

## Salt Marsh Restoration on Bell's Brook Conservation Area and Drisko Marsh



By Roger Clapp, DCC Board Member

**O**n August 16, 2018 DCC acquired 17.6 acres, including 14.5 acres of marsh, on both sides of Addison Road in Columbia where Bell's Brook flows into the West Branch of the Pleasant River (about a half mile southeast of the blinking light at Four Corners in Columbia). People driving through the gentle S-curve where Addison Road crosses over Bell's Brook enjoy a Quality of Place with views of the landscape on both sides of the road. DCC has named this new acquisition the Bell's Brook Conservation Area.

Acquisition of the Bell's Brook Conservation Area advances one of DCC's strategic conservation objectives for land acquisition. Adopted by DCC's Board of Directors in 2017, this objective, called "Conservation to Mitigate Climate Change", seeks to mitigate and manage, to the extent feasible, the impacts of climate changes to the tidal flats and saltwater marshes and to the ecosystems of the rivers and their associated riparian zones and forests in DCC's service region. DCC's Bell's Brook Conservation Area is located about one-third of a mile upstream from DCC's Drisko Marsh, acquired in 2007. DCC's ownership of both of these properties, which together include 83 acres of marsh along the West Branch of the Pleasant River, advances DCC's climate change strategy. DCC's policy explaining DCC's climate change land acquisition strategy is available upon request and on DCC's website under "About" click DCC's Climate Change Policy.

In 1940 the Maine Department of Transportation installed tide gates at the mouth of the West Branch, downstream from what are now DCC's Bell's Brook and Drisko Marsh preserves. As a direct result of the tide gates, both properties, and other marshes along the West Branch, were changed from salt marsh into what is now primarily freshwater wetlands with holdover species that indicate their tidal past.

DCC values both freshwater wetlands and salt marshes. Both kinds of wetlands slow the flow of water and prevent flooding by holding water much like a sponge, keeping river levels normal. Both kinds of wetlands have many purifying benefits by filtering out sedimentation, decomposing vegetative matter and converting chemicals into useable forms. Both release vegetative matter into rivers, which helps feed fish in the rivers.

However, salt marshes provide significant additional benefits to coastal estuaries. Research has shown that the ecological functions of salt marshes have tremendous economic value and that this habitat is one of the most critical to the productivity of the estuary and coastal environment. Salt marshes are even more productive than the most fertile farmland. Aquatic wildlife is the main beneficiary of salt marsh production. Two-thirds of commercial fish, shellfish and bait species landed in the Gulf of Maine depend on tidal estuaries and coastal salt marsh habitat at some point in their life cycles. But tide gates completely stop these

benefits, by stopping fish passage and the exchange of nutrients occurring with tidal exchange. Tidal exchange stimulates plant growth in the marsh and carries out organic material that feeds fish and other coastal organisms. The only way to re-establish these benefits is to remove the tide gates.

Bell's Brook Conservation Area and Drisko Marsh are within the West Branch of the Pleasant River watershed, the locus for one of the largest salt marsh restoration opportunities in the State of Maine and perhaps on the east coast of the United States. Salt marsh restoration means that the ecosystem of the marsh will be returned to its natural structure and function prior to human disturbance. Currently, the Army Corps of Engineers is believed to be working on recommendations for the removal of the tide gates at the mouth of the West Branch. It is expected that the Corps will recommend either partial or full tidal flow up the West Branch, setting in motion the restoration of up to 290 acres of salt marsh, including Bell's Brook Conservation Area and Drisko Marsh.

The major benefit of the Bell's Brook Conservation Area and Drisko Marsh depends on the restoration of tidal flow. DCC's Board of Directors will support the expected Army Corps of Engineers' recommendation to remove the West Branch tide gates so the West Branch can return to an intertidal estuarine habitat. DCC's Board adopted the following policy

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# A Note from the Executive Director

By Jon Southern

While summer in Maine got off to a much later than usual start, it has been one of the driest in a long time with some spectacular weather and ample opportunities for me to visit and work at many of DCC's amazing properties. This summer has been an exceptionally busy time for DCC. Our staff members are beginning to settle in after joining us at the busiest time of year. I do not think any of us imagined just how busy we would be this summer with so much to be done to ensure DCC's properties are managed appropriately, especially as each property is so unique, but for all of us, it has been a truly rewarding summer serving DCC.

