (Ibid.).

MassLIFT

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust established the MassLIFT Americorps program in 2010 to increase the pace of land conservation and it continues into

2015 as a grant contingent program funded in part by the Corporation of National Community Service and administered by the Massachusetts Service Alliance (Mount Grace 2015). The program has grown to include sixteen member organizations from groups such as Mount Grace, to other regional land trusts such as Sudbury Valley Trustees and community organizations, such as Groundwork Somerville in the Boston metro region (Ibid.). Of the four positions offered through the program, two are of note to this study, including the Regional Conservation Coordinator and Community Engagement Coordinator positions.

Regional Conservation Coordinators build capacity for their host organization and further conservation opportunities in their respective regions by engaging with municipal boards and committees, local volunteer land trusts, regional planning commissions and other agencies to increase collaboration among the different stakeholders in a region. (Mount Grace 2015, MassLIFT: Positions). Community Engagement Coordinators attempt to build capacity of their host organizations by extending outreach efforts beyond the typical conservation organizations in the region, to reach different demographics and civic interests and build support for the host's conservation efforts (Ibid.). Although they are local to the Massachusetts conservation community, the two positions are important to note, given their potential influence over collaborative impulses in municipalities. The program positions also seems intentionally suited to the two other applicable programs of Mount Grace.

Community Conservation Program

Mount Grace Conservation Trust's Community Conservation Program's focus is to assist town conservation and open space commission's prioritize protection of their land resources and develop implementation strategies to empower municipal actors to become effective conservation partners (Mount Grace 2015, Community Conservation). Given the focus on municipal outreach, it is likely that the Community Conservation Program relies on Regional Conservation Coordinators through MassLIFT to deliver or enhance programming.

Community Engagement Program

Mount Grace's Community Engagement Program (2015) appears takes a broader, if not longer term, approach to building local capacity for land conservation efforts, in that the program focuses on the importance of wider reaching community needs, and designed to strengthen service learning and educational opportunities, foster personal relationships and build connection to the lands Mount Grace seeks to protect. Similar to the relationship between Regional Conservation Coordinators and the Community Conservation Program, the aforementioned program focus seems specifically tailored to the MassLIFT Community Engagement Coordinators (Ibid.).

Together the three outlined programs represent significant potential for influence of inter-municipal collaboration in the RCP's region. However, Mount Grace is not the only regional actor offering technical assistance to municipalities. For purposes of outlining competing efforts that may influence the internal validity

of the study, it is important to note that two regional planning bodies are also present in the region.

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Massachusetts's Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) provides municipal and regional services to a 26 town region overlapping with the NQRLP's focus area (frcog.org 2015). Its programs range from cooperative public health services, local inspections and accounting to regional planning services spanning economic development, transportation, water infrastructure and land use planning and zoning (Ibid.). FRCOG offers a range of planning services that share resemblance to the type of outreach and capacity building currently undertaken through Mount Grace programs.

A 2013 comprehensive *Sustainable Franklin County* plan featured a broadly focused engagement effort to reach all varieties of populations in the region, including municipal board members and officials (Ibid). To guide the planning process, FRCOG created an inclusive internal governance structure in the form of a 74 person steering committee made up of residents, business owners and municipal committee members (frocog.org 2013, 3).

Additionally, FRCOG focuses on a variety of planning processes that are similar in scope to Mount Grace Conservation Trust's programming. The organization's Program Services webpage (2015) describes programs that may also be contributing to inter-municipal collaboration in the region may include FRCOG's open space and recreational planning, specifically their services to help

communities develop plans, contributions to the Massachusetts Food System Planning Initiative currently underway statewide, and hosted by Boston's Metropolitan Area Planning Council, as well as the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership, which is exploring the creation of a 20 town Regional Conservation Partnership in northwest Massachusetts (Ibid.).

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

Formed in 1968, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) provides an array of service and planning assistance to its 22 member communities, spanning from Athol and Petersham Massachusetts in the west to Harvard and Groton, Massachusetts to the east (mrpc.org 2015). MRPC's programs and services appear to cover the breadth of the planning practice. They offer community development services, including grant administration and project management, as well as assistance developing affordable housing rehabilitation and planning processes (Ibid.). The webpage for their *Comprehensive Planning (2015)* sector includes work similar to FRCOG, including assistance in developing open space and recreation plans, preparing economic development studies and reports, environmental and transportation planning, and zoning bylaw development (Ibid.).

MRPC's internal governance structure may also provide for effects on inter-municipal collaboration. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is comprised of members from its 22 member communities that are either appointed by the town Planning Board, Board of Selectmen or mayor (mrpc.org 2015). The Montachusett Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

helps provide a steering mechanism for further study and update of a 1994 comprehensive economic development strategy, which was created in cooperation with member communities and is currently made up of members of the public and private sector (Ibid.)

MRPC's transportation planning work, a semi voluntary form of collaboration, employs a focus on public participation, utilizing a public participation plan to guide its outreach process (Nelles 2010; Feiock, 2009; mrpc.org 2015). The Public Participation Plan page lists both the process for outreach and notice of meetings and regularly scheduled input sessions, as well as lists different organizations, committees and public and private interests that may be affected by transportation decision making (Ibid.). Although it is difficult to know the extent and effectiveness of MRPC's outreach, it can be reasonably assumed that actions and planning measures as outlined above, will bring community members into contact with a regional network.

Conclusion

The region defined by NQRLP is a complex arrangement of regulatory agencies, regional commissions, municipal stakeholders, and public and private organizations and interests, each working toward their own agenda, while interacting with one another on various shared goals. Despite the complexity of arrangements, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, and the NQRLP, seem to work at the confluence of the policy and action arena. Through their focus on action oriented planning assistance within the Community Conservation program, policy

work among its NQRLP partners and engagement on a more holistic range of community issues that are designed to strengthen capacity and networks, Mount Grace's staff and MassLIFT Americorps members are well positioned to influence inter-municipal collaboration in the greater Quabbin region. Through a study design introduced in the following Chapter 4, I will seek to further explore how the NQRLP and Mount Grace may influence inter-municipal collaboration through implementation of their regional work.

Chapter 4 | Methodology

Study Objective

This study will qualitatively examine the role of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), an active regional conservation partnership, and its host organization, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in north-central Massachusetts, by exploring their influence on municipalities, and investigating the real and perceived role they play in affecting a range of communication behaviors that can be referred to as inter-municipal collaboration. A review of Open Space and Recreation Plans in each of the 26 towns making up the NQRLP region, coupled with interviews of volunteer municipal Open Space Committee members was used to uncover the methods of interaction taking place between technical assistance providers and municipalities, as well as explore the impact those interactions have on the propensity for further collaborative activity.

Research Background

Studies highlight a variety of disciplines in the exploration of collaboration and inter-agency partnership, including the fields of childhood development (Borden and Perkins 1999), mental health and education, school and business, and grant partnerships (Frey et al. 2006). Measuring collaborative activity has been performed through a variety of methods as well, including case studies, interviews, focus groups, self-evaluation checklists, survey instruments and through the study of collaboration theory (Frey et al. 2006; Borden and Perkins 1999; Gadjia 2004;

Knudson 2010; Foster 1998). A subset of researchers have focused more specifically on the extent of inter-municipal collaboration and cooperation, using mixed methods to measure the amount of collaborative activity taking place, as well as its qualitative structure and effect (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Knudson 2010; Foster 1998).

Research shows that natural resource management and economic development are two areas where there is a proclivity for collaboration in municipal settings (Knudson 2010; Warner 2006). In designing this thesis study, research by Paul Knudson, based on interviews with municipal officials, provides a relevant framework to follow. By performing preliminary research on various organizations and consulting with experts at the Capital District Regional Planning Commission in the Albany, New York region, Knudson identified municipalities that had been involved with land-use focused non-profit organizations serving the region (Knudson 2010, 56). His interview questions focused on the municipality's "views and goals for regional collaboration," as well as challenges and future objectives (57).

Research Design

To assess the role of Regional Conservation Partnerships in inter-municipal collaboration, this study focuses on the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), and its host organization the Mount Grace Regional Conservation Trust, which together, account for the prominent regional land protection activity in a region spanning 26 towns, two regional planning

jurisdictions, 3 counties and multiple watersheds in north central Massachusetts (Wildlands and Woodlands 2013). The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership was chosen due to its status as a “maturing” partnership, showing demonstrable outreach experience through the hosting of peer learning forums for municipal officials and board members; providing technical assistance to municipalities, including assistance with the preparation of Open Space and Recreation Plans; and developing a mapped conservation vision (Ibid., 1).

Interview Structure and Goals

The primary data collection method in this study consisted of five semi-structured phone interviews with Open Space Committee members in five different municipalities within the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership region. As the aim of this study is not psychological analysis, verbatim transcription did not seem necessary (Kvale 1996, 171). Notes were taken from over-the-phone interviews. Similar to Knudson’s (2010) study, I focused my interviews on key municipal officials and committee members who work closely with land-use management issues, specifically Open Space Committee Members, who hold a familiarity with the conservation objectives and needs in their host community.

Municipal Data Gathering Through Open Space and Recreation Plans

In order to detect collaborative impulses throughout the subject region and provide a cross reference in which to examine the more in-depth interview data, this study next analyzed the Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRP) of each of the

26 municipalities making up the NQRLP region. The Open Space and Recreation Plan functions as the primary long term planning instrument for natural resources among municipalities in Massachusetts, making it a logical point of reference to assess the role regional conservation partnerships may have in the region (Mass.gov 2008). The process of their creation not only provides planning and educational advantages to the municipality, but the approved plans allow a community to be eligible to apply for a range of grant opportunities administered by the state of Massachusetts, acting as added incentive for obtaining a state approved plan (Ibid.).

In addition to the relative abundance of OSRP's among the North Quabbin Region municipalities, each document follows a strict outline that allows for isolating similar information across many plans (Open Space and Recreational Planner's Workbook, 2008). I chose to examine the *Goals and Objectives* and *Five Year Action Plan* chapters of each Town's OSRP, as the two chapters, are requisite inclusions for an OSRP to be accepted by the *Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs*. The chapters were also attractive for their succinct brevity of statements, including condensed objectives and action steps deriving from the inventory and analysis of each community's identified open space resources and protection needs (Mass.gov 2016).

Data Analysis

Open Space and Recreation Plan Data

The *Goals and Objectives* and *Five Year Action Plan* chapters were analyzed through a blend of "meaning condensation" and "interpretation," similar to the

strategy I employed with interview data described later in this chapter. The data analysis began with a reliance on Theresa Hogue’s “Levels of Community Linkage” (1993) model to identify actions that could be interpreted as fitting into one of the following five stages of collaboration, from which an organization may progress or move through, as shown in Figure 2 (Frey et. al. 2006, 385):

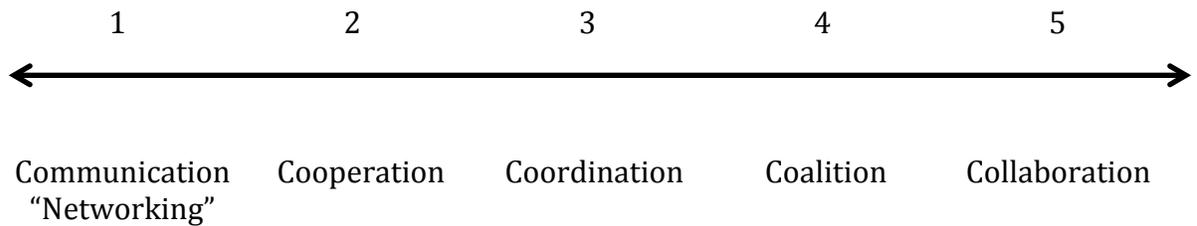


Figure 2. Levels of Community Linkage Scale

Where a keyword or phrase from a goal, objective or action step statement denoted the potential presence of a collaborative impulse, such as statements of “work together,” “support,” or “educate,” the statement was added to an excel spreadsheet for subsequent thematic categorization as a way to extract further meaning. Although the data being analyzed was written rather than interview based, the thematic categorization tactic seemed well suited to condensing large samples of text, as it is based on Steiner Kvale’s (1996) description of content analysis as a method for analyzing interview data (105). However, since this study was not in regard to testing or developing a survey instrument, as Hogue’s stages of collaboration was, I chose not to categorize solely on the five categories outlined by

Hogue, but rather to let the stages guide me toward text that could then be condensed into categories that were more representative of the specific content. Through the analysis of the plans, this study is provided a foundation of data representing the goals and objectives of regional collaboration. The aforementioned method for collecting the OSRP data provides an important counter balance to the interview data in two ways: it provides insight into the goals and objectives of future collaboration region-wide, which is similar to the information Knudson was examining; and due to the fact that the data regards goals, objectives and action steps, it seems less encumbered by the lack of resources that can affect actual process and implementation, therefore providing a better view into the rationale and intention of each community, rather than simply the existence of collaborative activity or its absence.

Interview Data

Interview questions were categorized into five sections to provide for order within a semi-structured interview method and to aid in the thematic categorization or “systematic conceptualization” of meaning across interviews that varied in question flow or jumped between related questions and topics (Kvale 1996, 105).

The five interview question sections are listed below:¹

- History and Form of the Committee
- Committee activity
- Inter-municipal Collaborative Activity

¹ A complete list of the interview questions is located in Appendix B.

- Identified Inter-Municipal Projects
- Addressing Validity of Collaborative Impulse

The five sections of questions aimed to cover a cross section of activities that underlie the type of collaborative activity noted in Hogue's "Community Linkages," including purpose, structure of decision making and collaboration (Frey et. al. 2006, 385). Due to this study's focus on just one type of Committee, it is possible that data on collaborative activity may be limited by the relatively narrow scope of the Committees' interests within the broad scope of potential collaborations that could be taking place within a municipal environment. Interview questions were designed with that potential in mind, and aimed to uncover the broader role NQRLP and Mount Grace may play effecting inter-municipal collaboration.

Thematic categorization was used in tandem with "meaning condensation" and "interpretation" methods (Kvale 1996, 105-107), similar to the analysis of OSRP text, to break down long statements into phrases or descriptions of meaning that were categorized and condensed to better identify patterns and to "work out the structures and relations of meaning" within the context of the interviewee's action arena and the broader literature on collaboration (Ibid.). Therefore, categorizing questions into typologies and sections not only assisted with the thematic data analysis, but it provided an avenue for open exploration of a variety of statements, inferences and directions of thought, since as a researcher, despite the apparent specificity of an Open Space Committee, I could not fully predict the scope of each committee's planning and professional efforts. Question categories allowed a semi-

structured interview process and permitted individual answers to be analyzed within the context of a broader conversation.

Interviews were conducted over the summer of 2015 and subsequently categorized. The first four steps of Steiner Kvale's method of meaning condensation were followed to break down the interview data (1996, 107):

- Interviews were read through in their entirety
- Longer statements or phrases were broken into "natural meaning units"
- Meaning units are condensed into simplified themes
- The themes were assessed in relation to the literature on collaboration and for meaning within the context of this study's goals.

