



WaYS crew, volunteers, and staff rebuilding a section of the Mowry Beach boardwalk

Building Bridges with Wabanaki Youth in Science

In 2023, Downeast Coastal Conservancy (DCC) worked with Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) to bring a unique trail building partnership to conserved lands in Downeast Maine. Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS) is a non-profit organization providing long-term educational opportunities that integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge with western science. One program of WaYS is a seasonal trail crew comprised of Wabanaki youth dedicated to building and improving trails and access on public lands in Maine.

Building upon the success of 2023's pilot year, with generous funding from Quimby Family Foundation, Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, and private donors, the WaYS crew returned to DCC and MCHT conserved lands in Washington County for four weeks in 2024. The crew's hard work and positive energy were a massive help with DCC stewardship projects, which included constructing a new bridge at Reynolds Marsh Overlook and hauling lumber over many miles to build new bridges on the Heritage Trail at Machias River Preserve.

"By inviting and fundraising for the WaYS trail crew to work with our land trust personnel, we hope to provide an experience that allows relationships to grow between Wabanaki youth and our land trusts," said Deirdre Whitehead, MCHT's Wabanaki Community Liaison. "We acknowledge that the properties we steward are all on Wabanaki ancestral homelands." *(Continued on page 5...)*

In Dedication to Bill Kitchen

A note from our Executive Director

In early September, DCC lost a close friend and true champion for the region. Bill Kitchen's sudden passing has left a massive hole in our hearts, and his energetic and lovable spirit will be sorely missed in communities all across Washington County. A volunteer firefighter, former selectman, and most recently Machias Town Manager, Bill was heavily involved in every facet of community work, including serving on DCC's Development Committee. He was an ardent supporter of land conservation in the region, and recognized the importance of people having a strong connection to place.

Bill had a simple phrase that hung on his wall at the town office. In big, bold letters it read, "Make Here Better." It was that very mantra that guided Bill's tireless work ethic in Machias, and inspired others to follow his lead in service to the community. We should all aspire to have Bill's drive to make our respective small towns and social circles a better place to live in.

While land protection is a leading aspect of DCC's conservation efforts, it is not our only focus. Whether working with local communities on climate resilience planning, leading free education programs and events, promoting new citizen science initiatives, or enhancing public access for recreation, DCC's work is rooted in improving the health and well-being of our region. We must continue to find new ways to leverage conserved lands for the betterment of Washington County.

Bill may be gone, but his infectious smile and boundless energy will have a lasting impact on the region. We send all of our love to Cat and the Kitchen family, and we will strive to do exactly as Bill would have wanted – Make Here Better.



A handwritten signature in black ink.

Colin Brown
Executive Director



DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

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Board of Directors and Staff Updates

This past summer, two of DCC's board members have resigned from their positions. Chris Bartlett, a DCC board member since 2021, has been a leading voice on DCC's Education and Outreach Committee and continues to be a big supporter of DCC's public programs. Chris is increasingly busy in his role at Maine Sea Grant and other volunteer projects, but will remain on the Education and Outreach Committee.

Gren Blackall, a DCC board member since 2022, has hosted DCC events and is passionate about protecting the Downeast Coast. Gren lives in Addison and is now taking on the leadership role of board president of the Cape Split Chapel. He will continue to serve on DCC's Development Committee. We are thankful for Chris and Gren's volunteer efforts for DCC, and excited to continue working with them at the committee level.

In October DCC welcomed new staff member Lexie Morrill as Administration Manager. Lexie has an environmental education background, working the past few years leading youth programs across the state. One trip in particular, River Camp, has been her favorite as it has allowed her to come home to Downeast Maine every summer to work with community organizations Cobscook Institute and Downeast Salmon Federation on habitat conservation and access projects with local professionals.

Though she's a seasoned canoer, Registered Maine Guide, and Wilderness First Responder, Lexie is excited to turn her former work back into play and step into the office at DCC to serve her community in a different way. She lives in her hometown of Steuben, enjoys regular visits to Pigeon Hill Preserve, cooking and, at the end of the day, curling up with a good movie.