Our new Stewardship Director, Kyle, has been busy growing our Stewardship efforts and working hard to improve our trails this past summer. Working with the University of Maine at Machias, Kyle has continued to grow our Internship program. Our second intern of the year, Zac, is fitting in well at DCC. It is critical that we reach as many people as possible, growing awareness of DCC's conservation efforts. Through our Outreach efforts, we hope that many more people will learn to love our properties through the usage of those properties and opportunities to become involved with our conservation work.

Our new Outreach Director, Bob, has been busy with a broad range of Outreach Efforts. Our second successful annual Bad Little Trail Run held at our Machias River Preserve

brought together many people from all over Maine in an event that shows the true value of conserved lands for recreational use and community well-being. This summer, we collaborated with several like-minded organizations, schools, and colleges to bring more young people onto our properties more than ever before. This effort also saw youth activities take place on some of our lessor used properties, such as the Orange River in Whiting, with the goal of creating a generation of local future conservation stewards.

Winter has come early this year in our region allowing the staff and volunteers of DCC a quieter period for planning for our 2019 season. As we prepare for the winter months, so too does the wildlife of our region, the Whitetail deer are out in healthy numbers this Fall preparing for the months ahead as are many other species that Maine is well known for from Black Bear and Moose to the many bird species thriving in our region. For many of us, this makes the fall a favorite time of year and there are still many opportunities to get out and enjoy DCC's preserves. From the stunning fall foliage to winters tranquil glory, this region reminds us of its beauty all year round.

I have been out on our properties watching wildlife go about their daily preparations for winter, a further reminder of the importance of our conservation efforts at DCC. The North American Wildlife Management mod-



Jon at Ingersoll Point

el is among the most successful in the world, a result of the many organizations engaged in conservation efforts throughout our great nation. DCC is a key part of this effort in one of the most stunning areas of North America, Downeast Maine. We are able to be a part of that effort due to the generosity and passion of our members, without whom we would not exist. I have been fortunate enough to speak with many of our members and supporters this summer. I thank you for your warm welcome to DCC. I look forward to continuing to meet with as many of our members and volunteers as possible in 2019, either out on our trails, by phone, or stop by and visit our office in Machias. We are currently working on several exciting projects I hope to announce early in 2019 so stay tuned for updates. As always, thank you sincerely for your continued support of DCC's valuable work.

*Salt Marsh Restoration continued from page 1*

statement: "DCC values saltmarsh restoration and is in favor of and will advocate for restoration of historic tidal flows into historic salt

marshes." Although DCC can advocate for salt marsh restoration, only the Maine Department of Transportation can make that happen by removing the West Branch tide gates. Returning the tides and

the salt marsh to the West Branch will recover a valuable and productive natural system to the coast of Maine.

## DCC is proud to introduce:

### Kyle Winslow

*Land Steward*

Kyle came to Downeast Maine to attend the University of Maine at Machias in 2002. He graduated with a B.S. in Conservation Biology in 2007 and has worked in the region since. Working with the Maine Department of Marine Resources and then the Downeast Salmon Federation, much of his time has been spent on the rivers of Washington County, focused on restoration of the endangered Atlantic salmon. In his time with the Downeast Salmon Federation, Kyle spent several years working in the Federation's salmon hatcheries and fisheries restoration programs, as well as spending time working as their Land Trust Director focusing on conserving areas important to fisheries protection and restoration. Most recently, Kyle has been working with the Axiom Education and Training Center offering exciting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) educational activities to area youth. Kyle enjoys spending his free time outdoors with his family and working in their garden at their home in Whiting.



### Bob Jean

*Outreach Director*

Bob discovered the natural wonders of Downeast Maine in 1977 while he was photographing the Maine coast for his hometown newspaper. It immediately became his second home for 25 years. Before finally moving to the Lubec area full time 10 years ago, he learned to photograph and formed a deep appreciation for the wonderful nature of Downeast, as well as his home state of New Hampshire. Bob took his activism for preserving untouched land inventories to the New Hampshire Legislature, reaching out, organizing, and educating voters about important issues for our environment, and appropriate land use. Bob brings a host of communication, outreach skills, and assets from his entrepreneurship in the printing, Internet, video, and online sales ventures. He earned a BS in Accounting and became the controller for multiple profit and non-profit, multi-company entities. On his days off Bob spends his time hiking and kayaking in the Downeast area.



## Stewardship Highlights

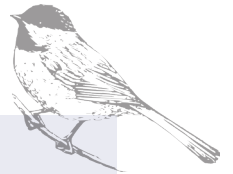
*By Kyle Winslow*

A few years ago, a major spring storm made a real mess of the East Loop Trail at our Pike Lands Preserve in Lubec. A maze of fallen trees made the trail unusable, and presented a real challenge to stewardship staff. This year, with the help of a group of University of Maine at Machias students, we removed brush, re-blazed trees, cut back overgrown grass, and removed some sizable fallen trees from the trails in an effort to re-open this great woods trail. If you head up to Lubec, be sure to make a trip up to the Pike Lands Preserve to check it out!