In step four, I used a blend of meaning condensation (Kvale 1996, 104 -108) for data management, and meaning interpretation (107) to further explore the potential implications within various responses, beyond simply the existence of a category or its absence. Condensed data from individual questions will be sorted into individual tables, although interpretation of that data will rely on results from several questions making up one of the sections defined above, to provide a clearer picture of the forces at play in in the impulse for collaboration.

Addressing Internal Validity and Defining the Units of Analysis

This study will explore the role RCP's may play in influencing collaborative activity between municipalities. With the nature of my results based on "inferences" about the causal relationship, it is necessary to ensure internal validity (Yin 1984). To strengthen the research design I will identify other regional entities that may

also influence collaboration among municipalities, such as operating councils of government and metropolitan planning organizations, using interviews to identify any overlapping programming that may affect my results (Ibid.).

To measure the influence RCP's are having on municipal collaboration, my unit of analysis must be two-fold (Yin 1984, 33). One unit of analysis will constitute the type of outreach, programming and technical assistance implemented by the RCP. The other unit will consist of the type of relationships the neighboring municipalities share. A semi-structured interview approach will allow me to identify the subtleties of partnerships and detect relevant impulses for collaboration (Foster 1998).

Conclusion

The goal of this qualitative research will be to provide insight into the different techniques regional conservation collaboratives are using to either intentionally or unintentionally create capacity for inter-municipal collaboration. By interviewing town officials with experience working with the NQRLP and Mount Grace, I will attempt to gain insight not only into the type of interactions regional conservation partnerships employ to engage regional partners and how those interactions may effect the collaborative capacity of municipalities.

Chapter 5 | Results

In Part I of Chapter 5, I will present the data from interviews with Open Space Committee members in the North Quabbin Regional Partnership's (NQRLP) region of work. Prominent themes and patterns evident from the four interview sections will be accompanied by tables and figures, including:

- Data on organizational makeup of each interviewee's respective committee
- NQRLP's collaborative influence
- Inter-municipal collaborative activity
- The validity of NQRLP's role in collaborative impulses

Specific quotes from the interview results will be included where necessary to highlight the presence of any relevant patterns or suggestions in the data.

Part II of Chapter 5 will focus on the results from the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) research into the goals, objectives and action steps as defined by 26 municipalities in the region. Data from this component of the research will be related to the interview data where relevant to highlight potential impulses for collaboration and to understand collaborative behavior in the context of perceptions of individual municipal actors.

Interview Data Results | Section 1

In the following discussion of Section 1 of the interview results, I will focus on the member makeup of the Open Space Committees (OSC's), the impulse for the Committee's establishment, and the role of the interviewee within the Committee's broader community context. The following interview data is based on five

discussions with OSC members in the following five municipalities (Census.gov 2016):

1. Hubbardston (pop. 4,382)
2. Phillipston (pop. 1,682)
3. Northfield (pop. 2,985)
4. Wendell (pop. 848)
5. Winchendon (pop. 10,300)

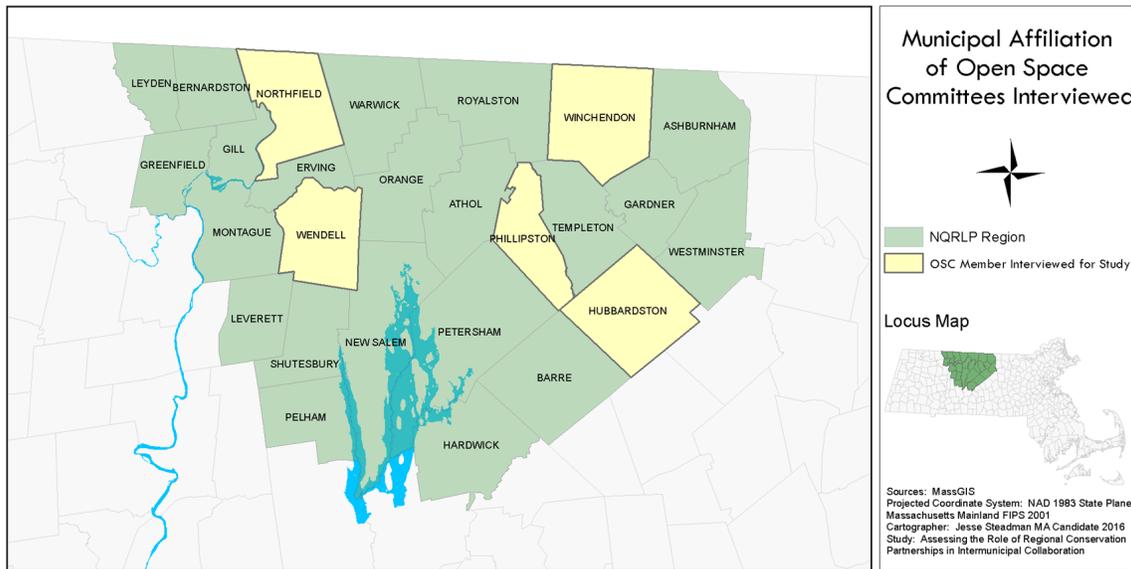


Figure 3. Municipal Affiliation of Open Space Committees Interviewed

Despite the differences in population, Open Space Committees are entirely voluntary arrangements, appointed according to the municipality's Town Charter. Of the interviewed members, appointing bodies responsible for voting on the membership makeup of the Committee included the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Planning Board or some combination of the three. Committee members are appointed to fixed terms. Despite fixed term lengths, the average length of time interview respondents served on the Committee in this study is 14.4 years.

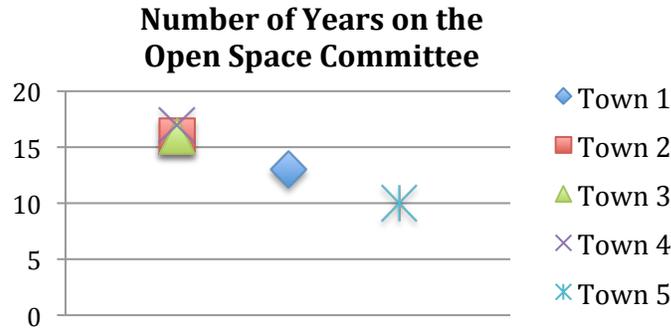


Figure 4. Number of Years on the Open Space Committee

Four of the five interviewees reported that the catalyst for establishment of the OSC was the development of an Open Space and Recreation Plan. One community noted a Franklin Council of Governments survey of historical and natural resources that eventually served as the basis for the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The length of time each has served, and the relatively low average population of the represented municipalities¹ compared to the Massachusetts average may correspond to the fact that 4/5 of the Open Space Committee members have served on other committees in their respective Towns. As seen in table 2, the majority of respondents interviewed reported serving on Boards or Committees with different charges, goals or missions.

¹ The average 2010 census population of the municipalities interviewed is 4,039 individuals or 21% of the Massachusetts average of 18,660 individuals. (Metropolitan Area Planning Council 2016).

Table 2. Other Committees Served in Town

Section I Question I	Have you served on other committees in town?		
Response	No	1 Other Committee	> 1 Committee
Respondent 1			Planning Board & School Committee
Respondent 3		Conservation Commission	
Respondent 2	X		
Hubbardston			Recreation Commission, Planning Board, Community Preservation Commission
Northfield		On the Mount Grace Board of Directors. Has served on the Planning Board.	

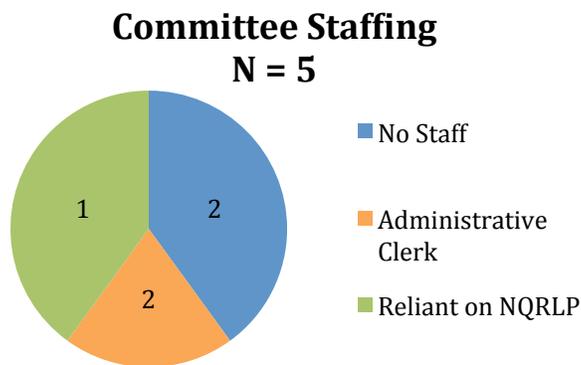


Figure 5. Committee Staffing

While the data reveals a tendency for interview respondents to bridge local networks in their cross committee work, each respondent also noted some involvement of their fellow committee members on the Board's of local or regional land trusts, or other local non-profit organizations as well. One respondent noted "it is common" for committee members to sit on land trust board's, while two of the five respondents specifically noted Board positions on Mount Grace Land Trust, the host organization of the NQRLP.

The initial interview focus on committee representation further reveals that despite the broader network the Open Space Committees are privy to, they are mostly autonomous bodies, responsible for advancing their own preservation goals. Figure 5 shows that two of five respondents noted the existence of a part time administrative clerk, although that clerk is shared among several boards. Others reported no staff assistance, with one respondent stating their committee is “completely reliant” on the NQRLP to reach their goals and objectives.

Interview Data Results | Section 2

Questions in Section two of the interview process focused on the current activity of the Open Space Committee for three primary motives: in order to gain insight into the types of projects being undertaken; the role of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (Mount Grace) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP) in the OSCs’ current work; and whether activity of the organizations are indicative of the types of activities that may lead to further collaboration among participating municipalities. Figure 6 depicts a range of actions respondents indicated are being pursued by their respective committee.

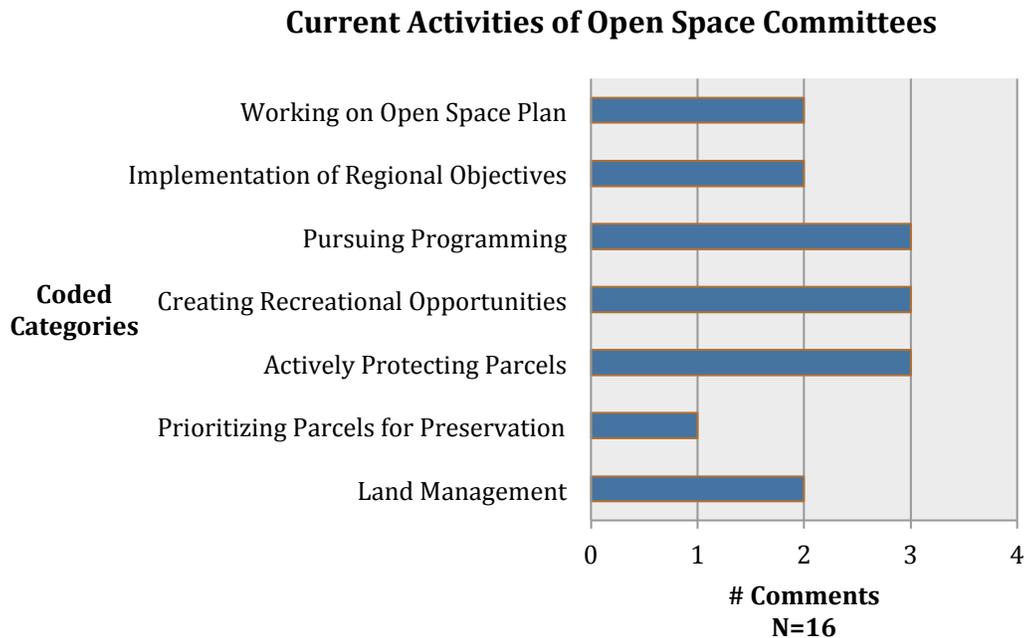


Figure 6. Current Open Space Committee Activities

The data identifies Open Space Committees engaged in a variety of tasks, with the three most common categories of responses including “pursuing programming,” “creating recreational opportunities,” and “actively protecting parcels.” One committee member noted activity in all categories, with the exception of work on their OSRP. That particular respondent also noted work on designing a Chapter 61² right-of-first refusal policy, brokering land conservation deals, and working with NQRLP to “review priority parcels.”

The action implied in the comment categories noted above, may point to the relative maturity of the committee’s activities, with a focus on implementation,

² M.G.L. Chapter 61 is a current use program designed to give preferential tax treatment to landowners who maintain their property in forestry, agriculture or recreational use. When the enrolled land’s use is subject to a purchase and sale agreement that would change the use to one other than forestry, agriculture or recreation, the municipality in which the property is located is provided the right of first refusal to purchase the property under the same terms identified in the purchase and sale agreement (Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs 2016).

likely derived from the goals and objectives outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. In fact, one respondent stated that the OSC is “doing landowner education and outreach to align with regional objectives,” while another respondent said their committee is using Community Preservation Act³ funding to act on goals and action steps” in the OSRP.

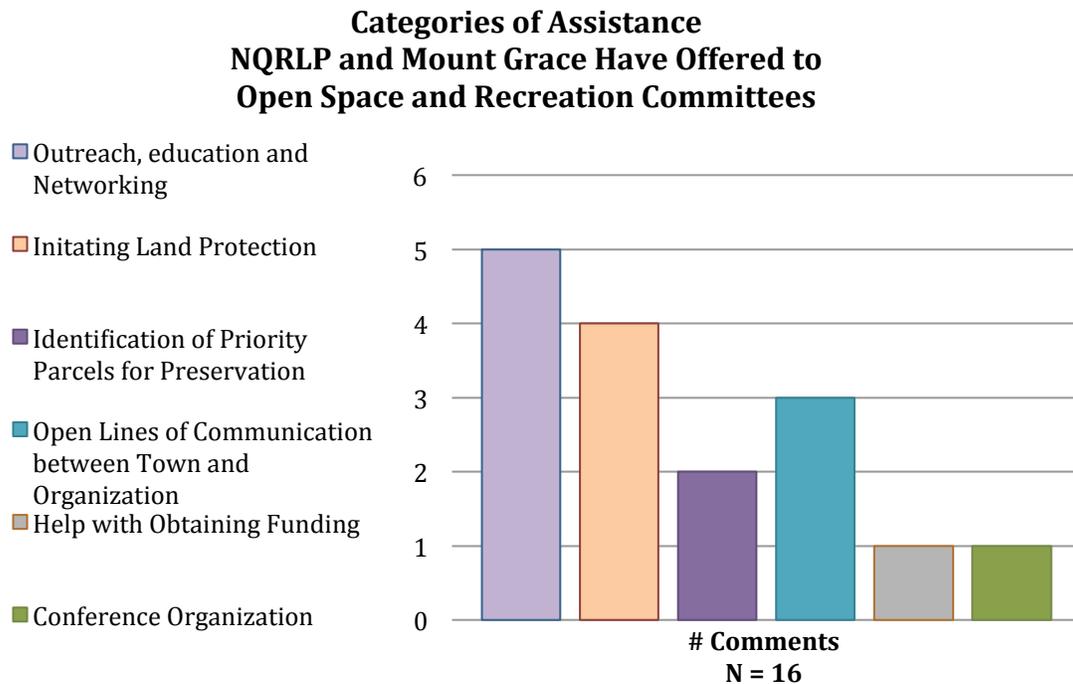


Figure 7. Categories of Assistance.