New Acquisition in Columbia Falls



This summer, DCC was gifted fee title to a long-held conservation easement parcel in Columbia Falls. Generously donated by DCC supporters Nancy and Charlie Herr, this 69-acre parcel includes 25 acres of salt marsh along the Pleasant River and beautiful upland forest. DCC will continue to manage the property in a wild state for its important wildlife habitat. Resilience to sea level rise, future salt marsh migration acreage, and intact coastal forests are all ecologically beneficial in the face of a changing climate. DCC thanks Charlie and Nancy for their important contribution to land conservation Downeast!

Climate Change and Our Responses

by Robin Pinto, DCC Board President

A series of gut punches hit us this year across the state of Maine: flooding in our riparian communities; tides and winds driving storm waters into coastal towns; boats and wharves tossed; homes and businesses damaged. The Gulf of Maine is warming. New plants, animals, and insects advance across our borders. These and other impacts to our lands and waters will continue to affect us into the foreseeable future.

How do we find hope and help in the face of these challenges? One answer is shared knowledge. A long-time member of DCC thought so. Their generous donation funded a series of wide-ranging presentations across our Downeast communities.

Clearly, we need to better understand those resources available to us to weather or adapt to these effects. Beverly Johnson pointed to the oft-forgotten salt marshes that buffer damaging waves, absorb atmospheric carbon, and provide critical habitat for marine organisms. Both Johnson and ecologist Brian McCall highlighted the value of our undeveloped landscapes that allow plants and animals to move as temperatures warm, sea levels rise, and natural communities evolve.

Other presenters focused on how we can help ourselves and others around us. Hope Kohtala encouraged us to make our homes and communities more resilient to changing weather and increasing energy costs through state and federal grants and new energy-saving technologies. Tora Johnson reminded us that change is traumatic and emotionally threatening. Each of us responds with differing degrees of acceptance and denial. Communicating ongoing support for friends and neighbors will be a critical tool to help all of us adapt and grow.

DCC continues to adapt and grow, too. We contribute to the Machias Resiliency Partnership, a statewide group working to find solutions to the complex problem of flooding in our county seat. We support citizen scientists, our “eyes on the ground,” who track weather and tide measurements. We partner with Machias Memorial High School students who study the health and condition of DCC salt marshes. And we are responding to increasing storm surge by redesigning and reinforcing recreational infrastructure at our coastal preserves (see cover article).

Climate change in its many ramifications is a challenge that we all must respond to now and into the future. Together we will learn and adapt through shared knowledge and experience. Maine won't wait, and neither should we.



Salt Marsh Walk with Beverly Johnson



Photos by Mark Borton



Rebuilt boardwalk at Mowry Beach Preserve
August 2024

(Building Bridges continued from page 1)

DCC's major stewardship project of the past summer was rebuilding 150 feet of the coastal section of boardwalk at Mowry Beach Preserve in Lubec. The WaYS crew's contribution was invaluable to the project, led by DCC stewardship staff and lead volunteers David Dowley and Philip Pinto. Working in the heat of August, the project required many hands to assist with demolition, preparation, and construction of the beloved Lubec path. The work was physically-demanding, and the WaYS crew relished the challenge. "Working Downeast is awesome," said Jayden Dana, WaYS Trail Crew Team Leader. "WaYS really appreciates DCC and MCHT collaborating with us, and I personally really enjoy all your trails and the variety of work we get to do."



Mowry Beach boardwalk
January 2024



Rebuilding the boardwalk with
WaYS and volunteers

The improvements at Mowry Beach Preserve were identified as a top priority for DCC, and became increasingly important when the coastal storms of this past January ravaged the boardwalk. By raising the elevation of the structure, rebuilding the decking, and improving the foundational supports, the trail is better prepared for future inundation and coastal erosion caused by sea level rise. Funding for this project was generously provided by Christine Nielsen, as the Nielsen family has been a long-time supporter of DCC's work in the region.