With help from many volunteers, the Pigeon Hill Preserve in Steuben has had some much needed attention this year. In the late summer, we added water bars and laid pea-gravel over the parking area and the first cou-

ple hundred feet of trail. The water bars will help direct water runoff off the trail, reducing trail erosion and erosion to the parking lot. The gravel will also help reduce erosion and make the first section of trail a bit easier to walk. We can't thank our volunteers enough for all the work they put into projects like these; It wouldn't be possible without you!

Don't miss out on some great winter hiking this year! Middle River Park will not be plowed all winter, but you can still enjoy the trails! Parking at the dike in Machias is only a short distance from the park, a great spot for cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding! Check out our website, [downeastcoastalconservancy.org](http://downeastcoastalconservancy.org), for a full list of winter access trails and tips on how to stay safe and make the most of your cold season adventure!



## 2017 Community Partners in Conservation

By Bob Jean

**D**owneast Coastal Conservancy's Community Partner Program provides important services to businesses. It can help with branding for current and future clients as well as customers who care.

When a business becomes one of DCC's Community Partners it gets a listing in DCC Newsletters, it is listed in our Community Partners' section on our website, it is invited to DCC events and activities, and its staff can participate in our volunteer workdays. In this way, both staff and potential clients know that this business fosters an appreciation and caring for our natural environment.

This is just the beginning. There is a much larger context for making sure that a company's branding is associated with land conservation. Think of what that can mean to perspective clients and customers.

In 2018, the Nature Conservancy undertook a bipartisan polling effort. They enlisted a Democratic polling firm...as well as a Republican polling firm...to help sort out these issues. They found that consumers and voters most value three things: water, wildlife, and preserving a way of life.

87% of voters felt that protecting water quality was very important. Of these, 73% identified protecting

oceans and fish as important; another 72% felt that it was essential to preserve lakes, rivers and streams. Still another 68% understood that it was essential to prevent pesticides and fertilizers from running into rivers and streams. In 2012, 41% of people felt that water pollution was "extremely" or "very" serious. Now, in 2018, that number has grown to 64%.

Wildlife protection also became a growing concern. Now 50% of people believe that it is an "extremely" or "very" serious issue. This is up from 34% six years ago. An example of this would be worry about the fates of pollinators like bees and Monarch butterflies:

"Voters are increasingly aware of and concerned about pollinators, adding a new element to their concern about wildlife. Again, nearly two-thirds (65%) say that helping to "conserve habitat for disappearing pollinators like bees and monarch butterflies" is a very important goal for a conservation effort. A concern about pollinators is one that voters in focus groups have told us they hear about in the news frequently - even on their breakfast cereal boxes! It's direct link to (and impact on) food supply helps to elevate it as a concern as well, making it the third-strongest message of any we tested."

Here in downeast Maine, we all know about protecting our "way of life." We

don't need polling data to understand how important this is to all of us. 70% of all Americans believe that we need to pay attention to maintaining our life style. Add to these concerns the buying power of Millennials, whose views run 5% higher than the general population, and you have three powerful reasons to consider DCC as a community partner. Young people agree: "we need to act now to conserve our natural areas that act as wildlife habitat, clean our air and water, and add to our natural beauty."

You can't go wrong. Downeast Coastal Conservancy's Partner Program provides a superb opportunity for businesses to reach conservation minded clients. Conservation is part of the future. Become a member. Become the future.

*Bob Jean is Downeast Coastal Conservancy's Outreach Director. If you would like your business to join DCC's Community Partner's program feel free to email him at bob@downeastcoastalconservancy.org.*

### 2018 Community Partners

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Bangor Savings Bank    | Hanscom              |
| Barrenview Golf Course | Construction Inc.    |
| Bar Harbor Bank        | Mark Wright Disposal |
| Dr. Peter Knowles      | Pineo's True Value   |
| Camden National        | Hardware             |
| Bank                   | Points East Real     |
| Down East              | Estate               |
| Community Hospital     | Swamp Yankee BBQ     |
| Machias Savings Bank   | Team Bog Lake        |
| Hammond Lumber/        | Walls TV & Appliance |
| EBS                    | Whitney Wreath       |

## Bad Little Trail Run



By Cat Cannon, DCC Board Member

Less than a month before the first snowstorm of the season hit Maine, staff, volunteers, and runners with a passion for preserving land came together at the Machias River Preserve for Downeast Coastal Conservancy's second annual Bad Little Trail Run.

