



DCC staff and volunteers installing flooring for the 'Make Here Better Stage' at Middle River Park

Making Here Better at Middle River Park

High on the grassy hill above downtown Machias sits Downeast Coastal Conservancy's (DCC) Middle River Park. Middle River Park has always been a popular gathering point for public events, DCC education programs, private parties, and local performances. With an extensive network of hiking trails (including a children's Story Book Trail!) and everyone's favorite local sledding hill, the Park is a true community gem in the Machias area.

Three years ago, DCC hosted an August afternoon music event, 'Middle River Rhythm,' that drew more than 250 concertgoers. They lounged on blankets and chairs, enjoyed the warm summer sun and listened to some of the best bands Downeast Maine has to offer. After such a popular event, it was clear to all that a permanent structure was needed. "A significant part of our mission as a nonprofit organization is to support this community. When DCC acquired Middle River Park fifteen years ago, we made a commitment to all of those who funded and protected its open spaces that this park would do just that," said DCC Board President Robin Pinto. As part of that commitment, the organization is constructing a public stage for Downeast residents and visitors to host musical, theatrical performances, or private events. The stage will be made available completely free of charge for local nonprofit use and community events; private rentals will be offered for a small donation to DCC.

(Continued on page 8...)

Passing The Torch

A note from our Executive Director

As you will read throughout this edition of Landmarks, DCC is growing. With our staff capacity now at five full-time employees (Welcome, Steven on page 4!) and the acquisition of a gorgeous new office space in Machias (page 3), DCC is expanding operations and taking on exciting new land conservation projects in coastal Downeast Maine.

One ongoing project still in the works is a significant land transfer from our long-time partners and supporters at the Pleasant River Wildlife Foundation (PRWF). Founded in 1998 by a group of passionate volunteers led by John and Anne Marshall, PRWF worked to protect wildlife habitat on the Downeast coast with a commitment to preserving public access. Since its founding more than 25 years ago, PRWF has protected 1,367 acres of wetlands, 2,523 acres of uplands, and 25 miles of salt water and stream shoreline.

John and Anne are winding down their operations as land owners, and are eager to see their remaining protected lands entrusted to the stewardship of DCC. This pending transfer of 500 acres of wildlife habitat in Addison includes several large tracts on Crowley Island, upland forest and recreational access on Merritt Cove, and Marsh Island in the Pleasant River. We are so grateful for John and Anne’s support throughout the years, and this “passing of the torch” shows their trust and commitment to DCC, and the entire Downeast region. We look forward to taking excellent care of the lands they worked so hard to protect!

Without the generosity of so many DCC supporters, like John and Anne, these major land protection projects and local partnerships would not be possible. By increasing our staff capacity and growing the organization’s impact in Washington County, DCC is well poised to tackle big conservation projects, now and into the future.

Best Wishes,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Brown".

Colin Brown
Executive Director



DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robin Pinto

President, Roque Bluffs

Dave Wimberly

Vice President, Addison

Ben Edwards

Treasurer, Machias

Parke Rublee

Secretary, Steuben

Anne Baker, Jonesboro

Karen Beeftink, Machias

Cat Cannon, Machias

Les Coleman, Addison

Julie Jacob, East Machias

Kate Jans, Trescott

Betty Ann Listowich, Steuben

Leslie Page, Addison

Sherrie Sprangers, Machias

STAFF

Colin Brown

Executive Director, Pembroke

Steven Poulos

Stewardship Director, Whiting

Matt Kelley

Outreach Director, Pembroke

Lexie Morrill

Operations Manager, Steuben

Jackson Wetzel

Land Steward, Machias



Strategic Planning & Growth at DCC

By Robin Pinto, Board President

In our preceding newsletter we shared with you our efforts in strategic planning, the renewed mission and vision statements, and the six guiding principles that now lead this organization. The primary benefit of such an exercise is the reflection and reevaluation of our organizational purpose and trajectory. Where are we today? Are we moving on the right path? How can we be more effective at meeting our goals? Those are not easy questions to provide thoughtful or comforting answers. Change is hard!

The simplest answer arising from this reflection is the need for growth – growth to be more effective within the organization as well as outwardly to better support our communities in which we play a valuable role. But how and where?

One important aspect of that growth was to improve our ability to conserve and monitor properties. We needed a boat and engine to carry stewards and volunteers out to monitor our coastal islands and otherwise difficult-to-access saltmarshes. Another aspect of growth meant more and better land management. We needed a newer, more reliable vehicle capable of towing and hauling heavy loads and equipment long distances into the field. Jackson and Steven have found and acquired a 2019 Toyota Tundra truck with cap that will carry and protect all DCC tools and machinery. Our “new” truck now proudly displays the DCC logo!

Even more importantly, growth meant increasing staff numbers to accomplish more and bigger jobs. We are now at five FTEs with benefits where two years ago we were at three without. However, each change incurs more challenge. During this summer, five staff and Zariah, DCC’s intern, were crammed into the dingy, one-room office in Machias’ historic Five-and-Dime store. That situation reinforced for us that DCC had to find a new, larger, and more efficient space. After much hunting, we have just closed on the purchase of DCC’s first home! The building is located on Rte. 1 at 7 VIP Dr. at the west end of Machias. This 2005 structure is well lit and of sufficient size to house all staff in comfort. It has more than adequate storage room for outreach materials, documents and records, and stewardship equipment in a dry, workable basement. Following cleaning and minor repairs, we hope to move into this new space at the end of the fall season.

These acquisitions and changes while coming in rapid succession have been missing and needed for a long time. DCC’s board is thrilled that we can now move this organization to become a more effective and successful resource for our communities and our mission of conservation. We are incredibly thankful for all of our supporters who have encouraged us to embrace this trajectory for growth.