Figure 7 lends further insight into the technical assistance offered by NQLRP and Mount Grace to Open Space Committees. The data received suggests that technical assistance is designed to help committees reach their goals and objectives, while also strengthening networks between a variety of actors. When asked about the types of projects committee members have worked with the two organizations

³ The MA Community Preservation Act (M.G.L Ch.44b) allows communities to establish a fund, sourced from a property tax surcharge of up to 3%, for the preservation of open space, historic preservation, and the creation of affordable housing (Community Preservation Coalition 2016).

on, the majority of responses were categorized as assistance with “initiating land protection” and “outreach, education and networking.”

Looking deeper into the data it appears that the outreach, education and networking assistance offered by the NQRLP and Mount Grace may lead to further collaborative behaviors. For instance, every town noted the NQRLP’s work on this topic. One municipality said that not only has the NQRLP “done a lot of landowner education” but they have also “coordinated land trust members in town.” More specifically, the data suggests that not only is the NQRLP providing a venue for peer learning, but actively encouraging it. Two of the respondents noted the NQRLP’s assistance with passing the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in their respective municipalities. One respondent reported that the NQRLP “advised how to talk about CPA politically” within town, while another noted that NQRLP “came to town and gave presentations and helped put together a proposal,” for CPA passage.

When asked whether Mount Grace or the NQRLP had contacted or worked with a respondent’s Open Space Committee, three of the five interviewees provided responses condensed into a category titled: “open lines of communication between town and organization.” One respondent reported open lines of dialogue between the Committee and the organizations, suggesting a fluid, and trusting relationship. Another community noted they are “very supportive on all conservation projects,” and that they see the “two organizations [NQRLP and Mount Grace] as one,” calling them as needed. The combination of technical assistance offered, and the ease at which communication takes place between the regional organizations and the

municipalities, points to the focus on networking and trust building that further interview questions expand upon.

Table 3 displays the range of responses provided in response to whether the Open Space Committee had designated a committee member as a liaison to NQRLP and/or Mount Grace. The range of responses - from initiation by the Committee, as well as the partnership - suggests an effort to create a more coordinated relationship.

Table 3. Committee Members as Liaisons

Has the Committee designated a member as a liaison to the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership or Mount Grace Conservation Trust?		
	Yes	No
Respondent 1	Have reached out as informal liaison	
Respondent 2	Yes	
Respondent 3	NQRLP's Community Conservation Program has liaison to the Town.	
Respondent 4		No
Respondent 5	Has an official liaison that attends meetings and reports on correspondence	

During background research into the regional programming offered by the NQRLP, it became apparent that the partnership held regional open space conferences for municipal committee members, landowners and other member of the public to attend. Given the potential for meaningful networking at such events, a series of questions was asked to gain insight into what the conferences offered and whether the exchanges and networking opportunities provided an environment that could lead to further collaboration.

One respondent specifically noted a conference hosted by the NQRLP in the Town of Royalston, “that brought in landowners from surrounding towns as well as Town Open Space Committees.” Table 4 further outlines the topics of discussion the different respondents participated in.

Table 4. Open Space Conference Topic Participation

What topics at the Open Space Conference did you participate in?					
	Land Restoration and Management	Outreach and education	Best Practices, Stories	GIS Technical Assistance	Municipal Policy and Planning Assistance
Respondent 1	x	x			x
Respondent 2				x	
Respondent 3			x		
Respondent 4					x
Respondent 5					

The responses in table 4 provide a snapshot into the type of work Open Space Committees are involved in, but more importantly, highlight the information exchange and dialogue between members of different municipalities. Every respondent provided a response that fell into one of two categories: *Stories and Lessons Learned* or *Sharing of Best Practices*. One respondent noted that the “...conference is workshop style and interactive with the sharing of experiences. There have been a lot of people in Town government a long time and a knowledge base that is willing to share that knowledge.” Another respondent stated they “have attended a regional event...to share stories and past projects.” Together, the data on conferences and workshops offered by the NQRLP and Mount Grace appears to mark a coordinated effort to increase networking and peer-to-peer learning among open space interests across municipalities in the region. The focus on stories and

lessons learned further supports the trust building efforts and suggests that although Towns may attend the workshops as autonomous entities, there are efficiencies gained in knowledge transfer through the act of engaging with one another.

Interview Data Results | Section 3

The third section of the interview process centered on questions meant to gauge both the Open Space Committee members' perceptions of the NQRLP and Mount Grace as a catalyst for collaboration, as well as to identify any inter-municipal collaboration taking place. The interview questions originally contained a subset of questions designed to explore the types of collaborative interactions taking place between towns through the lens of Teresa Hogue's scale of *Community Linkages* (1993). Those questions, however, were not utilized, as findings of higher order⁴ collaborative activity between towns did not materialize.

When asked whether the technical assistance and workshops provided by the NQRLP and Mount Grace are effective at bringing towns together, every interviewee responded positively. Figure 8 charts the categories of condensed responses by the total number of comments made.

⁴ Teresa Hogue's *Scale of Community Linkages* outlines "coordination" and "collaboration" at the highest end of the scale (1993). Creation of a shared vision and the building of interdependent systems are two of the constructs that indicate organizations at the higher end of the scale (Ibid.). None of the interviews suggested that municipalities were working at such a level independently of interactions with the NQRLP and Mount Grace.

Perception of NQRLP's Effectiveness as a Catalyst for Inter-Municipal Collaboration

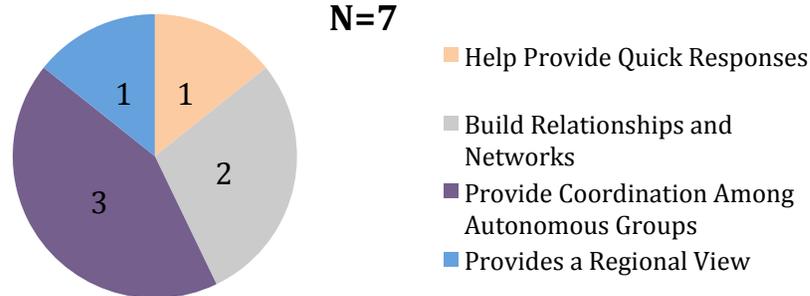


Figure 8. Perception of NQRLP's Effectiveness

Responses to the question of how Open Space Committee members perceive the collaborative effectiveness of NQRLP and Mount Grace underscores a theme that becomes more evident as Section 2 and 3 results are reviewed together – which is that despite the networking, trust building, education provided through the organizations' activities and assistance, the interviewees responses demonstrate that collaboration is more often valued positively where there are perceived gains from the effort. For instance, one respondent noted that communicating with the “land trust and state officials is important because you really need to be networked,” implying the community's reliance on the organization to coordinate among towns. Another interviewee stated that “when something comes up...[preservation opportunity] you need to act quick. You need to have those relationships in place. Reaching out and having them come by is a step in the right direction.”

Despite the suggestion among the findings of respondents' pragmatic utilization of networking and collaboration offered by the NQRLP and Mount Grace, other respondents reported the illuminating qualities that a regional understanding can bring. One respondent stated that presentations by the NQRLP “spurred

questions about the (Landscape Partnership) grants as it was the first time it had appeared and we realized we were a small part of a bigger Landscape Partnership Grant.” Another respondent noted “NQRLP provides regional involvement of local communities.” One respondent provided a clearer view into that potentially self-isolating municipal environment, stating that “Town officials have a self sufficient Town ethic. They are a tight knit group of individualists. Board’s work together.”

The results from the Section 3 questions imply that the NQRLP and Mount Grace may understand the structural impediments that can suppress inter *and* intra-municipal collaboration. The coded categories derived from the data in figure 9 suggest a coordinated effort on the part of the conservation organizations to not only strengthen networks, but also utilize those networks to support specific initiatives.

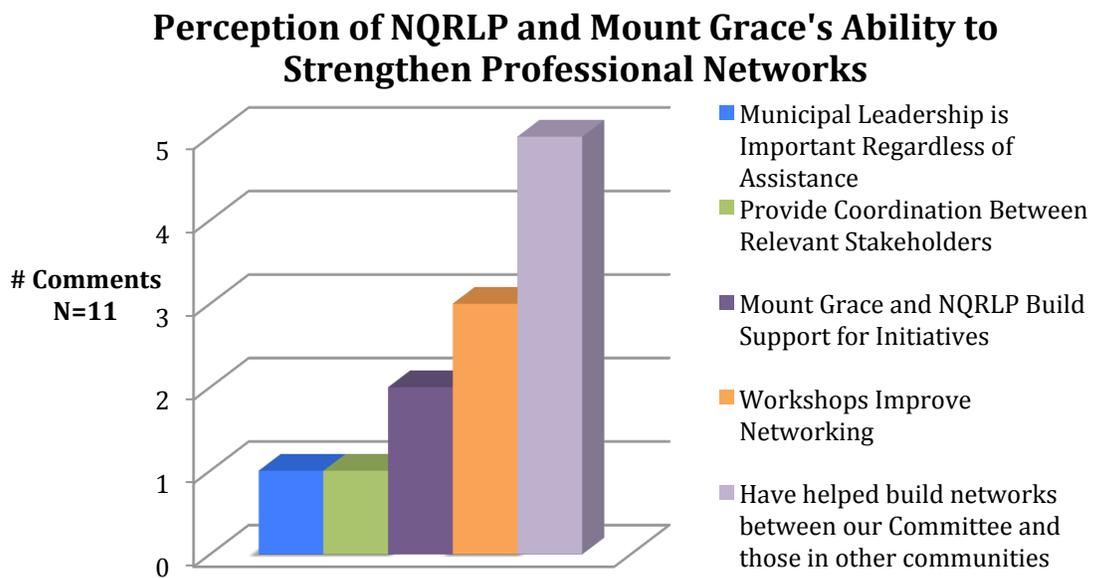


Figure 9. Perception of Ability to Strengthen Networks

Two respondents reported assistance from the two organizations in passing the Community Preservation Act in their Committee’s respective towns. Specifically,

the type of networking assistance they reported is analogous to campaign organizing. One respondent recounted that Mount Grace and the NQRLP were “able to sway the Selectmen and Treasurer and it was almost a done deal by the time they had to have the votes.” This pattern of stakeholder relationship building was further evident in another respondent’s statement that the organizations’ are effective at “working one on one and pulling stakeholders together as appropriate.”

Throughout the interviews, respondents repeatedly commented that the NQRLP and Mount Grace provide networking opportunities for their committee, and help coordinate various efforts between a variety of stakeholders, either local, regional or at the state level.

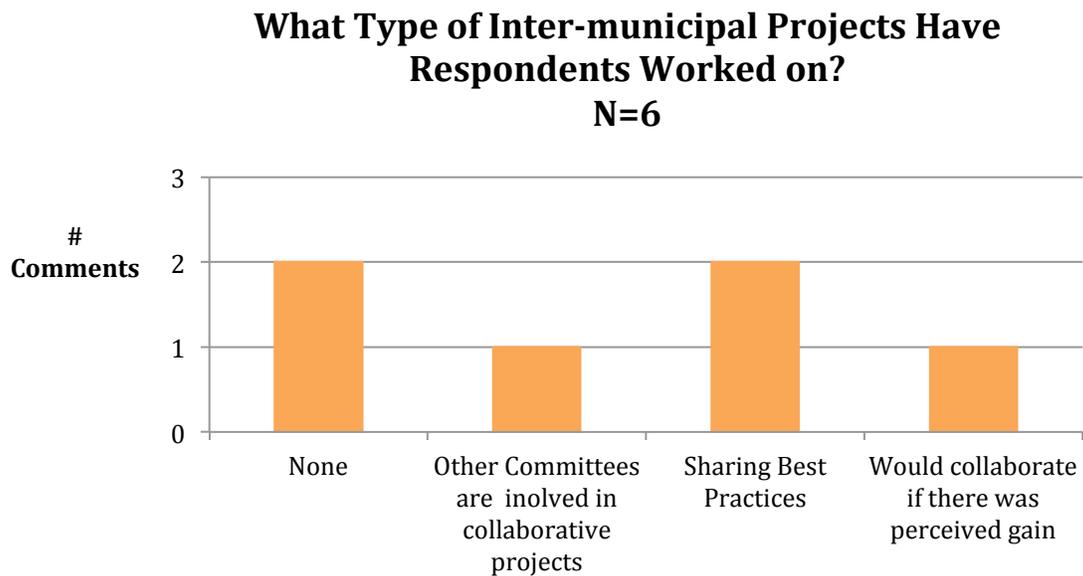


Figure 10. Inter-municipal Projects

Figure 10 demonstrates that when asked about past inter-municipal projects respondents have taken part in, only half of the comments coded and categorized provided positive evidence. When asked whether the respondent’s Open Space

Committee was currently involved in an inter-municipal project, 4/5 respondents replied “no” or “not directly.”

The categories in which inter-municipal activities were positively identified point toward a propensity to collaborate when there are clear or tangible gains for the local municipality taking part in that work. For instance, one respondent, whose comments were coded into “other committees are involved in collaborative projects,” noted that local broadband committees, which were designed to improve internet access in rural areas, have seen a “fair amount of collaboration.”

Similarly, responses categorized as “sharing best practices” support the theme of communicating and sharing knowledge when the result of collaboration is tangible or measurable. One respondent reported that their town was first to work on passing the Community Preservation Act. The respondent claimed that “other towns were very interested” in replicating the effort and contacted them for information. Another respondent reported that their committee “was starting to draft their first Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and were wondering if they could have a copy of (another town’s) plan to use as a guide to pick ideas from.” The results from categories where there was positive identification of municipalities working together, suggests that the respondents’ communities may be more apt to communicate and coordinate with neighboring towns when they are looking to compare and contrast or otherwise further local planning needs or policy efforts, such as in the example of reviewing the OSRP of another town or learning how a community passed a particular initiative. However, absent from the data on existing

inter-municipal efforts in this study, are examples of municipalities that coordinated among themselves to procure a regional goal.

Figure 11 illustrates several of the perceived challenges to inter-municipal collaboration among the North Quabbin Region open space Committees. Seventy five percent (75%) of the comments elaborate on an essentially negative response to the question posed in Figure 11 as shown below.

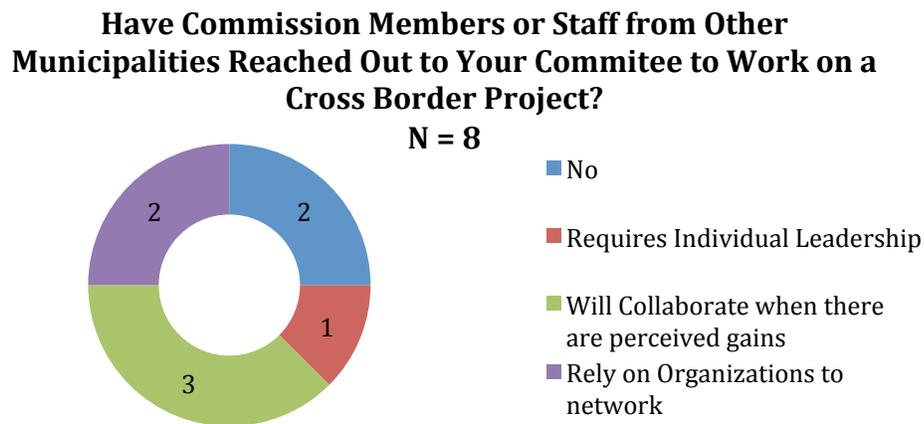


Figure 11. Communication Regarding Cross Border Projects

The data shown in figure 11 relates to data from figure 10 regarding past inter-municipal projects, in that it provides further evidence that collaboration follows a perception of tangible gain for the Committee member. Such a finding seems logical given the limited time often available to a volunteer committee. One respondent succinctly noted that their committee “reached out to Clean Water Action in Boston on one project when it was evident that they could help with a project,” and that they “will reach out to other towns when the need presents itself.” When asked about the types of inter-municipal projects their committee has been involved in, as illustrated earlier in figure 10, the same respondent noted they would “be happy to do so (collaborate) if there is an opportunity or need.”

