



Low Tide View Atop Klondike Mountain

A Matching Donation Campaign Success!

Last fall, DCC was presented with a very generous offer from a small group of long-time supporters – all new donations and increased donations from existing donors would be matched up to \$100,000. These supporters' goal was to expand and increase DCC's annual giving for the future success and sustainability of the organization. We are thrilled to report on this HUGE accomplishment. Between November first and February first, we raised a total of \$90,117.22!

The matching donor group was so excited by the momentum and result that they decided to contribute the entire \$100,000 match. Buoyed by their enthusiasm, we achieved a grand total of \$190,117.22 raised in this winter's appeal! An inspiring trend in this matching challenge were the 34 brand-new donors who joined DCC. We are excited to see new faces hiking the trails, attending programs, and volunteering in their communities. The support of small, local land trusts hinges on the generosity of its residents and visitors to our beloved region. We are overwhelmed and blessed to have such an outpouring.

A sincere "thank you" to all who contributed to the success of this campaign.

DCC Staff & Board



Collective Action Supports New Growth

A note from our Executive Director

In the conservation world (and the greater nonprofit space), there is cause for alarm given the increasing uncertainty of federal funding availability, now and into the future. Nearly all of the successful land acquisition projects in Downeast Maine have been made possible through significant grants from federal conservation programs, many of which are at risk of losing funding. Here at DCC, we are already feeling the spillover effects from supporting partners. This includes the loss of a two-month National Civilian Conservation Corps group that was slated to arrive this spring to assist with numerous trail and recreation projects for DCC and many partner organizations in the region.

While a great deal of uncertainty over federal dollars remains, DCC is blessed to not have to rely on federal funding for our operations or staffing. For decades, our work has been overwhelmingly supported by passionate local residents and visitors to the region who love what we do – protect wild landscapes, promote public access, enhance recreation offerings, and offer learning opportunities and connections to the natural world. Our mission remains unchanged, even in the face of these changing times.

Whether you have donated annually to DCC for many years, or you’ve just joined us in our most recent matching campaign (see page 1!), I want to take a moment to loudly say “thank you!” The groundswell of financial support that we saw at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025 is not only essential to surviving in this climate, but thriving. Your charitable contributions are supporting exciting new projects and initiatives that we have slated for 2025. But, it doesn’t end there...

With our newly-approved strategic plan (page 5), DCC stands well poised for growth – more staff, new facilities and equipment, increased land and water protected, and deeper connections to our communities. We are so excited by the future goals that the DCC Board of Directors has set forth, but we need your help to accomplish these goals. The long-term success of DCC can be directly traced to the kind generosity of so many people who call Washington County home, or “home away from home.”

Your support is needed, now more than ever, to augment the success that we’ve had over the years. Growth of the organization is already happening, but we need to grow our foundation of supporters. I encourage everyone out there to bring new folks into our DCC tent – new volunteers, new event attendees, new outdoor enthusiasts, and new donors. Without the collective action of people, this work of land conservation can not succeed.

See you this summer!



Colin Brown
Executive Director



DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

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Welcoming Our New Outreach Director

Former Outreach Director Emily Guirl has transitioned from DCC to a new role with Cobscook Institute. We wish Emily the best in her future endeavors and are glad to have been a part of her journey.

Matt Kelley joins DCC as our new Outreach Director. He grew up in the Belfast area on his family's chicken farm. Throughout his childhood he was active in sports, the outdoors, and helping on the farm. Matt has worked in coaching and assisting youth sports as well as after school programs and summer camps. Matt attended UMM for 4 years. When he wasn't busy with school work he spent his time appreciating Downeast Maine's wilderness. During his summer breaks, he directed a summer camp in Belfast. After graduating with a BS in Outdoor Recreation & Leadership in 2024, Matt worked as a Land Steward for Frenchman Bay Conservancy. When not on a hike or in the office, he will likely be fishing a secluded pond or stream or in search of new places of solitude in Maine's outdoors.