"Working with WaYS has not only been very beneficial to DCC's stewardship efforts, but has built a great relationship with a Wabanaki-led organization that offers essential science programming," said DCC Executive Director Colin Brown. "Connecting Wabanaki youth to conserved lands in their traditional homelands is critically important for the future of conservation stewardship in the region."

Planning for 2025 is already in the works, as this partnership with WaYS has yielded excellent results in improving trails and public access to conserved lands in Washington County. If you are interested in donating to support bringing future WaYS crews to Washington County, please contact Colin at colin@downeastcoastalconservancy.org.

Summer of Stewardship: Interning with DCC

By Marissa Wood



I had the pleasure of interning with DCC this summer. I am currently a senior at the University of Maine, studying ecology and environmental science with a minor in forest recreation management. I was born and raised in Machiasport, just a few miles down the road from DCC's Machias office.

As a lifelong resident of Washington County and an avid hiker, I was familiar with the preserves DCC manages, and had visited many before the start of the summer. Little did I know, I had only seen the tip of the iceberg. Sixteen preserves, 33 miles of hiking trails and 7,000-plus acres of land all conserved by DCC. Although I didn't have time to see it all, I walked trails that guided me through moss covered forests, rocky shorelines, and winding rivers. This summer of stewardship allowed me to see my home in a new light, gaining an appreciation for the land that I grew up exploring.



2024 Stewardship Crew: Ryan, Jackson, Marissa
Ingersoll Point Preserve

Not only did I gain a new sense of appreciation for Downeast Maine, I also learned and developed skills throughout the summer. Each day in the field was different. I was able to use (and eventually master) a weed whacker to maintain hiking trails, help build bridges and boardwalks, monitor preserve and easement properties, write monitoring reports, help cleanup island properties, and complete the occasional office task. What I enjoyed most about all of this was the amount of time it allowed me to spend outdoors, hiking all day and improving access for outdoor recreation on all of DCC's fantastic preserves.



Homestead Trail, Machias River Preserve

I couldn't be more grateful for DCC and all of its staff, board members, volunteers, and members. It is evident that everyone involved is passionate about DCC and its vision. Thank you for an amazing and memorable summer!



Tibbett Island Preserve

Quest to hike 13 DCC public access preserves

By Craig Snapp

As I entered my 80th year on planet Earth, I was moved to do some special things to celebrate the upcoming decadal milestone. A top item on my list was to hike trails in all of Downeast Coastal Conservancy's public access preserves that I could reach without a boat! Why? I love to hike in nature preserves, and for almost 20 years I've been an enthusiastic supporter and volunteer for DCC's mission.

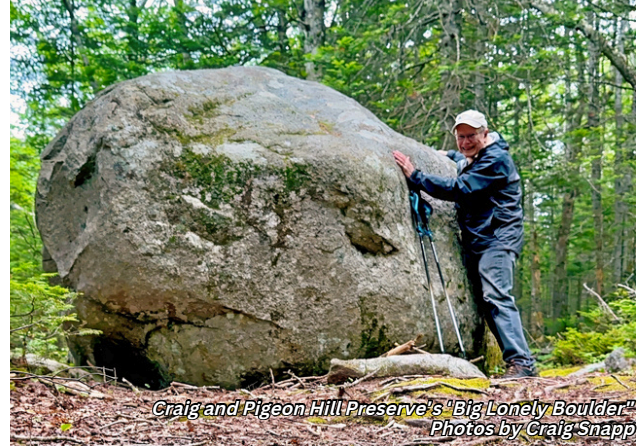
My quest began on June 29 at Pigeon Hill Preserve in Steuben and ended on August 8 at Mowry Beach Preserve in Lubec. Companionship was provided by my wife Barbara on more than half the hikes. It was a fun and delightful adventure! Here I'll highlight DCC's most southern, central, northern and eastern preserves.