A different respondent added to the trend of a perceived lack of necessity around collaboration, saying the committee “initiated a Regional Open Space Committee ten years ago but nothing ever came of it. We would collaborate if there was a project to take on.” However, the same respondent noted that their committee is working with “North County Land Trust and NQRLP on a Forest Legacy Project across multiple towns.” This is not the only instance of the apparent duality in perception versus action. A separate respondent, who claimed that their committee “would reach out to other towns when the need presents itself,” later noted their work with the NQRLP and Mount Grace on “a project between three towns.”

A further layer of is added to this concept of a perceived lack of need, when considering the category of responses in figure 11, coded as “Rely on Organizations to Network.” Although it was a relatively isolated category of comments, the concept of reliance on the NQRLP and Mount Grace suggests perhaps that the perceived lack of need for collaboration refers not to a lack of regional need, but a more intimate local need. One respondent noted that they “depend on Mount Grace for contacting Towns on projects and to get the Selectmen involved.”

“What could be done to improve collaboration between communities?” It was the final question on collaboration posed to the interviewees, and the responses not only suggest that respondents are aware of the lack of capacity for autonomous Open Space Committees to collaborate on projects, but that inter-municipal collaboration may not be the most critical tool for reaching project goals.

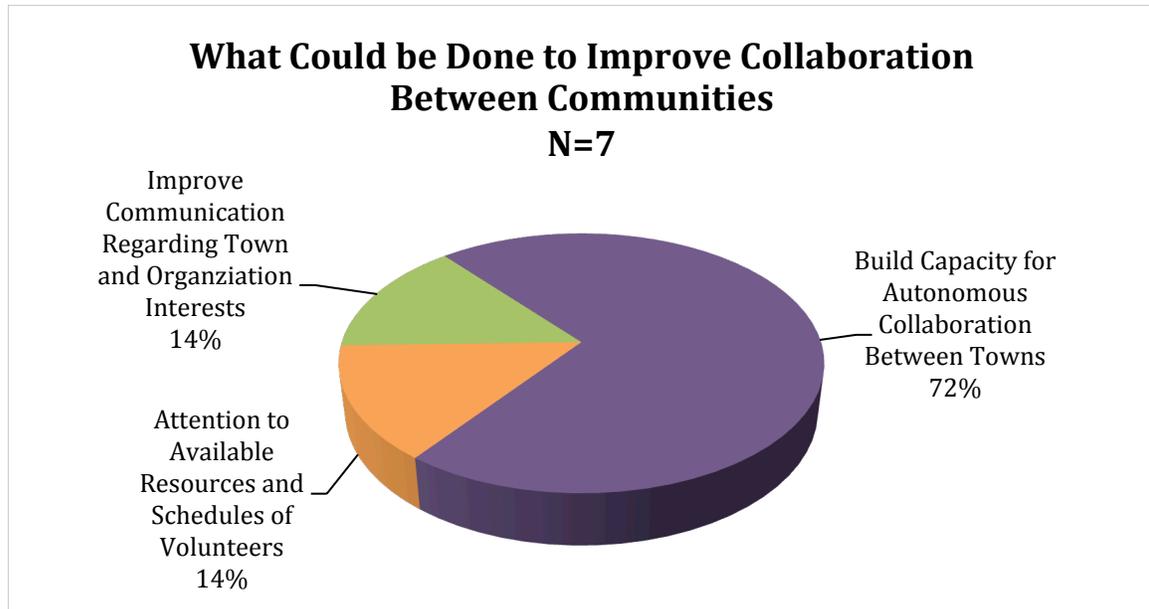


Figure 12. Improving Collaboration Between Communities

Comments in figure 12 overwhelmingly fell into the category of capacity building, meaning that the responses point to assistance offered to the municipality that provides networking support, improvement of communication strategy or expansion of the professional abilities the municipal committees may already employ. One respondent noted that “leadership at the municipal level is important” to keep projects moving and to do the necessary strategic planning. Another respondent reported that Mount Grace “reaches out” to various boards and committees within town to involve them in a project. The respondent claimed they “feel it might make collaboration in town easier.” One response in particular suggested a wish to be able to communicate easier, saying it would be helpful to have “an email list of participants, so that if someone hears about a project for one town they get in touch with people directly rather than use the filters of the conservation organizations.” One interview put it succinctly - “land trusts have a lot to learn from committees on how to approach people in town, and the Open Space

Committees can really benefit from the professionalism they bring.” The results point to both strong networking and relationship building on the part of the NQRLP and Mount Grace, but also an implicit perception that autonomous open space committees continue to be an important driver of progress within individual municipalities.

Interview Data Results | Section 4

In order to reliably explore the relationship of collaborative influence between the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, Mount Grace and the Open Space Committee members interviewed, it is necessary to address the internal validity of the study (Yin, 1984). Several questions were posed to the interviewees to better gauge the overlap between similar technical assistance provided by other

Has your committee been involved in any efforts sponsored by a regional planning agency?

N=6



organizations and whether the actions of those groups, including regional planning entities in the NQRLP region, could account for any of the aforementioned results of this study.

Figure 13. Regional Planning Agency Efforts

Results from Section 4 of the interviews point to a definite presence of regional groups operating under a different mission than the NQRLP and Mount

Grace. All five of the interviewees noted some amount of assistance from one of the two regional planning commissions: the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission. One respondent noted assistance with economic development planning, while two others noted technical GIS assistance with Open Space and Recreation Plan development. A respondent who had reported serving as the representative to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments also reported collaboration with a local watershed organization for conservation restriction monitoring and stewardship planning.

Despite the results showing a familiarity with regional planning entities in the region, when asked whether the interviewees Open Space Committee has “worked with neighboring towns on *other* regional projects, including groundwater resource planning, watershed planning, open space, transportation or economic development planning,” the responses were mixed and less certain. 3 of the 5 interviewees answered “no” or “not sure.” Another committee member noted that several towns have hired a contractor to assist with writing shared Community Development Block Grants, “just the way Mount Grace combines Landscape Partnership Grants.”

Results from Section 4 suggest that the types of assistance offered by local regional planning organizations may be outside the immediate focus of the Open Space Committee members interviewed. Respondents noted assistance and collaboration on a community economic development strategy, a survey regarding sustainable resource extraction businesses, and grants for brownfield remediation. When asked how the “work that your regional planning agency involves your

Commission in, differs from the technical assistance provided by Mount Grace or NQRLP,” two of the five respondents suggested that open space planning is not the strong suit of their local regional planning entity. One respondent reported a mismatch between the types of priority landscapes the town wished to have mapped, versus those the regional planning agency was focused on. Another respondent noted that they simply “have not depended much on the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission for Open Space and Recreation Planning.”

Although the sample size is quite small, and the tone of the responses suggests a distance between the core missions of Open Space Committees and other regional planning entities and agencies in the region, there is evidence that such entities are engaging municipalities in different types of assistance. However, despite that assistance to municipalities in other genres of planning work, the results seemed to lack the strong sense of relationship between the entities and the Open Space Committees.

One respondent noted that the local regional planning agency “has responded differently depending on the directors – one was very supportive and helpful and the other was not.” Another interviewee stated that they worked on a “document prioritizing different planning activities...however there was no point person.” Although it could be a result of the interview structure, favoring discussion of NQRLP’s assistance, the tone of interviewee responses leaned toward an absence of strong relationships and trust between the municipal interviewees and the technical service providers.

PART II | Open Space and Recreation Plan Data

In Part II of Chapter 5, I present the results of a survey of the Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRPs) for each of the 26 towns making up the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership region. 21 of the 26 towns in the region provided links on their website to access their local OSRP. From a review of the *Goals and Objectives* and *Five Year Action Step* chapters of each plan, 307 stated goal, objective and action comments were identified based on the relation to keywords established in Teresa Hogue's "Scale of Community Linkages" (1993) and subsequently categorized by theme.

The results settle into four broad categories of what I term "collaborative impulses" (Foster 1998), as the comment or statement denotes an effort to further an open space or recreation goal through a method of networking, coordination, cooperation, coalition or collaboration (Hogue 1993). Figure 17 displays a town-by-town breakdown of the comments recorded into the four themes: Public Education; Intra-municipal Collaboration; Organizational/Agency Collaboration; Inter-municipal Collaboration.

Goal / Action Step Comments by Theme N = 307

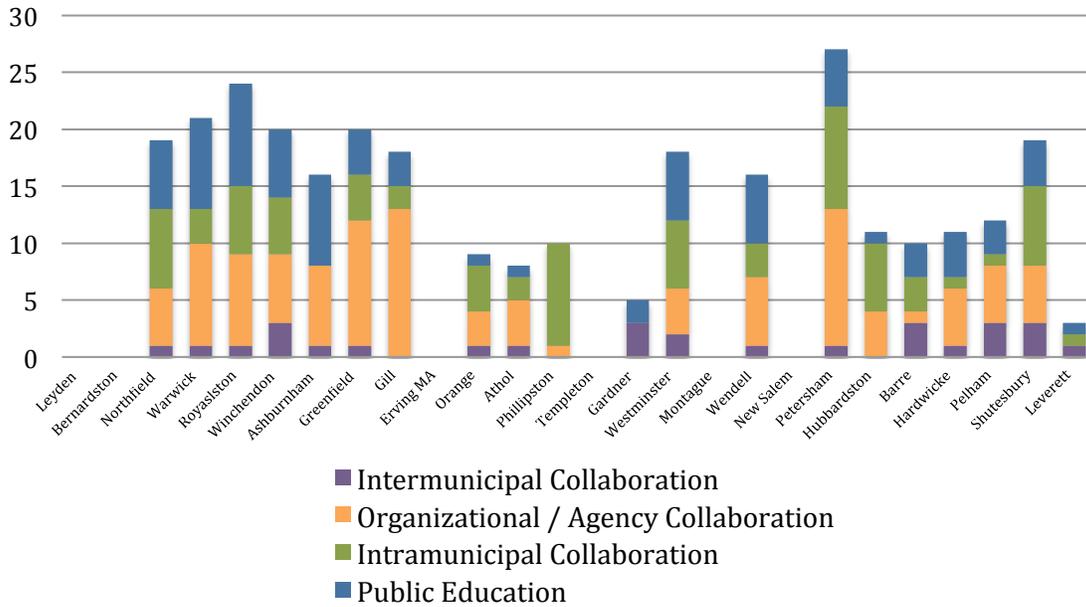


Figure 14. Goals and Action Step Themes

A fairly uniform ratio of comment themes across the 21 municipalities represented displays itself in figure 14. The highest mean number of comments by theme (5.2 comments/town) pertained to goals or actions relating to collaborative efforts with conservation organizations or agencies at various levels of government. The lowest mean (1.3 comments/town) related to inter-municipal collaboration. Municipalities, on average, produced 3.6 comments relating intra-municipal collaboration and 3.7 comments per town relating to various types of public education.

Figure 15 further demonstrates the relative scarcity of attention given to inter-municipal collaboration during the municipalities' OSRP planning processes.

Just 9% of the overall comments were categorized as relating to inter-municipal collaboration. The theme of Organizational / Agency Collaboration makes up the largest percentage of comments across all 307 comments recorded, at 38%, while public education and intra-municipal collaboration, categories that showed some similarities, made up over 53% of all comments recorded.

Total Goal / Action Step Comments by Theme N=307

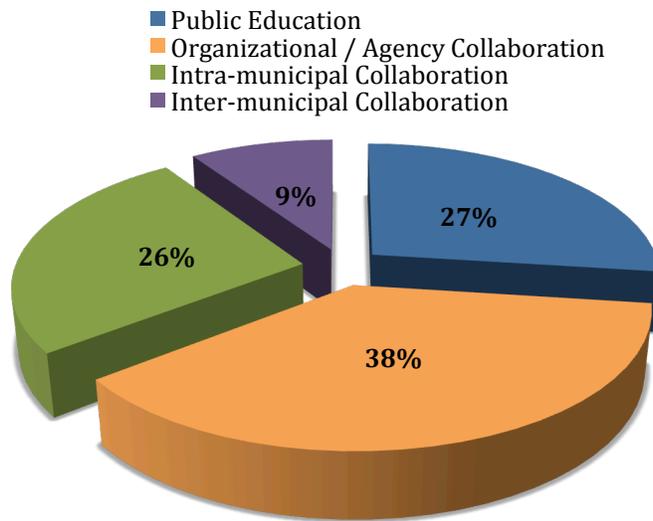


Figure 15. Total Goal and Action Step Comments

Figure 16 further unpacks the theme of inter-municipal collaboration as written in the Goals/Objectives and Action Steps chapters of the OSRPs. When looking at the individual comments making up the four categories in Figure 18, comments tended toward valuing shared resources and outcomes, over reliance on neighboring municipalities.

**Inter-Municipal Collaboration Comments in Goals/
Objectives and Five Year Action Steps Chapters
N = 29**

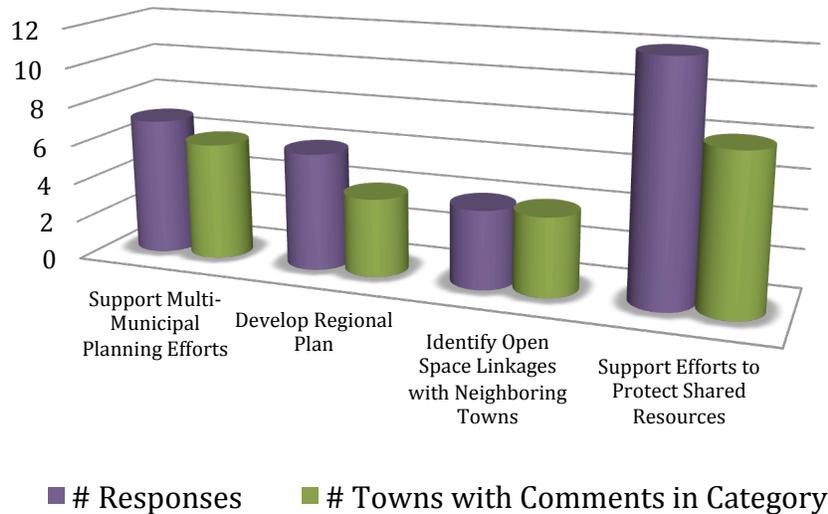


Figure 16. Inter-municipal Collaboration Comments

Although evidence of NQRLP led, land protection initiatives between municipalities, such as Landscape Partnership Grants, were recorded as inter-municipal activities during the interview process, through their Open Space and Recreation Plans, Towns showed a greater prevalence for watershed protection when referencing the need to work across boundaries. Several municipalities noted the importance of protecting a shared watershed or a source of their municipal water supply in a nearby town. However, in no instance were comments included that suggested work with the NQRLP or Mount Grace to directly initiate such collaboration.