Fond Farewell From Ryan Mola



DCC holds over 7,400 acres of some of the most beautiful and ecologically significant landscapes I've experienced, and I am privileged to have had the opportunity to manage them. Over the past three and a half years, I have done my best to ensure all DCC properties are thoroughly cared for. These lands and the amazing people that I've met are both irreplaceable. Building bridges miles into the wilderness with only a chainsaw and hand tools, scouting out and constructing DCC's water access campsites deep in the woods, acquiring new properties to be conserved in perpetuity, clearing blowdowns from our 30 miles of trails, and working with some of the most inspiring and positive-minded individuals I've met will always stand out when I look back at the time I spent at DCC. Thank you for all your support over the past few years.

In the near future, I'll be going back to fight wildfire with my Helitack crew based out of Southern Idaho. I need to do this as fire danger continues to grow rapidly across North America. I'm so excited to be back fighting fire with my crew, but I will always miss DCC and take many of the lessons I've learned here with me wherever I go. It's been a huge honor stewarding these lands for the future conservation of wildlife and marine life, as well as for all the recreationists, sportsmen, wildlife observers, hunters, and fishermen like me!

Bringing Community Together to Create Joy

By Robin Pinto

Middle River Park in Machias has always been a gathering point for both public and DCC events and performances. We often hold annual meetings at the open meadow overlooking the town where the two rivers meet. Trails, including the monthly Story Book Trail, lead to the historic dike, marsh, and woods and are open for anyone to enjoy. When DCC acquired this land fifteen years ago, we made a commitment to our supporters that this park would be utilized for Community Conservation – “to bring diverse people and interests together around the shared goal of a more resilient, healthy, whole natural human landscape.”

Three years ago, a temporary stage was erected to support “Middle River Rhythm”, an August afternoon’s music event that drew well over 250 participants. They lounged on blankets and chairs, enjoyed the warm summer sun and spectacular views, and listened to some of the best bands Downeast has to offer.

As part of that ongoing commitment, DCC is building a permanent, public stage for Downeast residents and visitors to host musical, theatrical or private events and performances. Financial and material support is coming from individuals and community businesses. Volunteers and supporters will build the stage this summer to be ready for its opening this fall. The ‘Make Here Better’ Stage is named in honor of Bill Kitchen, Machias’ former Town Manager, whose energy for and belief in community engagement lives on after him. Our shared goal here is to build a gathering place where we can create joy in company together. If you, too, would like to help support this worthy effort, please contact Executive Director Colin Brown at colin@downeastcoastalconservancy.org



Working Towards A New Strategic Plan

Since the merger of Great Auk and Quoddy Regional Land Trusts in 2009, DCC has acquired an extensive number of easements and preserves. This board is firmly committed to continuing to preserve lands and to increase community interactions. The decision was made to initiate a new Strategic Plan that would guide this organization's growth and development over the next five years. DCC staff has increased to five employees and this plan aims to further grow staff capacity. Brainstorming started at the board retreat in late 2023 and in June of 2024 an updated Vision and Mission for the organization was approved.

Vision:

We envision resilient lands and waters that support thriving communities.

Mission:

We conserve essential ecological habitats, engage local communities and foster environments where wildlife and people thrive in coastal Washington County, Maine.

Over the course of 2024 our volunteer committees including lands, stewardship, outreach and development worked through an iterative process to define specific actions in support of that mission and vision. The Strategic Planning Committee distilled input from the committees in the six guiding principles.

Guiding Principles:

1. Mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change; increase the resilience of vital lands and waters.
2. Connect strategic habitats that support plant and animal movement to enhance ecosystem health.
3. Support talented staff who possess a passion for land conservation and community betterment.
4. Collaborate with landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies to protect natural resources on which local economies depend.
5. Provide education and recreation opportunities that connect a diverse and inclusive population to the ecological, historical, and cultural values of our lands and waters.
6. Inspire and train present and future stewards and conservationists.

As these principles suggest, DCC must act today in order to make a difference in lives and landscapes tomorrow. Here are the plans and projects that we will be working towards in the next couple of years.

Action Plans:

- Create a process and build tools to assist in intelligent, targeted acquisitions.
- Operate outreach programming to encourage greater conservation and healthy recreation in Downeast Maine.
- Augment stewardship to ensure all lands are cared for and conserved properly.
- Grow and support staff effectively; and improve office space and functionality.
- Expand the membership and donor base to ensure that DCC has sufficient resources.