Pigeon Hill Preserve in Steuben is DCC's southern most preserve. It's very popular and famous for its stunning panorama vistas to the East, South and West. It is home to the "Big Lonely Boulder" glacial erratic, one of 12 history/nature educational waypoints along the Pigeon Hill trails.

Beaver Dam Stream Preserve in Wesley is a tributary to the East Machias River. Habitat restoration projects in the preserve have helped make it home to native fish species including the endangered Atlantic salmon. Beaver Dam Stream is DCC's northern most preserve.

Machias River Preserve in Machias is an ecologically diverse 917-acre preserve and the largest that DCC has protected to date. Much of the trail provides excellent views of one of Maine's greatest remaining wild rivers.

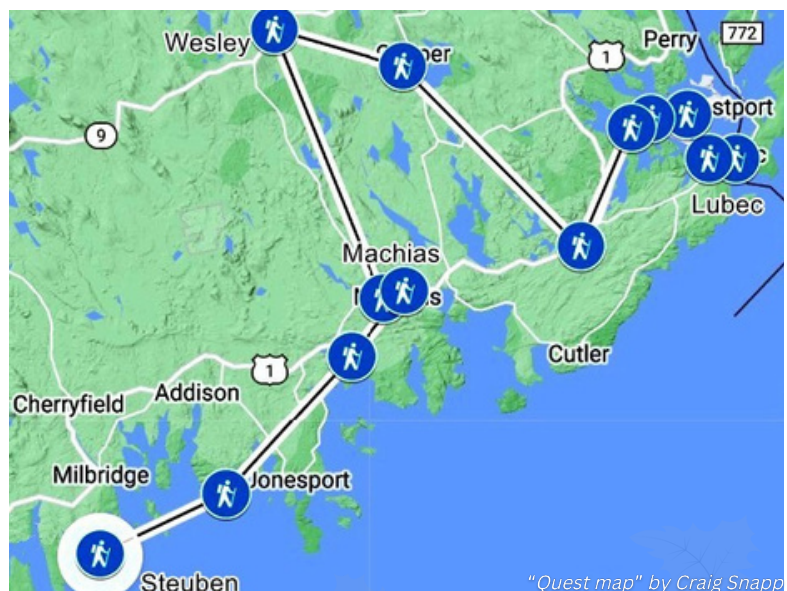
(Continued on page 8...)



Craig and Pigeon Hill Preserve's "Big Lonely Boulder"
Photos by Craig Snapp



Beaver Dam Stream



"Quest map" by Craig Snapp



(Quest continued from page 7)

In Lubec, Mowry Beach Preserve is DCC's easternmost preserve. It features a 1700-foot boardwalk leading to one of the most easterly beaches in the country that both humans and birds enjoy.

My quest has reminded me:

Celebrate Life!

Nurture the Earth!

And keep exploring!



For more photos from Craig's hike, visit DCC's blog: downeastcoastalconservancy.org/news-events/
Want to go on your own quest? Visit downeastcoastalconservancy.org/dcc-trails/ for maps.

Share your voice!

We welcome submissions inspired by DCC preserves - poems, art, drawings, photos, recipes. All ages welcome! Selected submissions will be showcased in DCC media: our printed newsletter, social media, and website. Send to emily@downeastcoastalconservancy.org. Share your voice, your passion, and help us highlight the special places of Downeast Maine.

Thank you to our 2024 Community Partners in Conservation!

The generosity of our supporters is vital to preserving these spectacular places that we love! Our Community Partners in Conservation are local businesses and organizations with a passion for conserving natural areas that make Downeast Maine special. They aid stewardship efforts, support educational programs to engage local youth and families, and sponsor large community events for residents and visitors. DCC could not succeed without them. Please help us thank our partners by giving them your support!



Cathance Lake Association



Dr. Peter J. Knowles
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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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Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving. Join our monthly giving program at \$10 or more per month on or before December 3 to be entered into a drawing to win a \$200 LL Bean gift card.

Your monthly donation creates a continuous base of support to protect land and work with local communities yearround.



www.downeastcoastalconservancy.org/donate