By 6:30am on October 21, organizers were on site in Whitneyville to ensure that the event would be a success for everyone who took on the challenge of the trails that day. While 21 runners and walkers signed up to cover the 2.5 mile loop, 33 faced a 7 mile loop over leaf-covered trails, under a canopy of trees, and along the Machias River, encompassing the preserve's Homestead, Heritage, and Hemlock Trails, as well as a section of the Down East Sunrise Trail.

Truly a triumph of cooperation and preparation, the event was co-organized by DCC and the Sunrise Athletic Club. On the day of the race, turn directors, led by turn crew leader, Zack Gray, cheered and guided runners at crucial points of the races, while volunteers from the Downeast Trail Volunteers and Sunrise Opportunities helped transport volunteers to their stations and waited at the ready in case of emergency.

This year, the trail run was part of the first-ever Downeast Conservation Trail Race Series, which included six races across Downeast Maine between August 11th and November 11th. These races are meant to encourage appreciation of the natural beauty of the area and to highlight the important work being done by conservation groups in the region.

An award ceremony was held after the race at the Whitneyville Hillgrove Community Hall, where the winners of each age category were given handmade wooden medallions, and all participants were celebrated with food catered by the Whitneyville Library Committee. There was also a beer tent run by the Machias River Brewing Company/Skywalker's.

Many sponsors contributed to make this year's event possible: Down East Community Hospital, Bar Harbor Bank, Dr. Peter Knowles, Hammond Lumber/EBS, Machias Savings Bank, Hanscom Construction Incorporated, Points East Real Estate, Walls TV & Appliance, Team Bog Lake, Mark Wright Disposal, Pineo's True Value Hardware, Camden National Bank, Bangor Savings Bank, Whitney Wreath, Swamp Yankee BBQ, and Barrenview Golf.

## Downeast Coastal Conservancy

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Jon Southern, Executive Director  
 Kyle Winslow, Stewardship Director  
 Bob Jean, Outreach Director



Video of the "Bad Little Trail Run 2018" produced by DCC Outreach Director Bob Jean is available on DCC's YouTube page.

## The History of the Middle River Berm

By Robin Pinto and David Dowley

Last summer, Downeast Coastal Conservancy and the Machias community were fortunate to have Robin Pinto, landscape architect and landscape historian, continue her research on the important role that salt marshes played in the development of Colonial Machias. Dr. Robin Pinto lives in Tucson but summers in Roque Bluffs where she has deep family roots. Robin investigates the history of landscape change resulting from human occupation and use.

In her presentation to the DCC Board on August 6, Robin informed the Directors of the historical significance of Middle River Park and Middle River in the development of Machias. Quoting from Robin's presentation:

"There were four essential Machias Valley resources attracting early settlers in the 1760s: water for navigation (3-river confluence) and power (multiple falls), timber for shipbuilding, and salt marsh hay for feeding livestock. Machias Valley has the largest area (500 acres) of marshlands in Maine. Located in Machiasport, East Machias, Machias and Marshfield, these marsh lands were also used by the Native Americans for farming. Other reclaimed marshlands are found in Addison, Milbridge, and Steuben, and in Scarborough and Arrowsic in southern Maine.

The salt hay that grew on these marshes was one of the prime attractions for the early settlers in 1763. An early 1770 map used in their application for a grant of land from the British government shows that marshlands were considered a valuable asset to the success of the settlement, important enough to record in their application.

Early maps also show that the conformation of Middle River was very different at the time of early settlement. The lower river was essentially straight. Construction of the Middle River dike 100 years later has subsequently modified the river's form by slowing its flow. Today, silt deposition and absence of flushing have created a river that meanders across the landscape.

Why were marshes important? Machias was replete with small marshes. Essentially marshes provided free and immediately available fodder (salt grasses) for early settlers. They were free from the usual labor and time required to clear the land (years) and plant and grow grass and grain. Marshland is the most productive of any land type. It is always fertile, unlike upland soils (especially those in Maine). Settlers constructed dikes (berms) to stop tidal influx onto the salt marsh. They cut ditches to drain the wetlands and to encourage the growth of more hay. As the land was modified and drained, farmers could plant more valuable grasses, like timothy and alfalfa, which did not tolerate salt but were better fodder for livestock."

Two years ago, Rich Bard and David Dowley recognized an unnatural hump in the landscape as they set a cross-country ski track along the marsh for the winter fun day in Middle River Park. The next spring, we confirmed that the "hump" was the remnant of a colonial dike, once a part of farmed land in our Park.