This planning project has been a lot of work. We are energizing to set this organization on a clear and aligned path for growth. We will track results and adjust the action plans annually. To that end, continued input from you, our members, is welcome and highly valued! We need input from you. How can we become more effective? Where should we focus our energy? What challenges or results should we prioritize? Please share your thoughts and ideas in a phone call to the DCC office or in a conversation at our upcoming Annual Celebration!

The Ocean is Calling

By Parke Rublee

The ocean has a voice, not through words but through color, sound, smell, sea level, and weather. Beautiful sunsets, crashing waves, salt air all bring joy to our senses. But the odor of rotting fish, increased sea level, and intense storms are worrying signals that suggest something is wrong; they are warnings about our future.

Global climate change is driving many of these challenges to Downeast Maine. Ocean warming and sea level rise are occurring faster here than in many other coastal areas. These changes may lead to more frequent or more intense storms, such as we experienced in early 2024, and which caused tremendous damage to coastal infrastructure, roads, homes, and piers. The warming of coastal waters is also shifting the habitats of organisms further north to cooler waters, most notably lobsters. Sea level rise can degrade salt marshes and mudflats which function as important inland protection from storms and as nursery grounds for economically important finfish and shellfish species.

Plastic pollution of the ocean is also problematic. While Maine's bottle deposit law has reduced plastic waste in our waters, anyone who has walked the Downeast shores can tell that plenty of plastic waste remains. Recent studies show that the smallest breakdown particles of plastics – microplastics – enter the marine food chain. Those particles can end up in humans, and lead to illness.

DCC is incorporating climate adaptation and mitigation into our new strategic plan. One method is to conserve coastal wetlands and their adjacent uplands. Marshes and wetlands pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and bury it as decaying plant matter. Undeveloped uplands will allow coastal marshes to migrate inland as sea level rises. We also try to conserve lands that provide corridors for animal and plant migration as the climate warms and habitats change. DCC monitors its lands and easements to prevent actions that might exacerbate climate change. We host shoreline clean-ups, often working with other conservation organizations, to remove plastic pollutants from the shore before they degrade further.

If the ocean calls to you – as it does to us – you can help. Join us at clean-up events. Carry a bag with on shore walks or hikes; and collect and remove waste from our shores and coastal lands. Try to reduce your own use of plastics with refillable water bottles and minimize purchase of plasticware.

Let's not accept a warming or polluted ocean we. Instead, let's work together to make it the healthy ocean it still can be.



Coastal storm and flooding at Mowry Beach



Beaver Meadow Brook Salt Marsh Protected by DCC



Volunteers at a DCC Cleanup at Pike Lands

Save The Date! This Summer's Events

A full event calendar including stewardship volunteer days can be found on our website events page: <https://downeastcoastalconservancy.org/events/>. New events may be added throughout the season, so check back often! Below are some highlights of what is planned.

June



Community Paddle
Orange River, Sat. 7th



Wildflower Walk
Pigeon Hill, Mon. 16th
led by Sherrie Sprangers



Solstice Sunset Hike
Denbow Point, Fri. 20th

July

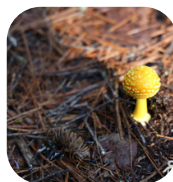


**Annual Celebration
& Meeting**
Schoppee Farm,
Fri. 18th



Milbridge Days
Milbridge, 24th-26th

August



Mushroom Walk
Middle River Park, Sat. 2nd
led by Greg Marley



Blueberry Festival
Machias, Aug. 16th & 17th



Maine Outdoor Film Fest.
Milbridge Theatre, Aug. 30th

September



Night Sky Viewing
Reversing Falls, Sat. 13th
w/ Downeast Amateur Astronomers



Bad Little Trail Run
Machias River Preserve
Sun. 28th
w/ Bold Coast Runners

Thank You to Our 2024 Donors

The generosity of all of our supporters is vital to conserving and maintaining unique areas and landscapes of Downeast Maine. We are excited to welcome our newest donors, written in bold, who joined us in 2024.

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The mission of 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.

Annual Celebration & Summer Meeting

FRIDAY JULY 18TH 3PM

Schoppee
Farm



DCC's Annual Celebration will take place at Schoppee Farm (Edwards Residence) on E Street off of East Kennebec Road in Machias. Beer, wine, and food will be served. There will be games, activities, live music, as well as a speaker covering topics important to DCC.