Among the comments regarding inter-municipal collaboration, the lowest number of comments related to identifying open space linkages with neighboring

towns. However, half of the 12 comments categorized as “Support Efforts to Protect Shared Resources” related to furthering efforts to increase bicycle and recreation trails spanning beyond town borders.

In regard to the category of “Supporting Multi-Municipal Planning Efforts,” three of the comments related to working with neighboring municipal governments to secure access to water-bodies for public recreation. Five municipalities directly noted the regional importance of working with a specific town, or with neighboring towns more generally, such as in the area of habitat, watershed and landscape preservation. The results however, were not detailed enough to shed light on whether the municipality itself would engage the neighboring town(s) in the cross border effort or whether open space committees or other local planning entities would look to groups, such as NQRLP and Mount Grace to assist with that outreach.

Figure 17 outlines the themes that emerged from the comments categorized as “organizational/agency collaboration.” Goals, objectives and action steps relating to work with an outside organization or public agency accounted for over 1/3 of all comments recorded. The data presented in Figure 19 can be viewed in three distinct ways:

1. The results markedly suggest areas of work that may be amply provided for, not as prone to tangible results or are at a lower regional priority;
2. it displays a strong propensity for further work and engagement with area/regional land trusts;

3. demonstrates an understanding among municipalities that increased participation, support and promotion of regional efforts is a priority strategy for reach goals and objective in the OSRP.

Bullet #1 above refers to the three comment themes forming the lowest number of total recorded comments, including: working with organizations and agencies to secure funding resources, working with regional planning commissions, and supporting and promoting efforts for furthering recreation opportunities. Securing funding resources may simply be a lower priority given the reliance on NQRLP and Mount Grace, among interview respondents, in coordinating funding sources when projects are identified. As discussed within Section 4 of the interview results, Regional Planning Commissions' work outside the immediate focus of the Open Space Committee's core work may account for the scarcity of responses in the OSRP comments. Lastly, the promotion and support of organizations and programs related to recreational opportunities may be attributed to the more focused attention given to wildlands preservation within the region. Strengthening relationships with area land trusts and engaging in their preservation efforts, however, accounted for nearly *seven times* as many responses than working with regional planning agencies.

Organizational / Agency Collaboration

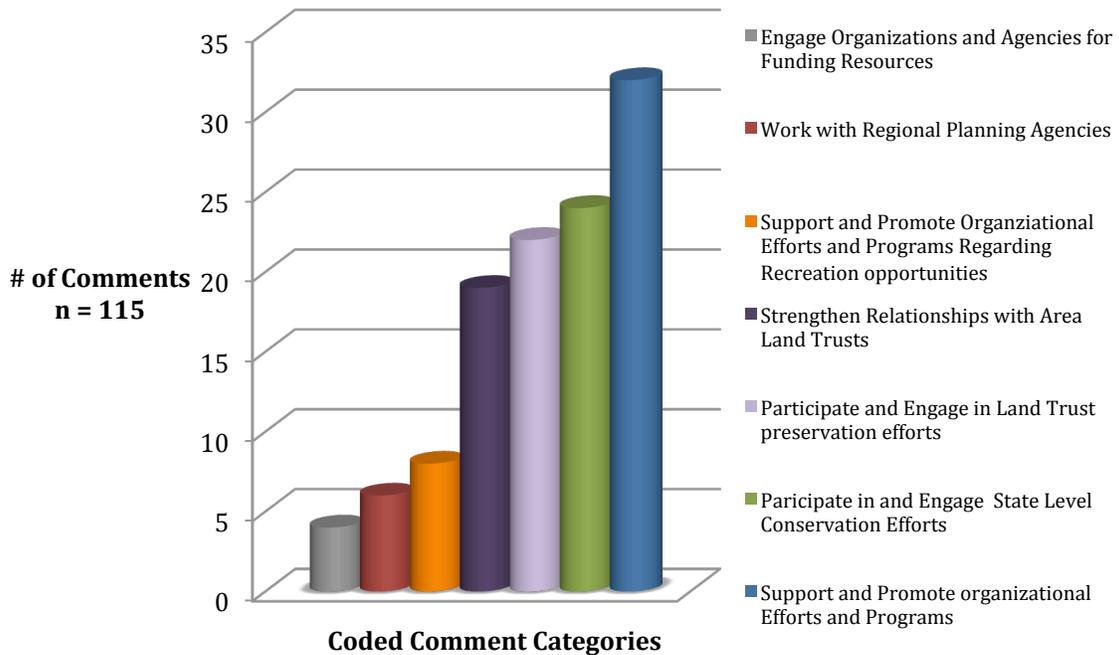


Figure 17. Organizational and Agency Collaboration

The highest number of categorized comments was recorded in the themes in of participating and engaging in state level conservation efforts, and supporting and promoting organizational efforts and programs. The trend suggests a willingness on the part of Open Space Committees reach out to state agencies and organizations to further open space and recreation goals and leverage regional participation to advance goals. Individual comments from the theme include partnering with various watershed organizations who share open space goals with the Town, working with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation on connecting access to open space lands, and communicating with school districts, historical societies, and chambers of commerce on areas of shared interests. The data suggests a confidence to expand the reach of collaborative efforts into organizations and efforts beyond the NQRLP, Mount Grace and other regional land trust efforts.

The results demonstrated in figure 18 build off those shown in figure 19 in that municipalities in the North Quabbin region reveal an inclination to also partner with in-town interests that may be able to further preservation goals and objectives. Figure 19 depicts a preference among municipalities for partnering with local municipal committees, boards, and interests when developing a strategy to meet open space goals and objectives outlined in their respective OSRP's. Intra-municipal collaboration accounts for over ¼ of the recorded comments at 27%, compared to just 9% of comments pertaining to inter-municipal collaboration.

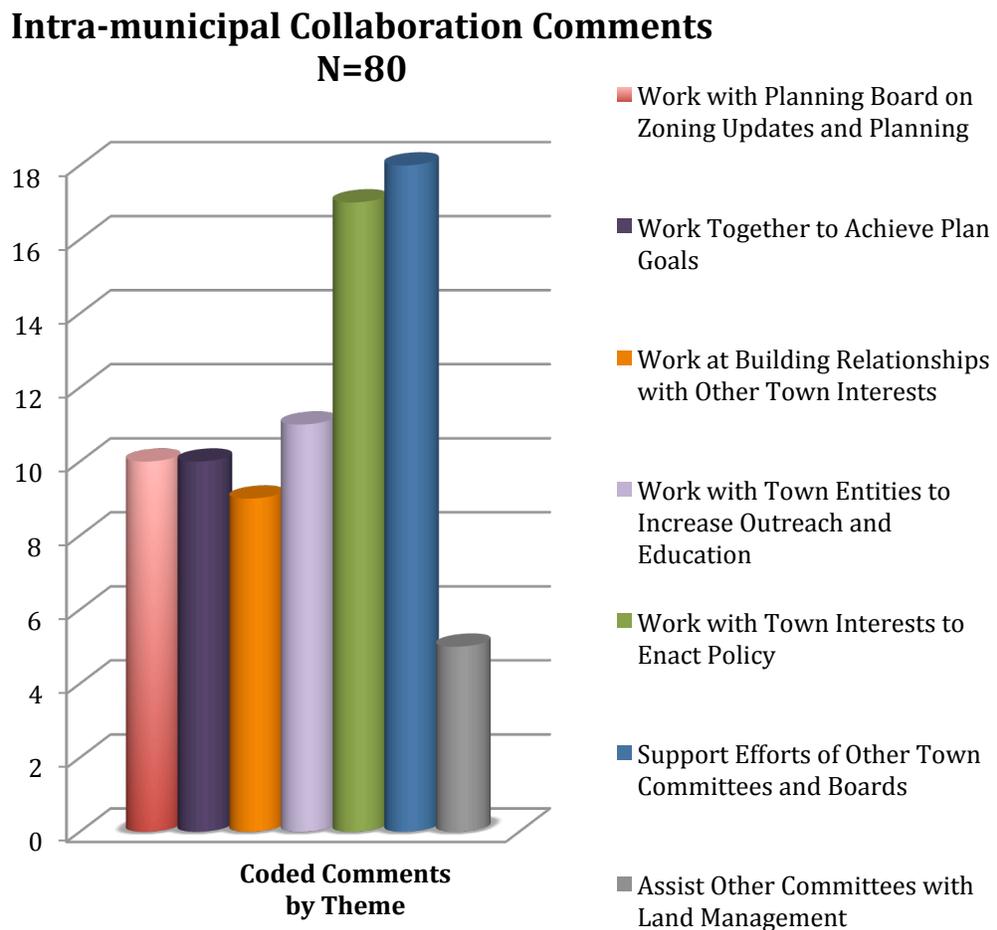


Figure 18. Intra-municipal Collaboration Comments

The above results point to a general strategy of inclusion as outlined in the goals, objectives and action steps. OSRP data shows that many comments suggest a recognition for the need for broad level outreach, collaboration and support for and within their municipal committee structures. Categories, such as “work together to achieve plan goals,” and “work with town entities to increase outreach and education,” and “support efforts of other town committees and boards,” together accounted for 60% of the recorded comments. Individual comments included “continue close cooperation between Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission to conserve priority open space,” and “develop and maintain an ongoing collaborative relationship between the Planning Board, Select Board, Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee.”

One the other end of the spectrum, 40% of recorded comments in the Intra-municipal theme were geared toward more specific collaborative actions. Categories in the theme included comments regarding work with the Planning on zoning updates and planning, work with town interests to enact policy, and assisting other committees with land management.

Working with town interests to enact policies accounted for 21% of total comments. Common among comments in the category were references to building town support for the passage of the Community Preservation Act and working with multiple boards on the creation of a Chapter 61 policy for assessing lands as the town determines whether to exercise it’s right of first refusal. The propensity for municipalities to work within their community to further goals, rather than reach out to other communities is distinct. The average number of comments geared

toward intra-municipal collaboration across all towns with OSRP’s was found to be 3.6, nearly three times the average for inter-municipal comments at 1.3.

The final theme that surfaced in the OSRP analysis related to a need for public education and engagement. Although geared more toward town residents outside of municipal government, the public education and engagement theme nearly equaled the distribution of comments recorded in the Intra-municipal collaboration theme, at 26% and 27% of total comments respectively. The comments recorded into the seven individual categories suggest a systems approach to understanding regional issues, with many of the comments aimed at supporting efforts that the interview results show NQLRP and Mount Grace are actively involved in coordinating.



Figure 19. Word Cloud

The systems thinking approach is teased out in the word cloud in figure 19, with words suggesting more broad level public participation, such as “school,”

“children,” “education,” “public,” “residents” and “landowners.” At the same time, there is evidence that towns are pursuing activities the NQRLP and Mount Grace are actively engaged in, such as landowner outreach, and education and encouragement regarding the utilization of various conservation programs.

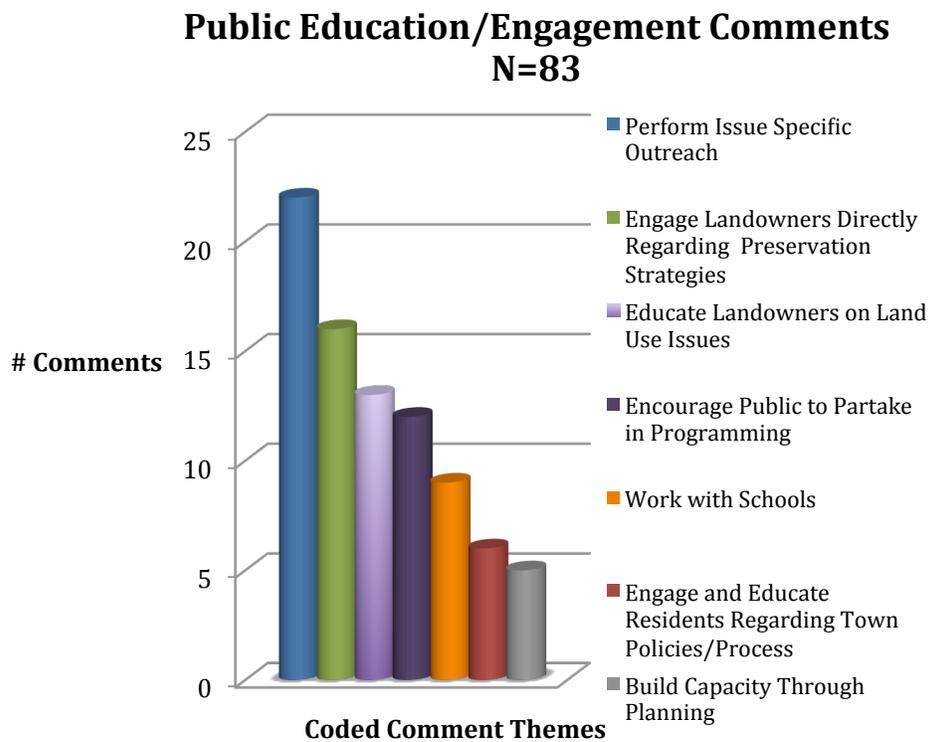


Figure 20. Public Education and Engagement Comments

Of the 83 comments recorded in the theme, 35% relate directly to engaging landowners in preservation strategies and educating landowners on land use issues. Individual comments included encouraging landowners to work with regional land trusts, and “establishing communication with priority landowners to keep them informed” of OSRP goals. Similar comments regarding landowners were even more directly tied to preservation strategies, such as “work with landowners whose land includes portions of the Metacomet and Mondadnock Scenic trail to ensure trail

access,” and “inform landowners about Chapter 61 programs.” The focus on landowners correlates with interview data, particularly the similarity in the type of outreach activities and the topics at open space conferences provided by NQRLP and Mount Grace.

Performing issue specific outreach, encouraging the public to partake in programming and working with area schools, accounted for nearly 52% of all comments in the theme. When looked at against similar comments regarding intra-municipal collaboration the data helps demonstrate a recognition that priorities for securing municipal open space and recreation goals are not focused on program and policy innovation, but on increasing participation in those tools that already exist and building networks for further engagement. Individual comments support the need for further utilization of current programs, such as “educate residents about the Community Preservation Act Committee process,” “support efforts...to promote agritourism and buy local campaigns,” and “promote education and activities that protect the town's surface and ground water resources, wetlands, vernal pools, unique habitats and wildlife corridors.”

Other comments were more focused on networking and communication to build support for local and regional land use issues, such as “institute an on-going publicity campaign to inform the public about the actions that affect open space and recreation,” “ensure that regional understanding and cooperation in meeting environmental goals is ongoing,” and “increase community information and involvement.”

