



Conservation Success in Little Kennebec Bay

DCC is excited to announce the conservation of 52 acres of coastal land at the head of Little Kennebec Bay. Generously donated by long-time DCC supporter Dr. Frank Schumann, this parcel is comprised of healthy mixed forest and 1,950 feet of shoreline along the West Branch of Little Kennebec Bay in Machias.

“Dr. Schumann’s donation is an excellent example of DCC supporters’ strong commitment to land conservation in Downeast Maine,” says DCC Executive Director Colin Brown. “This important project not only protects vital wildlife habitat, but also provides permanent public access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors to the region.”

Located along Cross Road in Machias, the well-intact upland forest gradually slopes to the water’s edge to reveal expansive mudflats and tidal-creek saltmarsh – a highly-productive coastal wetland habitat that is increasingly susceptible to the effects of climate change. The property also contains cellar holes and remnants of a 19th century homestead.

“When my father saw this land in 1987, he fell in love with its raw, wild forest interior and its shoreline rich in nature,” says Dr. Schumann. “He was a great admirer of Percival Baxter for specifying that the land donated to become Baxter State Park be maintained as a public park but, as much as possible, be left in its wild state as a ‘sanctuary for wild beasts and birds.’ It is in this spirit that I am honored to hand over its future to DCC.”

DCC does not have immediate plans to develop any recreational trails on the property, but will improve an existing, informal path that leads to the shoreline for public access.

A Note from our ED

Celebrating the Past, Preparing for the Future

While our roots in Washington County date back to the 1980s, Downeast Coastal Conservancy was officially formed by a merger of Quoddy Regional Land Trust and Great Auk Land Trust in 2009. This year, we celebrate the 15th anniversary of a very important union for land conservation in Downeast Maine! Through numerous successful land conservation projects, many miles of trails and points of public access created, and impactful education programs initiated, DCC has made an indelible mark on the environmental well-being of local communities. But – we're not content with simply resting on our laurels!

The work of land conservation is completed with a long-range outlook to the future, and attempts to anticipate what changes the future will bring. Many places around the world are seeing dramatic effects that are linked to climate change, and Downeast Maine is no exception. Globally, 2023 was the warmest year since recordkeeping began in 1850, and the weather trends in Maine point to a much warmer and wetter future. These weather changes are not only wreaking havoc on vulnerable ecosystems, but are having severe effects on Maine's natural-resources based economy. Just this past December, the Downeast coast was hit with a hurricane-strength windstorm from a historically-unusual direction that caused widespread tree damage at many DCC preserves. Then, on January 10th and 13th, back-to-back storms brought coastal surges that coincided with spring tides, resulting in unprecedented coastal floods that battered area trails and ravaged community infrastructure along the entire Maine coastline.

We are focusing our conservation efforts on remaining resilient in the face of increasing climate uncertainty. DCC staff are busy assessing all hiking trails and prioritizing necessary changes due to increased rainfall, erosion concerns, rising sea levels, and overall accessibility. With our regional partner organizations, we are identifying important lands that will help mitigate the impacts of climate change. DCC Directors are crafting a new strategic plan for the organization, and as part of this process, are designing acquisition goals for those conservation-critical lands that are best suited to adapt to a changing climate. In addition to our land conservation planning and thanks to the generosity of a long-time donor, DCC will host a Climate Change Education Series in 2024. This extensive slate of public presentations and lectures will take place at different venues across Washington County, and will highlight the important climate-focused work taking place in the region.

Climate change might seem like an overwhelming and overpowering force. But with shrewd stewardship practices and sound land protection strategies, DCC will be well positioned to conserve properties that will allow for improved ecological and community resilience in coastal Washington County - far beyond the next 15 years.



Colin Brown
Executive Director



DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

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Farewell to DCC – A Note from Cathy

Over the past four years, I have watched sunsets over Cobscook Bay, paddled the winding Orange River, and hiked countless miles to explore our local flora and fauna alongside like-minded individuals, long-term supporters, and curious visitors. I have had the privilege of hearing excited youth trek down trails with hopes to catch a glimpse of a migrating songbird or trace the tracks of a secretive hare. I have worked side by side with volunteers who are thrilled with the expansion of new conserved lands and the construction of new trails, and I have joined dedicated staff working passionately to foster new connections to our lands through exciting new initiatives. It is a bittersweet goodbye, as I leave my role as DCC's Education and Outreach Director.



I am grateful for the opportunities DCC has provided me over the past few years, and thankful to have worked alongside an enthusiastic board and committed group of staff and volunteers. I have formed deep connections within our community, shared many stories and laughs along the trails, and grown as a guide, naturalist, and educator. Thank you to everyone who joined me in sharing a love for what makes our region so special. I will forever remain connected to DCC as a volunteer, friend, and supporter. Farewell for today, but I hope to see you on the trails soon in my role with Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

All my best - *Cathy*

Welcoming our Land Steward



DCC is pleased to introduce Jackson Wetzel as our seasonal Land Steward! Last summer, Jackson worked for DCC as a stewardship assistant, and learned to maintain hiking trails, clear trees, monitor conservation properties, perform carpentry projects, and much more. Originally hailing from Pennsylvania, Jackson graduated from the University of Maine at Machias with an associate's degree in liberal studies, and now calls Machias home.