The dike has been cleared and a trail now directs today's hikers to this berm and gives us the opportunity to experience the thrill of walking -in our ancestor's footsteps. Look for the berm next spring or at the next winter fun day!

## Ways You Can Help Support Our Important Conservation Efforts

By supporting Downeast Coastal Conservancy, you can be assured you are supporting a focused and fiscally responsible organization that follows the highest national standards in conservation and stewardship. We keep administrative costs as low as possible maximizing your gift's potential to protect and manage the areas we all love for future generations. There are a number of meaningful ways to support DCC's critical mission:

### Secure Online Giving

We offer secure online giving at <http://downeastcoastalconservancy.org/donate/ways-to-give/> or you may make gifts by cash or check. If you wish to spread the cost of a donation throughout the year, simply choose "Make this a recurring donation" when making an online gift through our website. You can also help DCC when shopping at Amazon.com by signing up to support Downeast Coastal Conservancy with Amazon Smile at: <https://smile.amazon.com/>.

### Donate Stock

By giving appreciated securities you can avoid paying capital gains taxes, receive a tax deduction on the full value of the gift, and support DCC at a lower cost to you than if you made a cash gift.

### Give from your IRA

If aged 70½ and older you can donate up to \$100,000 directly to DCC from your individual retirement account (IRA) without it being counted as taxable income. The gift can be used as your required minimum distribution. Your financial institution can arrange this for you.

### Leave a Legacy

Anyone can leave a lasting legacy by naming DCC as a beneficiary in their will or living trust, life insurance, or retirement accounts. It's easy to do and it costs nothing during your lifetime. If you decide to do this, please let us know so that you can be part of the planning as to how that gift is to be used in the future. Another way to leave a legacy is to invest in one of our Maine Community Foundation DCC funds, your gift will be responsibly invested securely and ethically, and will continue to grow, benefiting DCC's stewardship work for many years to come. Legacy gifts can provide you or your estate with important tax benefits too. You can leave a lasting legacy by supporting DCC.

To learn more about our flexible ways to give and to find the option that best fits your giving plans, please call Bob or Jon at (207) 255-4500.



Middle River Berm

# Your 2019 Guide to DCC's Winter Access Properties

Whether you are on your first visit to Downeast Maine or have lived here many years, DCC offers access to diverse variety of lands always waiting to be explored. You can access many of our properties in the winter, offering a whole new perspective on a property you know well.



Pigeon Hill offers nearly 2 miles of inter-connecting trails for experienced snowshoers – there are several steep pitches that may be icy and hazardous depending on conditions. Steuben, ME.



At Ingersoll Point, intrepid snowshoers can be nearly assured of finding peace and solitude while exploring Ingersoll Point's 3.1 miles of relatively easy snowshoeing trails.



Tide Mill Creek features 2.5 miles of trails that are excellent for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.



Machias River Preserve (MRP) has about 5 miles of established primitive trails, plus nearly 1.5 miles of the Down East Sunrise Trail, the MRP is a wonderful place to explore for an hour or a day.



Middle River Park provides the greatest diversity of winter recreation options among all of DCC's preserves including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and sledding.



Mowry Beach Preserve's boardwalk and the beach are some of DCC's most easily accessible winter attractions..

## Preserve guidelines:

- Trails are closed to motorized vehicles of any kind. Foot traffic only, please.
- Keep pets leashed or under voice control and in your site at all times.
- Pack out your trash.
- Fires and camping are not permitted.
- Please respect neighboring private property and roads.
- All activities are at your own risk.

## Know before you go:

- Before venturing to any of these, or other winter recreation areas, please be prepared!
- Tell someone where you'll be and when to expect you home
- Assess your skill level and fitness realistically and plan accordingly
- Dress for the weather and pack extra layers
- Take along extra food, water and anything you might need in case of an emergency
- Consult other sources for a more complete list of how to prepare for a winter excursion.



**More information is available for each of our properties on our website**

**[downeastcoastalconservancy.org](http://downeastcoastalconservancy.org) (with printable maps & guides) and at [mainetrailfinder.com/](http://mainetrailfinder.com/)**



# DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

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*Winter Access Property Guide Inside!*

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*The mission of the Downeast Coastal Conservancy is the conservation of the natural habitats and resources of the coastal watersheds, islands and communities of Washington County, Maine, for present and future generations.*

*Printed on recycled paper.*



Munson Pitch, Machias River Preserve



East Loop Trail work day with UMM students



Browney Island