Nested within the theme of public education and engagement was a more fundamental educational theme regarding collaboration with school systems and work on more formal education campaigns. Some comments were issue specific, such as “sponsor educational events and materials for residents concerning the management of invasive pests and diseases,” while others suggested the need for a better understanding of fundamental conservation issues and appreciations, such as “work with schools, assorted civic groups and citizens to foster open space education and appreciation,” or “coordinate environmental education into the school district curriculum using local conservation resources.” When combined, the language expressed in the comments regarding work with schools and issue specific outreach, points to a need for better understanding and education regarding the needs outlined in OSRP’s, whether that outreach is aimed at school age children or landowning adults.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 represents the results of Open Space Committee member interviews and the analysis of Open Space and Recreation Plans across the North Quabbin region. The interview data presented reveals the various ways the NQRLP, Mount Grace and municipal Open Space Committees engage with one another, as well as explores the more nuanced feelings and perceptions of how that engagement and participation can lead to inter-municipal collaboration and networking among community members. When viewed against the broad sweep of goals, objective and action steps outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Plans of the region’s

municipalities, the results show that while inter-municipal collaboration does not appear to rank among the top strategies for advancing open space and recreation goals, it does not necessarily signify that the types of activities and assistance offered by Mount Grace and the NQRLP are not having an impact on perceptions regarding the importance of networking, communication, coordination and collaboration within town and with the greater public.

Chapter 6 | Conclusion

In Chapter 6 I will review the results of the two-part study methodology, provide insight into limitations of the study and discuss the implications this research may have on the efficacy of voluntary collaborative arrangements in a broader sense. Using interview results, Open Space and Recreation Plan analysis results, as well as information gained through the literature review, I will analyze the data as a whole, noting perceptions and trends within the data set that may have implications for the way open space committees and regional conservation partnerships interact to affect collaborative activity in the 26 town region.

Collaboration at Multiple Levels

The results of Chapter 5 suggest that the NQRLP and Mount Grace affect OSC's collaborative behavior in a variety of nuanced ways. More particularly, though, Section I of the interview results suggests they may represent a more fundamental component of local open space networks and conservation activity. Although none of the respondents directly noted NQRLP or Mount Grace as the impetus for the Open Space Committee's establishment, the NQRLP was established in 1998. While the OSC's first contact with the NQRLP was not explored, the earliest dates interviewees were first appointed to their respective committee was the year 2000. Given the fact that development of an Open Space Plan was noted as an impetus for committee formation in several instances, it seems plausible that the two organizations have operated as an initial catalyst, setting the stage for further

learning and networking that results show is often bestowed on communities that begin implementation of an OSRP.

Future studies may further explore the perceptions and relationships between Regional Conservation Partnerships and Open Space Committee members from the angle of the committees' newer members as well. In this study, interviewees averaged 14.4 years on the committee, and cross committee involvement in the community was found to be widespread. It is difficult to say whether this horizontal network bridging into other committees is a function of an early collaborative relationship with the NQRLP or whether it is due to the relatively scant pool of volunteer members the differing committees must vie for in towns with small populations.

Regardless of the origin, the horizontal network bridging apparently taking place in the rural subject communities of this study seem to be ripe for the style of engagement offered by the NQRLP and Mount Grace. This seems especially relevant given the number and arrangement of local, autonomous municipal committees, local land trusts, and watershed organizations operating in the region appears conducive to working with collaborative setups with various partners operating in different action arenas. It is this type of arrangement that Agranoff and McGuire (2003) describe as being able to "induce leadership by forging strategic design...around dozens of horizontal and vertical consultations (64).

The organizational and municipal arrangement of actors and their interactions further suggests that collaborative activity is widespread and well integrated. Certain open space committee members not only have sat on other

municipal boards or committees, but are in some cases, sitting Board members on area land trusts, including some with the host organization of Mount Grace and NQRLP. The finding suggests a fairly sophisticated level of integration into regional planning efforts, meaning that respondents interviewed may not only be active in the action arena of local networking and education, but also at the organizational threshold of coordinating collaborative responses to conservation issues at the regional level.

Given the interactions taking place among actors in the region, Chapter 5 results point toward collaboration as defined in the literature review. NQRLP's municipal networking seems to mirror Agranoff and McGuire's (2003) definition of collaboration - the "process of facilitating or operating in multi-organizational arrangements" to solve problems that are difficult to address for one actor alone (4). Richard Margerum's definition also seems spot on, describing collaboration as an "approach to solving complex problems in which a diverse group of autonomous stakeholders deliberates to build consensus and develop networks for translating consensus into results" (Ibid.). This seems especially accurate given the sense of autonomy that the municipal partners exhibit in the Section 3 results.

Despite findings of collaborative activity between the NQRLP, Mount Grace and the open space committees, results of the committee makeup and organization questions introduce the need for further research into communities that do not operate among the strong presence of a mature regional conservation partnership. Specifically, this study stops short of providing a clear indication as to whether open space committees would have the same capacity for understanding effective

responses to regional issues, and demonstrating a proclivity to reach beyond their networks to solve those issues if NQRLP and Mount Grace were not present to support and build capacity and networking opportunities. Although it is a small sample, the fact that most respondents reported no municipal support staff at all, as well as a complete reliance on the NQRLP for many aspects of their workplans, it would be interesting to further research whether the organization's absence would empower the committee to create effective networks, or whether the capacity to do so rests primarily on the shoulders of strong regional conservation partnerships.

Building a Foundation for Further Collaboration

The arrangement of activities and technical assistance offered by Mount Grace and the NQRLP and recorded in the results, provide ample insight into the building blocks of collaborative behavior within municipal networks. This is not surprising, given Labich's (2015) of "mature" and "conserving" partnerships, which develop tools and contacts to conserve land at a pace and scale that member groups could not achieve on their own (14, 22) . The Highstead Foundation describes mature RCPs as laying out a mapped conservation vision, engaging government and organizational stakeholders and even advancing recreational projects, such as educational programs and trail projects "to produce momentum and keep partners involved (Highstead 2014, 1). The results in Section II largely corroborate these types of activities, such as evidence of assistance in building support for Community Preservation Act initiatives and the development of ADA accessible trails and recreation areas in the subject communities.

Provided the fairly advanced conservation strategy of mature RCP's, projects that appear to be locally initiated by open space committees, such as monitoring conservation easements, maintaining protected parcels or even creating educational campaigns (as noted in many of the OSRP's), may rather be indicative of the implementation of a sophisticated, collaborative conservation vision. The data on technical assistance provided, as well as the range of comments within the goals, objective and action steps in the OSRPs, supports the finding that even where explicitly local projects are being pursued and/or implemented, the activities are linked to regional goals and strategies supported by the collaborative work of the NQRLP and Mount Grace.

Data on the type of technical assistance provided, as well as the perception of how that assistance effects open space committees, suggests that many of the levels noted in Teresa Hogue's *Scale of Community Linkages* (1993) are present at once in the collaborative arrangements between NQRLP, Mount Grace and the OSC's. Networking, cooperation, coordination or partnership, coalition and collaboration (Hogue 1993) all appear to be present in the results of Section II. Where "dialogue and understanding" ground the base of the scale, gaining a "shared vision" and developing "interdependent systems" define the higher levels of collaboration (Ibid.). Results in Section II of the interviews do well to demonstrate the "open lines of communication" and dialogue (Ibid.) between two seemingly trusted entities (NQRLP and OSC's) involved in various networking and peer learning opportunities.

Examining the results regarding tasks of initiating land protection, the coordination and alliance appears to shine through. Examples in the data include

RCPs and OSCs working alongside one another to coordinate the support and application of a multi-town Landscape Partnership Grant. This sense of coordination and coalition is further strengthened by the open space committees propensity to appoint liaisons between the OSC and the NQRLP and Mount Grace, which provides a more formal point person for continued coordination.

Moving on to the higher levels of Hogue's scale (1993), it appears that Open Space Committees interactions with NQRLP and Mount Grace are less likely to be static within one level of communication, neither evolving chronologically from one step to the next. Rather, in the case of their work with NQRLP, municipal open space committees exhibit behaviors across the scale, suggesting action within in several levels at once. It's possible that the act of an RCP engaging a municipal committee in a shared conservation vision both allows for and necessitates continued work within all levels. Assuming this logic, this study's elimination of interview questions relating to Teresa Hogue's scale in the absence of identified inter-municipal collaborative relationships seems appropriate. For if the relationship between open space committees and the NQRLP can be considered a benchmark of strong collaboration, it seems it would take an outsized level of capacity, coupled with a willingness to step beyond the walled interests of a municipality, for two communities to network, coordinate, coalesce and collaborate at the scale that NQRLP's mission allows for. In short, NQRLP and Mount Grace appear to be the facilitator of collaboration.

The implication correlates well to Lubell's (2002) ideas around the inherent difficulty in institutional collective action models, specifically within his study of

watershed partnerships, where he finds “partnerships were more likely to form when the transaction costs of building and maintaining new institutions are outweighed by the relative ease of partnering” (2). From the level of programming, staff and administration the NQRLP and Mount Grace provide and shoulder, it does not seem there is anything easy about it. The results beg the question – do municipalities have the staff, resources and political will to assume the role of the facilitator? In the North Quabbin region – they may not need to.

Inter-municipal Collaboration and the Missing Link

When interviewees were asked about the effectiveness of NQRLP and Mount Grace at bringing communities together, the response was a resounding yes. Respondents noted the coordination the organizations provided between town groups, the ability to build networks among them and the regional viewpoints that NQRLP and Mount Grace exposed the open space committee members to.

Notwithstanding the extra capacity and technical assistance offered by Mount Grace and the NQRLP, the results in the third section of questions did not portray open space committee members as simply being led without question toward another group’s conservation vision. As indicated in the results, interviewees demonstrated an understanding of their role within larger regional effort, perhaps perceiving the transaction costs in collaborating with NQRLP. Respondents noted the act of “reaching out” to NQRLP to be better positioned when a preservation opportunity arises, while another respondent claimed “you really need to be networked.”

Interviewees were clear in their perception of being well networked, citing open space conferences held by the NQRLP, as well as the ability for NQRLP and Mount Grace to gather the relevant stakeholders necessary to move a project forward, whether at the local, regional or state level. The feeling harkens back to the literature review where it was found that Richard Margerum (2011) saw networks as being able to overcome the transaction costs of collective action, noting the importance of “social norms, interlinked fates and interpersonal communication and trust (183-184).

The data from Section III serves to demonstrate Margerum’s point. One respondent noted their committee recognized they were part of a bigger landscape partnership after one conference, while others had built a relationship leading to free flowing communication. These results suggest that there is more behind the initial coded categories than simply how the organizations catalyze collaborative activity. Phrases such as “we realized we were a small part,” and “regional involvement of local communities” exposes the recognition among Open Space Committee members that the municipal committee format may limit the range of inter-municipal collaboration possible.

Together, the findings largely represent evidence NQRLP and Mount Grace’s efforts to build capacity among municipal partners through peer-to-peer networks, similar to those described in the *RCP Handbook* and the *Willdlands and Woodlands Vision* (Labich 2015; Aber et al. 2010). The focus on capacity and networking seems to be an approach supported in the literature I reviewed, including Richard

Feiock's (2009) findings that self organizing methods of collective action can be more effective where autonomy of local actors is preserved (360).

It seems clear that trust building and networking appear to be cornerstones of the various programs and activities offered to towns in the region. Yet, the responses seem to further signify a perception that collaboration with the NQRLP serves a defined purpose and that the networking provided by the groups is utilized as a tool for land preservation among autonomous committees. Based on the results and the above discussion, the sense of autonomy regarding a committee's governance structure is strong. One interviewee specifically noted the importance of having municipal leadership to move initiatives forward when responding to several questions regarding the capacity for inter-municipal collaboration.

Respondents from interview questions reported a relative propensity to reach out to other municipalities for peer learning purposes, such as to further the production of an Open Space and Recreation Plan, learn strategies for building support for Town policies, or borrowing ideas to jump start a local cordwood bank project. The comments seem to point to a municipality's absence of reliance on neighboring towns in addressing regional goals, and rather toward a more pragmatic tendency to value shared resources and outcomes. Notwithstanding the responses regarding broadband and energy committee collaboration contained in Figure 11 of Chapter 5, the results contain little suggestion that Open Space Committees have autonomously reached out to other municipalities to collaborate

on issues of shared regional importance. And subsequent responses suggest that perhaps they do not need to.

When interviewees were asked whether commission members or staff from other municipalities reached out to the committee to work on a cross border project – results suggested an overall lack of necessity. Some respondents noted forming a regional project some time in the past but that “nothing ever came of it.” On more than one occasion, another respondent noted that if there was a project that necessitated working with another town directly, there would be nothing to stop that committee from doing so. Similarly another respondent noted they would work with other towns when the need presents itself.

Given the link within the literature between network building and collaboration, it was perhaps easy for me to assume that the networking and coordination provided by the NQRLP and Mount Grace would lead to evidence of more formal collaborative activities, such as those noted in the higher levels of Theresa Hogue’s scale of Community Linkages. However, when asked directly about the type of inter-municipal projects the respondents’ committees were currently involved in, and what could be done to increase inter-municipal collaboration, the responses suggested a relative simplicity of current collaborations.

The difference in the results between the overwhelmingly positive attitudes regarding the NQRLP and Mount Grace’s ability to act as a catalyst for inter-municipal collaboration, and the sparse response to inter-municipal projects that committees are actively engaged in, suggests a variety of factors potentially at work. One possibility for the lack of inter-municipal collaboration is that that in the

absence of direct involvement by NQRLP and Mount Grace, the transaction costs for collaborating are beyond what the average open space committee or municipality can bear. Another possibility suggested in the results is that collaboration is born from necessity; that collaborations between communities can be important means to an end, but that strengthening the capacity for autonomous Committees to move projects forward may be more important than collaborating for the sake of working together. And yet, perhaps the reason for a lack of a strong positive response to instances of inter-municipal collaboration is more pragmatic; that the municipal committee structure is more suited to pursuing projects and activities that can demonstrably further local projects. For instance the results from the analysis of Open Space and Recreation and Plans provide a multitude of instances where OSCs have noted priorities of reaching out to landowners in town, or working to complete sections of multi-use trails.

The scarcity of recorded instances of inter-municipal activity in the results, against the backdrop of a sophisticated collaborative effort on the part of the NQRLP and Mount Grace is a significant contradiction of the study. What the data on the “necessity of” and the “capacity for” inter-municipal collaboration seems to point to, is that municipal committees may effectively outsource collaboration to strong regional conservation partnerships.

Throughout the results, there are references to the NQRLP bridging networks together at forums, or for the purposes of a multi-municipal Forest Legacy or Landscape Partnership Grant. Interviewees further noted their reliance on the NQRLP and Mount Grace to coordinate activities among different actors and bring

the right stakeholders to the table. The arrangement suggests that the host organization of Mount Grace and the regional conservation partnership it supports in NQRLP, have assumed a role that is difficult for municipal committees to replicate. Given the maturity of the partnership and the pattern and record of their success working with communities, it seems plausible that some municipalities could be less likely to sustain functional collaborative arrangements with neighboring communities when an able regional conservation partnership can provide the benefit of cutting transaction costs.