"Jackson is an excellent addition to the DCC team, and his passion for conservation and familiarity of DCC's preserves, trails, and communities are great assets to the organization," said DCC Executive Director Colin Brown.

"I'm so thankful to be working at DCC," said Wetzel. "Not only is it an opportunity for me to learn new skills while working outdoors, but it allows me to respect and appreciate the passion and thoughtful planning that is reflected in every property."

Jackson's favorite DCC preserves include Ingersoll Point, Vining Lake, Orange River, and Beaver Dam Stream. If you see him out on the trails this summer and fall, be sure to say hello!

Edmunds School Students Build Own Outdoor Classroom

by Lura Jackson, feature article in The Quoddy Tides January 2024

In collaboration with the Downeast Coastal Conservancy (DCC), the students and staff at Edmunds Consolidated School (ECS) have developed their first outdoor classroom. Consisting of a trail that winds through an upland conifer forest and travels 500 feet along the Dennys River, the project provides both terrestrial and aquatic learning opportunities to the school's students.

The idea behind the project was seeded over 20 years ago when DCC first acquired the 10-acre Dennys River Mill Pond parcel, says Colin Brown, DCC's executive director. "The main goal of the property's management plan was to use the area for educational purposes, and we saw ECS as the perfect partner."

To help accomplish the task, Brown applied for \$5,000 in grant funding, supplied by L.L. Bean and administered by the Maine Land Trust Network. DCC won the grant, which funded staff time to help build a trail, acquire lumber for bog bridging, make picnic tables and put up educational signage. "We were thrilled to have been selected as a recipient of the funding and were able to get to work right away with the students."



Photos: Edmunds School students building trail



In September of last year, ECS teacher Molly Calder took the students in grades 5 through 8 out along the property to scout it out and see where the trail should run. Once the students marked the planned trail with orange flags, Brown and Ryan Mola, DCC's stewardship director, came to cut down the trees while the students cleared branches and raked the trail's surface. "The kids have been excellent to work with," Brown says, praising their eagerness and excitement. "Ryan and I explained safety techniques and really let them lead the way."

In December, students in the fifth and sixth grades, with DCC's guidance, built a bridge over a ditch to make accessing the trail easier, and students in the seventh and eighth grades built bog bridges over wet and uneven ground.

"It was great to have the students involved in the design of the trail, as well as the construction," Brown says, "because it seems to have really given them a sense of ownership and pride in the project."

With the initial trail complete, the outdoor classroom - located just 250 yards away from the school - is visited at least once a week by students, Calder says. "So far, students have done nature journaling, focusing on our five senses to introduce figurative language, and writing poetry. Another time we went and identified tracks in the snow and were able to see a story play out for us of squirrels, snow hares and foxes."

Since starting the trail project, Calder has won a second grant to put together ready-to-go backpacks for her students. Each contains a sit pad, magnifying glass, journal, clipboard and orange vest. (continued on the next page...)



Photo: Edmunds School students building trail

"Outdoor lessons deliver connections and opportunities that a classroom simply cannot," Brown says, emphasizing the importance of being in the natural environment rather than indoors or on a screen. "Whether it's biology, ecology, math, art, language arts, even music - there are always hands on lessons that can be taught outside."

Student and staff response to the project has been extremely positive - enough so that a second outdoor education classroom has already been started under the guidance of teacher Chris VanOrmer, Calder says. "We want to incorporate as many learning stations as possible in each trail, with as many learning opportunities as possible."

The development of both outdoor classrooms is being steered by the students involved, Calder says. In the spring, the fifth and sixth grade students will be integrating a ropes course into the first classroom, while seventh and eighth grade students will fine-tune the second classroom's offerings. Plans to acquire cross-country skis and snowshoes are in the works.

In addition to the learning opportunities the new outdoor classrooms afford, working with conservation groups has its own value, Brown says. "It shows students the importance of land conservation and how conserved lands can directly benefit local communities."



Vining Lake Community Preserve

Join DCC as a Monthly Supporter!

This year we invite you to sign up for our monthly giving program! All supporters who join at a \$10/month level (or more!) will be entered into a raffle to win a \$200 LLBean gift card, if you join by Giving Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

When you sign up to become a monthly supporter, you can make a recurring contribution in an amount that fits your budget, helping create a continuous base of support to protect land year-round. Your generosity will make a difference when it's needed most. Monthly giving is also an affordable way to increase your impact on conservation while saving paper, postage, and staff resources.