Collaboration Where it Counts

This study focused on the role regional conservation partnerships play in inter-municipal collaboration. It is a significant finding then, that the results regarding inter-municipal collaborative arrangements were overwhelmingly shadowed by the multitude of results pointing to collaboration between open space committees and other entities. Nowhere in the data was this occurrence more apparent than in the study of the Goals, Objectives and Action Steps chapters of the region's Open Space and Recreation Plans.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, nearly 65% of all comments recorded regarded the pursuit of collaborative efforts with organizations, agencies and intra-municipal entities. Supporting, promoting and participating in organizational and agency efforts accounted for the highest number of comments. When viewed alongside the strong relationship open space committees have with the NQRLP and Mount Grace efforts, it appears that there may be a potential recognition among

municipalities that increased participation, support and promotion of regional efforts is the best strategy for reaching goals and objectives.

The implication is that the peer learning, network strengthening and capacity building could be shining a fresh light on the strength of regional collaboration and opening new pathways to securing objectives. Comments from OSRP's noted work with multiple state agencies and initiatives, watershed organizations, trail groups, and public and private schools. At the same time, a number of comments stated the priority of strengthening ties with regional land trusts. This concept of "learning to learn" appears to be the result of the same double and triple loop learning processes Curtin (2011) and Innes and Booher (2010) point to in the process of community based collaboration, where new outcomes are discovered through collaboration (Innes and Booher, 5). In short, it appears that the strength of collaboration, as shown by the NQRLP, may be rubbing off on the municipal committees.

The above concept is similarly evident among comments regarding public education. OSRP data pointed to a variety of municipal goals and action steps around building awareness for landscape preservation, applicable programs and services for landowners and residents and even natural resource issues at a broader level. The fact that the need for education spanned municipal circles, such as the need to engage and educate Boards of Selectmen on policy issues, to education in a more formal sense, including designing environmental education curriculums to increase appreciation and awareness for natural resources, suggests that municipalities, and open space committees in particular, are perhaps seeing their role within the collaborative structure of the regional conservation partnership in a

new and more functional way. If coordination of multiple stakeholders in different action arenas is too unwieldy, perhaps organizing education campaigns at the local level is a more efficient way to provide support to a partnership that can demonstrate success through networking.

The above concept seems overtly apparent in the data recorded on intra-municipal collaboration. The second highest number of comments recorded in the category relates to working with town interests to enact policies. Many towns in the region noted the objective of creating a town policy around the exercise of the municipalities right of first refusal when land is being taken out of the Chapter 61 program. Other communities noted the priority of working within their municipal structure to build support for the Community Preservation Act. Such activities were identical to those activities the NQRLP and Mount Grace were found to be pursuing with towns during the interview process. Either the results in this instance indicate ongoing projects that towns are working with the NQRLP and Mount Grace to pursue or open space committees are learning from the broader partnership and other municipalities that such efforts can help them reach their goals. For instance, while the interview results demonstrate a lack of evidence regarding tangible gains and successes emerging from committee driven inter-municipal projects, more concrete examples of technical assistance provided by the NQRLP and Mount Grace may be leading to the higher number of comments attributed to collaboration with organizations and agencies.

Similar to supporting other organizations and programs, the implication is one of the open space committee's potential recognition that promotion, support

and strengthening of networks and relationships are crucial at all levels of the partnership. However, if the above implication were true, it would have seemed that more frequent mention of regional planning agencies would have come up in the OSRP data. Although there is certainly evidence of OSRP's referencing further collaboration and coordination with regional planning agencies in the region, it is a much smaller percentage.

One would assume the lack of comments regarding further work with regional planning agencies could be linked to the strong relationship building offered by the NQRLP and the tendency for open space committees to focus on collaboration with organizations better aligned with their respective missions. The relative lack of interest in working with regional planning agencies in the NQRLP region may also be more programmatic. For instance where the NQRLP can have a fluid relationship with a community focused on networking and shared goals, the regional planning agencies may be less agile in their collaborations, requiring more formal contracts for work that can get in the way of the trust building and networking that appears to keep the NQRLP at the forefront of open space committee rolodexes.

Study Limitations

This assessment of the role of regional conservation partnerships in inter-municipal collaboration has provided insight into the effect voluntary collaborative governance approaches can have in strengthening the efficacy of local conservation efforts. However, the methodology chosen does invite limitations in the ability to

draw broader inferences on the how voluntary collaborative arrangements are effecting inter-municipal collaboration in the North Quabbin region.

Would the results of this study have been similar across multiple interviewees of the same committee? The question raises one potential limitation of the study. During the process of selecting interviewees, I was often pointed in the direction of the Committee chair, which often seemed to correlate to a long serving member [the question of term in relation to others on the committee was not asked explicitly] as the average number of years served on the Open Space Committee was 14.4. Focusing the results on data from long serving members may have inadvertently provided for evidence of networking and collaborative behavior from members that have been long familiar with NQRLP's efforts to build relationships and networks among and within municipalities. Such respondents may also have had more of an opportunity to build similar professional habits in other positions or through working with other groups. One could surmise that data from newer members of the Open Space Committees may have been able to provide a balancing effect, providing insight into how newer members were pulled into the broader network of conservation efforts and potentially clarifying the effect of NQRLP's efforts.

Another prominent limitation stems from the case study approach of focusing on the Mount Grace and NQRLP region. From the literature that exists on regional conservation partnerships, NQRLP appears to fit neatly into the category of a "maturing" or "conserving" (Labich 2015, 14 – 22) partnership. The assumed status presented the benefit of studying a region where peer networking and

collaborative approaches were actively being pursued, but also pointed to the need for a control in the study. This study was not able to determine the existence of collaborative activity in municipalities that were outside the umbrella of an organized conservation partnership. The questions that arise from this limitation include whether the existence of NQRLP and Mount Grace and their efforts have a causal relationship to the goals, objectives and action steps noted in the region's OSRP's? Would similarly rural municipalities in regions not served by a strong RCP show the same propensity for collaborative behavior as revealed in this study? Without further research into regions outside of the focus area, answers can only be contemplated.

Another prominent limitation is linked to the homogeneity of the municipalities chosen for study. None of the five municipalities had dedicated staff for the Open Space Committee, save a shared clerk among committee's in two examples. Given the reliance on NQRLP staff to provide for communications and technical support, it is difficult to know how professional staff provided by the municipality, such as the existence of a town planner or community development director would have to either magnify the effect that NQRLP could have on inter-municipal collaboration or perhaps negate it. This is an especially interesting limitation given the concept of "outsourcing" collaboration, where communities rely on regional networks to collaborate when the capacity to sustain functional partnerships across boundaries is beyond reach.

Voluntary Collaboration and the Foundations of Regional Planning

In the North Quabbin region of small towns, volunteer committees and autonomous histories, it can be effectively argued that voluntary collaborative planning arrangements, such as NQRLP, have no regulatory teeth. But where efforts to consolidate municipal functions across regions have largely been unsuccessful for political reasons (Feiock 2009, 361), voluntary arrangements have become ingrained. NQRLP, Mount Grace, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – each operate within the NQRLP region and each attempt to bring cross border issues before the governing bodies of the inherently more insular municipal government.

The literature on inter-municipal collaboration values voluntary collaborative arrangements regardless of the existence of regulatory backbone. Social capital, including understanding of norms, values and beliefs (Ohno, Tanaki and Sakagami 2010, 306) appears crucial to such arrangements – particularly so with regional conservation partnerships. RCP's ability to build a collectively shared vision (Labich 2015) provides a seemingly more secure foundation in which to build support for conservation efforts, while respecting the history of autonomous governance that municipalities in this study seemed to hold dear.

Freed from the need to lobby for a cause in a purely legislative arena, the voluntary arrangement RCP's work within allows them to build collectively reinforced shared understandings (Feiock 2009, 365), which this study suggests, provides spillover effects beyond the bounds of any one topic or idea. NQRLP

provides conservation based outreach, networking and technical support. Their staff explain relevant state statutes and provide examples of peer developed policies and procedures. Documenting such work against the goals, objectives and action steps of communities within the NQRLP region reveals the depth of effect the strengthening of trust and social ties can have. Not only were communities in this study found to state the necessity of improving their relationship with the NQRLP, but more importantly, they appear to have learned to learn (Curtin 2011; Innes and Booher 2010). The Open Space and Recreation Plan data suggests that communities have learned from the NQRLP's processes, understanding the importance of building relations within their own communities as well as without, strengthening ties with landowners, and finding a shared understanding of their role within a collaborative governance structure.

It is the backbone of shared understanding, trust and reinforced values that makes voluntary collaborative arrangements so intriguing as a response to issues of regional problem solving. Teresa Hogue's (1993) *Scale of Community Linkages* and Labich's (2015) levels of partnership maturity both suggest an evolution, chronology or progression from a preliminary stage of collaboration to one more advanced. The ability of collaborative management structures to manage interdependencies (Agranoff and McGuire 2003, 64) seems tailor made for the environment of jurisdictional boundaries and horizontal arrangements. The question for further pondering is whether such arrangements, built on socially reinforced beliefs and values, can eventually exceed the effectiveness of consolidated regional governance structures? Given the time, the data collected in

this study suggests Regional Conservation Partnerships may provide the model to get there.

Conclusion

Collaboration does not just happen. Results of this study show that over a period of many years, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership and its host organization, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust have worked to gain the trust of municipal open space committees in the North Quabbin region by building the capacity of committees to reach their goals, and providing inroads to networks that are difficult for communities to access alone.

This study finds that although regional conservation partnerships provide what appear to be the building blocks of inter-municipal collaboration, the cost of sustaining fruitful partnerships may be too much for the average municipal committee to maintain. But despite that possibility, regional conservation partnerships show great potential to lead municipal committees toward better methods of addressing collective action issues. This study has helped reveal the power of regional conservation partnerships to educate, network and build the capacity of open space committees in ways that illuminate the opportunities for working together, whether those committees reach beyond the bounds of their own jurisdiction or learn to strengthen their effectiveness from within.

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Open Space Committee Interview Data

Section I Question I	Have you served on other committees in town?		
Response Category	No	1 Other Committee	> 1 Committee
Respondent 1			Planning Board & School Committee
Respondent 2		Conservation Commission	
Respondent 3	X		
Respondent 4			Recreation Commission, Planning Board, Community Preservation Commission
Respondent 5		On the Mount Grace Board of Directors. Has served on the Planning Board.	

Section I Question Ia	How long have you served on the Open Space Committee? (Measured by Initial Year of Service)		
Response Category	16 years or more	11 - 15 years	Ten years or less
Respondent 1		2003	
Respondent 2	2000		
Respondent 3	2000		
Respondent 4	1999		
Respondent 5			2006

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Section I Question 1b	Do Open Space Committee members serve on any Land Trust Boards?
Respondent 1	Member is on Land Trust Board of Director
Respondent 2	Served on Mount Grace for 9 years
Respondent 3	Some committee members serve on land trusts
Respondent 4	It is common
Respondent 5	Serves on Mount Grace Land Trust Board of Directors. Other committee members serve on Greater Northfield Watershed Council and other non-profits

Section I Question 2	Does your town have municipal staff either leading or supporting efforts of the Committee?		
	No Staff	Administrative Clerk	Reliant on NQRLP
Respondent 1		Shared clerk between Boards	
Respondent 2	all volunteer		
Respondent 3			Completely reliant on NQRLP
Respondent 4		Town Administrator and clerk	
Respondent 5	All volunteer		

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Section I Question 3	When was the Open Space Committee Established?		
	Late 1990's	2000 - 2004	After 2005
Respondent 1	Late 1990's		
Respondent 2		2000	
Respondent 3			
Respondent 4		2001	
Respondent 5			2006

Section I Question 3a	What was the catalyst for establishment of the Open Space Committee?	
	Part of Regional Planning Commission Initiative	Development of Open Space and Recreation Plan Development
Respondent 1	Franklin COG surveyed the town's cultural, conservation and historic importance, which formed basis of Town's first OSRP.	
Respondent 2		Open Space and Recreation Plan Development
Respondent 3		
Respondent 4		Open Space and Recreation Plan Development
Respondent 5		Open Space and Recreation Plan called for Selectmen to form an Open Space Committee to implement the plan

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Section 2 Question 1	What projects are Open Space Committee members currently working on?						
	Land Management	Prioritizing Parcels for Preservation	Actively Protecting Parcels	Creating Recreational Opportunities	Pursuing Programming	Implementation of Regional Objectives	Working on Open Space Plan
Respondent 1	Forest thinning to create early successional habitat	Working with NQRLP to review priority parcels	Recently purchased 100 acre parcel.	Working with North Quabbin Trails to create field stations	Exploring possibility of a Fire Wood bank	Aligning next projects, brokering Conservation Restrictions, doing landowner education and outreach to try to align with regional objectives. Implemented Chapter 61 Land Acceptance Policy	
Respondent 2				Assisting with the process of creating a Town park		Using Community Preservation Act funding to act on goals and action steps in Open Space Plan	Renew Open Space Plan every 7 years.

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Respondent 3					Working on Landscape Partnership Grant Program		
Respondent 4	Managing conservation land		Attempting to purchase land abutting 2 protected parcels				Updated OSRP
Respondent 5			Involved in setting up CR on 145 acre property. Working with Trust for Public Land who is leading the effort to conserve a private 160 acre property in which the Town would partially own.	working on putting a roughly one mile long ADA ADA trail in Northfield. Working with Mount Grace closely on that project and wrote the grant proposal for funding the ADA trail. Sponsored the creation of a community park committee and working as a go between the park	working on a website and brochure and a lot of community effort.		

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				committee and the owner of the land they are interested in. 2013 OSRP goal is to work on trail signage and to provide trailhead information and the committee has funding the creation of trail head kiosks and worked with Highway to develop and improve parking.			
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Section 2 Question 2	Has the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership contacted or worked with your Committee on a project?					
Coded Response	Outreach, education and Networking	Initiating Land Protection	Conference Organization	Identification of Priority Parcels for Preservation	Open Lines of Communication between Town and Organization	Help with Obtaining Funding
Respondent 1	They supported Wendell and have done a lot of landowner education in Wendell. Coordinated with land trust members in Town	In 2002 NQRLP came to Wendell with a plan to develop a CR.	Jay Rasku has done a conference every year. He is always eager to help.		Mount Grace and North Quabbin reach out to Wendell OSC and Wendell OSC sometime reaches out to Mount Grace and North Quabbin.	
Respondent 2	NQRLP keeps the OSC informed and up to date.	NQRLP has been helpful with doing baseline studies of properties. Mount Grace with MassLift can send volunteers to do baseline reports and the OSC can tag along.			Very supportive on all conservation projects. Phillipston leaned on them considerably. See the two as one organization and since I have been serving I can somewhat see the difference but in reality I call Mount Grace when needed or when they see an	

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					area of a grant that would be helpful.	
Respondent 3	NQRLP helps mostly with landowner outreach in town.			They have worked on mapping, assessing undeveloped parcels against the state biomap and identified areas of possible projects		
Respondent 4	NQRLP helped to get CPA passed. Advised how to talk about CPA politically as far as outreach.	Mount Grace helped to purchase one of the pieces. Helped get a Conservation land grant from NQRLP for appraisal.				
Respondent 5	Town passed CPA in 2008 with the help of NQRLP. Came to Town and gave presentations and helped put together proposal.	Worked on various projects		Prioritized parcels for preservation	Goes to meetings regularly. Stays in touch.	Working with Mount Grace closely on a grant proposal for funding the ADA trail.