Questions about becoming a monthly supporter? Email DCC's Administration Manager Emily Guirl at emily@downeastcoastalconservancy.org

Coastal Flooding Community Science



Photos; Machias during a Coastal Flood Meetup

A group of local volunteers braved the cold rain and gusty winds to join DCC and Maine Coast Heritage Trust for a Coastal Flood Meetup on March 10th. The storm surge from a coastal storm with southeasterly winds coincided with one of this year's highest tides, creating flood conditions throughout downtown Machias. The purpose of the meetup was to help our community gather important flood impact data by recording information such as water level, wind speed, precipitation amounts, and wave action. This data will be submitted to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute's Coastal Flooding Community Science Project and will aid in understanding the unique vulnerabilities Machias experiences as sea levels rise.

That Sunday's flooding was visually observed at 1-3ft deep in nearby parking areas and roadways, and the tide gauge sensor installed at the Machias dike recorded a 11.3ft tide at the high tide peak. For reference, our Base Flood Elevation, commonly called a "100-year flood" or the elevation to which a body of water could be expected to rise during a 100-year flooding event, is only 10.7ft. As the tide subsided, debris remained along the high water mark blocking some sections of the roadway, and erosion damage was noted along several sections of the Sunrise Trail.

These observations clearly demonstrate the impacts that storm surges can have when coupled with astronomical high tides. Collecting this important data will aid us in understanding how weather and sea level contribute to coastal flooding, erosion, and damage to our shores and coastal infrastructure. The data collected will be used to support coastal resilience planning and emergency management in local communities.

Help is needed from the community to continually gather this data. More Coastal Flood Meetups will happen in the fall, so please stay tuned for more details.

MITA Skipper Volunteers

The Maine Island Trail Association (MITA, mita.org) is seeking dedicated volunteers! MITA is a non-profit organization committed to partnering with landowners like DCC to help protect and steward Maine's coastal islands. They're currently looking to grow their Volunteer Monitor Skippers program in the Downeast region. MITA's Monitor Skippers are a dedicated group of experienced boaters trained to use MITA workboats for stewardship activities on the islands of the Maine Island Trail. If you have boating experience and care deeply about public access to and stewardship of Maine's remarkable islands, they'd love to hear from you! To learn more, check out mita.org/monitor or reach out to Christina Hassett, MITA's Downeast Stewardship Manager directly at Christina@mita.org.



Save the dates!

Our full event calendar is posted to our website: <https://downeastcoastalconservancy.org/events/>
New events added throughout the season, please check back often. Below are some highlights to save the date!

May



Thursday, 16th

Volunteer Workday:
Deer Wintering Area Management
Workshop



Fri-Mon, 24th-27th

Down East Spring Birding Festival
<https://cobscookinstitute.org/birdfest>



Friday, 31st

Salt Marshes and Carbon Cycles
Climate Change Talk with Speaker
Beverly Johnson

July



Friday, 12th

Extinctions, Biodiversity, and
Conservation
Climate Change Talk with Speaker Brian McGill



Saturday, 13th

Denbow Point Naturalist Walk
w/ Maine Master Naturalists Kris & Allison
Paprocki



Mon-Thur, 15th-18th

Forest Camp
*Registration opens April 1st!

June



Sunday, 9th

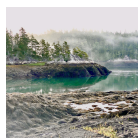
Orange River Water Trail
Celebration



Friday, 28th

Mowry Beach Plant Walk
w/ Naturalist Louise Barteau

August



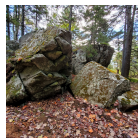
Friday, 9th

Peskotomuhkati Fisheries
Climate Change Talk with Speakers
Natalie Michelle & Jasmine Lamb



Sat-Sun, 17th-18th

Machias Wild
Blueberry Festival



Saturday, 24th

Pigeon Hill Geology Walk
w/ Maine Master Naturalist Grace Bartlett

DCC's 4th Annual Silent Auction, June 3 - 23



Our Annual Online Silent Auction is a fundraiser to support the conservation and public access of our preserves! Items include: Local Artwork, Outdoor Gear, Books, Boat Trips, Rentals, Gift Certificates, and more! Online bidding will open this year on June 3rd and closes June 23rd. Visit our website for more information!

Photo is a sneak peak of an auction item donated by Crow Town Gallery!

Thank you to our 2023 Donors!

The generosity of all of our members is vital to conserving the spectacular areas of Downeast Maine that we love. We are thrilled to welcome our newest members, highlighted in bold, who joined us in 2023.

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We have made every effort to make this listing as accurate as possible. Please contact us at (207) 255-4500 if you have any questions or corrections.



PO Box 760
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DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

www.DowneastCoastalConservancy.org

info@DowneastCoastalConservancy.org

Telephone: (207) 255-4500

Facebook: facebook.com/DowneastCoastalConservancy

The mission of the Downeast Coastal Conservancy is to conserve essential ecological habitats, engage the local community, and foster an environment where wildlife and people thrive in coastal Washington County, Maine.

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SAVE THE DATE! SUMMER COOKOUT & ANNUAL MEETING

FRIDAY, JULY 19TH

Our Annual Meeting will kickoff at 3pm. Burgers, hot dogs, veggie options, and summer salads will be served around 4pm. Come hang out for as long as you can and hear what is new with DCC!



Annual Meeting at Middle River Park 2023