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Section 2 Question 3	Has your committee attended any planning workshops sponsored by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust or the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership?		
Response Category	Yes	Workshops build skills	Events provided networking opportunities
Respondent 1	Yes	Workshops provide technical expertise and overall knowledge	
Respondent 2	Yes		
Respondent 3	Yes		Yes. NQRLP helped set up an event in Royalston that brought in landowners from surrounding towns, as well as town open space committee members from area towns.
Respondent 4	Yes		
Respondent 5	Yes		

Section 2 Question 3a	What were the topics at the event and what project did the Land Trust or Partnership assist with?				
	Land Restoration and Management	Outreach and education	Best Practices, Storeis,	GIS Technical Assistance	Municipal Policy and Planning Assistance
Respondent 1	x	x			x
Respondent 2				x	
Respondent 3			x		

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Respondent 4					x
Respondent 5					

Section 2 Question 4	Has the Committee designated a member as a liaison to the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership or Mount Grace Conservation Trust?			
Response Category	Yes		No	
Respondent 1	Committee has reached out as informal liaison			
Respondent 2	Yes			
Respondent 3	NQRLP's Community Conservation Program has liaison to the Town.			
Respondent 4			No	
Respondent 5	Committee has an official liaison that attends meetings and reports on correspondence			

Section 3 Question 1	What do you consider to be the most important regional resources for your community?			
Response Category	Regional Planning Organizations	Municipal and State Organizations	Listserves	Regional Land Trusts
Respondent 1	FRCOG is big resource, who helped write the Open Space Plan.	MAC has been helpful in the past.	Massland listserv is a good resource.	
Respondent 2				
Respondent 3				

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Respondent 4	Worked with Montachusett Regional Planning Commission on GIS and information on Open Space Plan. MRPC provides three hours a year to help assist with updating trail maps.	Worked with DCR on preservation of state forests		Work closely with North County Land Trust in Hubbardston.
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Section 3 Question 2		Have other commissions or staff from other communities reached out to your commission to BI conservation matters or other cross-boundary issues important to their community?		
Response Category	No	Requires Individual Leadership	Will Collaborate when there are perceived gains	Rely on Organizations to network
Respondent 1	No			
Respondent 2		Depends on the individual who gets involved. Each gets involved for different reasons.	Communicated with Clean Water Action in Boston on one project when it was evident that they could help with a project. Will reach out to other towns when the need presents itself.	Depend on Mount Grace for contacting Towns on projects and to get the Selectmen involved.
Respondent 3	No			
Respondent 4			Initiated Regional Open Space Committee ten years ago but nothing ever came of it. Would collaborate if there was a project to take on.	Working with North County Land Trust and NQRLP on Forest Legacy Project across multiple Towns

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Respondent 5			<p>One town the Open Space Committee get together and talk about issues informally. Another Town, Phillipston was starting to draft their first OSRP s and were wondering if they could have a copy of our plan to use as a guide to pick ideas from.</p>	
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Section 3 Question 3	Are you working on any projects at this moment with members of other communities?			
Response Category	Not Directly	Yes	NQRLP and Mount Grace are leading effort.	
Respondent 1	Not Directly			
Respondent 2		<p>Have one land conservation project that encompasses three towns. Petersham, Phillipston and Athol.</p>	<p>Landowner is working with Mount Grace and NQRLP on project between three towns. I do sitewalks because I am on conservation committee with Mount Grace.</p>	
Respondent 3	No			
Respondent 4	No			
Respondent 5	No			

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Section 3 Question 3a	What kind of inter-municipal projects did you work together on?				
Response Category	None	Other Committees are involved in collaborative projects	Sharing Best Practices	Would collaborate if there was perceived gain	Land Conservation Projects Spans Multiple Towns
Respondent 1		Energy Committee in Town worked with energy Committee in New Salem where school and fire chief are shared. Mutual aid is another area of collaboration. Have broadband committees and has been a fair amount of collaboration on that. School committee is part of Hampshire county collaborative.			
Respondent 2	None				Have one land conservation project that encompasses three towns. Petersham, Phillipston and Athol. Landowner is working with Mount Grace and NQRLP on project between three towns.
Respondent 3	None				

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Respondent 4			We were first to work on CPA. Other Towns were very interested in doing it and they went and talked with them.	Be more than happy to do so if there is an opportunity or need	
Respondent 5			The town was starting to draft their first OSRP s and were wondering if they could have a copy of Northfield's plan to use as a guide to pick ideas from.		

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Section 3 Question 3b	Have those projects spawned any follow up projects or new phases?		
Response Category	Working with other Non-profit organizations	Identified other Towns to Contact	Reaches Out on Needs Basis
Respondent 1	Working on trail access to a parcel that may involve the North Quabbin Trail Association. Wood Bank project will need to lean on Petersham to learn best practices for them. Cord wood that can be stored and given through a voucher.		
Respondent 2			Will reach out to other towns when the need presents itself. Does not contact other towns for small projects.
Respondent 3		Open Space Committee is talking about potential Landscape Partnership Grant Application since two separate communities can apply.	
Respondent 4			
Respondent 5			

Section 3 Question 4	Do officials share stories and/or experiences at workshops or events?	
Response Category	Yes	No
Respondent 1	Yes	

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Respondent 2	Yes, but I am the only one who attends workshops . Led a workshop with someone from Royalston and brought a list of different grant opportunities that present themselves throughout the year.	
Respondent 3	Yes	
Respondent 4	Yes	
Respondent 5	Yes	

Section 3 Question 4a	What types of information is typically shared?	
Response Category	Stories and Lessons Learned	Best Practices
Respondent 1	Open space Committee and Conservation Commission conference is workshop style and interactive with sharing of experiences. There have been a lot of people in Town government a long time and a lot of knowledge base that is willing to share that knowledge. Several working groups among the land trust.	
Respondent 2		
Respondent 3	Have attended a regional event for conservation commissioners to share stories and past projects.	Have attended to share best practices
Respondent 4		
Respondent 5		They have provided information on how to process CR's

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Section 3 Question 5	Do you think the assistance/workshops provided by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust or the NQRLP are effective at bringing officials from neighboring towns together?				
Response Category	Help Provide Quick Responses	Build Relationships and Networks	Provide Coordination Among Autonomous Groups	Provides a Regional View	Yes
Respondent 1	When something comes up it is a family or landowner in crisis and you need to act quick. Need to have those relationships in place. Reaching out and having them come by is a step in that direction.	Being more in touch with the land trust and state officials is important because you really need to be networked	Town officials have a self sufficient Town ethic. They are a tight knit group of individualists. Board's work together.		Yes
Respondent 2			Help to learn from one another.	Their presentation spurred questions about the grants as it was the first time it had appeared and we realized we were a small part of a bigger Landscape Partnership Grant.	Yes
Respondent 3					Yes
Respondent 4					Yes

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Respondent 5		Mount Grace is the locus and central organization that causes the collaboration.	NQRLP provides regional involvement of local communities		Yes Very effective and critical.
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Section 3 Question 6	Do you feel that the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or NQRLP have helped to build networks between your Committee and those in other communities?				
Response Category	Yes	Mount Grace and NQRLP Build Support for Initiatives	Municipal Leadership is Important Regardless of Assistance	Coordinate Relevant Stakeholders	Workshops Improve Networking
Respondent 1	Yes				
Respondent 2	Yes	Mount Grace and NQRLP were able to convince town officials to pass CPC. Jay Rasku and Paul Daniello were able to sway selectmen and treasurer and it was almost a done deal by the time they had to have the votes. Once CPA was passed they could start implementing some of their goals. Could not get anything done prior to CPC as the town never had money to spend on land.			Workshops

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Respondent 3	Yes		But municipal leadership is needed to move projects forward and get efforts passed at Town Meeting		
Respondent 4	Yes	Assistance Passing CPA			Workshops
Respondent 5	Yes			Very good at working one on one and pulling stakeholders together as appropriate. Able to get OSC's to attend but also those from MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and so there was a lot of good networking being done. Who knows what sort of collaborations can come from getting all those people together	They have sponsored an annual open space conference which I have spoke at. They have provided information on how to process CR's.

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Section 3 Question 7a	What Could be Done to Improve Collaboration Between Communities?		
Response Category	Build Capacity for Autonomous Collaboration Between Towns	Attention to Available Resources and Schedules of Volunteers	Improve Communication Regarding Town and Organization Interests
Respondent 1	Big conferences like MLTC and the open space conference from NQRLP are good but a regional collaborative of land trusts would be easily identifiable.	One thing I notice all the time is that Town officials are unpaid and evenings and weekends are the only time they can meet. Land Trusts organize their events during the day but for municipal officials it is not the best time as they are working. Internet and skype is not really available. Access to broadband is a big issue.	Land trusts have a lot to learn from committees on how to approach people in town. And the Open space committees can really benefit from the professionalism they bring. There is a lot that can be learned on both ends.
Respondent 2	Put together an email list of participants so that if someone hears about a project for one town they can get in touch with people directly rather than use the filters of the conservation organizations.		
Respondent 3	Leadership at the municipal level is important. There needs to be someone who can keep a project moving and do the strategic planning necessary.		
Respondent 4	Projects that require collaboration to get done		

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Respondent 5	Mount Grace reaches out to Board of Selectmen and Conservation Commission and occasionally the Ag commission and often times it is more than one committee that is involved in a project. Feel it might make collaboration in town easier.		
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Section 4 Question 1	Has your committee been involved in any planning efforts sponsored by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments or the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission?		
Response Category	Worked with Regional Planning Agency on OSRP	Worked with Other Conservation Organization	
Respondent 1	Worked with FRCOG in the past on open space plan. They provided staffing to help write the plan and offered help with mapping as well.		
Respondent 2	Worked with Montachusett on Economic Development Issues.		
Respondent 3	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is involved in the area but not with land protection.		
Respondent 4	Yes. Have three hours of assistance for GIS mapping with Montachusett Regional Planning Agency for OSRP		

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Respondent 5	Served as Town representative to Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Town stays in pretty close contact with RPA and are brought together with other Towns in much the same way as NQRLP.	Local Northfield Watershed Organization has volunteered to do some of the CR monitoring of Stewardship Plans. The OSC has several members on Greather Northfield Watershed Organization who is a regular player in Northfield.
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Section 4 Question 2	Has your Committee worked with neighboring towns on other regional projects, including groundwater resource planning, watershed planning, open space, transportation or economic development planning? Who initiated the projects?			
Response Category	No	Unsure	Yes	Knowledge of Other Initiatives
Respondent 1		Not sure. There are some small grants available for brownfields work.		
Respondent 2		A year ago asked Montachusett to write a letter of support for the OSRP, but instead were told the Town should hire someone to write it.		Know of someone who writes block grants for Phillipston, Athol and Royalston. Templeton may be included when it has to do with fixing roads and low income housing issues. Just the way Mount Grace combines Landscape Partnership Grants.
Respondent 3	No			
Respondent 4			Years ago took part in a watershed planning for nashua river	
Respondent 5		Not sure.		

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Section 4 Question 4	Did any of your members take part in the Franklin County Sustainable Development Plan?	
Response Category	Yes	Unsure
Respondent 1		Recently there was a document prioritizing different planning activities, including a rating system for natural sustainable resource businesses. But there was no point person
Respondent 2		Unsure
Respondent 3		Unsure
Respondent 4		Unsure
Respondent 5	Involved in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Franklin County and on projects in Northfield.	

Section 4 Question 5	How does the work that your regional planning agency involves your Commission in differ from the technical assistance provided by the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership?	
Response Category	Inconsistent Assistance	Priorities Not Always Aligned
Wendell		Could have benefitted from NQRLP with a set of maps to go along with Open Space Plan. Priorities were different on the maps. Meetings were during the day. People are concerned about prime farmlands and there was little on their map regarding that. Early successional habitat is important in Town and nothing about that in the map. A little misaligned regionally.

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Phillipston	Montachusett has responded differently depending on the directors. One was very supportive and helpful and the other was not.	Have not depended much on Montachusett regarding open space and recreation planning.
Winchendon		
Hubbardston		
Northfield		

APPENDIX B – Interview Questions

Section 1 | Committee Makeup and Organization

1. How long have you served on the Committee?
 - a. Do you or have you served on other Committees in town?
 - b. Do OSC or Conservation Commission members sit on any land trust boards?
2. Does your Town have municipal staff either leading or supporting efforts of the Committee?
3. When was the Open Space Committee Established?
 - a. What was the catalyst for establishment?

Section 2 | Committee Activity

1. What projects are the committee members currently working on?
 - a. What are typical projects for the committee?
2. Has the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership contacted or worked with your Committee on a project?
3. Has your committee attended any planning workshops sponsored by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust or the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership?
 - a. What were the topics at the event and what project did the Land Trust or Partnership assist with?
4. Has the Committee designated a member as a liaison to the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership or Mount Grace Conservation Trust?

Section 3 | Inter-Municipal Collaborative Activity

1. What do you consider to be the most important regional resources for your community?

APPENDIX B – Interview Questions

2. Have other commissions or staff from other communities reached out to your commission to discuss conservation matters or other cross-boundary issues important to their community?
3. Are you working on any projects at this moment with members of other communities?
 - a. What kind of projects did you work together on?
 - b. Have those projects spawned any follow up projects or new phases?
4. Do officials share stories and/or experiences at workshops or events?
 - a. What types of information is typically shared?
5. Do you think the assistance/workshops provided by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust or the NQRLP are effective at bringing officials from neighboring towns together?
6. Do you feel that the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or NQRLP have helped to build networks between your Committee and those in other communities?
7. What activities have helped that cross-town connection? What is the most important factor or indicator of healthy collaboration?
 - a. What could be done to improve collaboration?

Section 4 | Addressing Validity of NQRLP Impulses

1. Has your committee been involved in any planning efforts sponsored by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments or the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission? How has work with local watershed organizations been similar to work with NQRLP? Who do you have a more consistent relationship with? Does your work with NQRLP make you more likely to work with other organizations?
2. Has your Committee worked with neighboring towns on other regional projects, including groundwater resource planning, watershed planning, open space, transportation or economic development planning? Who initiated the projects?
3. How often do you attend events sponsored by your regional planning agency?

APPENDIX B – Interview Questions

4. Did any of your members take part in the Franklin County Sustainable Development Plan?
5. For those projects that you have experienced or been a part of, how does the work that your regional planning agency involves your Commission in differ from the technical assistance provided by the Mount Grace Conservation Trust or North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership?

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