DCC's new home



Jackson with the new DCC truck

Welcoming New Stewardship Director



*Stewardship Director Steven Poulos
and trusty sidekick Mackerel*

Steven Poulos joined DCC as the Stewardship Director in June 2025. Previously, he worked as a fisheries biologist on stream habitat restoration and enhancement projects in the northeast and northwest. Originally from Vermont, Steven grew up immersed in nature and curious about ecology. He completed a BSc in natural resources management from Paul Smith's College, and a MSc degree in biology from Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he studied brown trout and Atlantic salmon hybridization.

Steven and his wife Andrea live on Cobscook Bay and spend their time hiking, hunting, fishing, gardening, and foraging. He is excited to shift gears and work with DCC its partners, and the community on important conservation lands and projects.

New and Familiar Faces Join Board of Directors

DCC is thankful for the time Matt Mandino and Lyman Holmes gave to the organization as they step away from their roles on the board of directors. Throughout the summer three new individuals have stepped up and taken roles on the board of directors.

Sherrie Sprangers, recently retired professor at the University of Maine at Machias, is rejoining the board. Sherrie started her volunteering on the QRLT board that merged with GALT to found DCC. Sherrie stepped away from the board yet continued her involvement as a member of the Lands and Outreach Committees. We are excited to have her back on board.

Julie Jacob moved to the Downeast region from Florida in 2023. She, like many, has a passion for protecting and caring for the region's natural beauty. Julie has twenty years of professional event management experience, and is excited to apply her skills and passions as a member of the DCC board.

Betty Ann Listowich graduated from University of Maine Orono with a degree in Political Science/History. Her career however has focused on Horticulture. As owner of Norpine Landscape Inc. a landscape contracting firm, she has developed a wide range of skills, from plant identification and horticultural knowledge to construction project management. Betty Ann wants to use her time on the board to give back to the place that she loves by helping DCC protect these lands.



Sherrie Sprangers

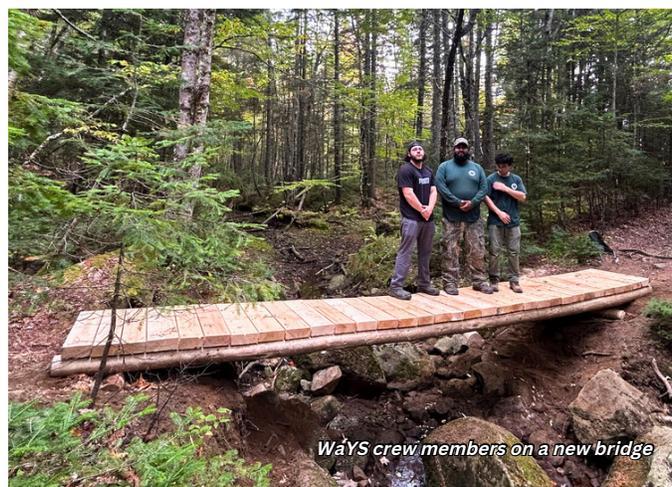


Julie Jacob



Betty Ann Listowich

Work Crews Bridging The Stewardship Gap



Every year as winter becomes spring, trail stewardship crews across Maine are preparing for the arduous trail maintenance and upgrade projects that need to be done. Maine’s “trail season” is short. Not only is it the ideal time to go for a hike in the woods, but so is it the best time to complete work on those trails. DCC has 16 public-access properties with trails, campsites, or hand-carry water access, and some have all three. Caring for and maintaining all of these resources is the responsibility of DCC’s two full-time stewardship employees, Director Steven Poulos and Land Steward Jackson Wetzel. Due to the remote setting of trails, the wide geographic range of DCC, and number of potential projects there is never a shortage of work!

Tasks such as building bridges take a lot of time and energy - not only the building process, but also transporting materials to the work site. Multiple bridges at Machias River Preserve have been in need of replacement. If Steven and Jackson had constructed the bridges themselves it would have limited their available time for other necessary projects. This is where trail crews make a big impact.

With financial support from Onion Foundation, DCC has developed a strong partnership with the Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS) trail crew. This crew of comprised of Wabanaki youth have significant skills in trail maintenance and improving recreational infrastructure. During their two weeks with Steven and Jackson, the WaYS crew of seven replaced two bridges on the Money Island Trail (pictured above). They also installed bog bridging on the Heritage Trail and at Pigeon Hill, and built two waterbars to minimize trail erosion at Klondike Mountain.

The L.L. Bean Maine Land Trust Grant Program funded another separate but overlapping work project. DCC was able to hire five members of the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC). At the Machias River Preserve, the MCC crew carried 25 large cedar boards for bog bridging seven-tenths of a mile and rerouted 2500 feet of new path on the Heritage Trail.

These trail crews working under Steven’s guidance have greatly assisted in the completion of these important trail improvements. Trail maintenance is truly never ending. DCC is immensely grateful to our financial supporters and to these young men and women. They provide essential support in bridging the ongoing workload and the capacity of our stalwart, two-man stewardship team.



41 Days of Conservation Stewardship

By Zariah Mahan, MCHT Rockefeller Intern



Zariah Mahan

I'm Zariah Mahan, a senior at the University of Maine at Machias. I'm currently studying Integrative Biology with a concentration in Pre-Veterinary and a minor in Zoology. I enjoy the outdoors. With the help of DCC, I got to experience the preserves that I have been surrounded by for the past three years.

My first experience with conservation was in a General Ecology class with Dr. Eric Jones, who took us to Klondike Mountain to do a natural resource inventory for DCC. Through this partnership I learned of this wonderful internship opportunity. After 41 days, 336 hours, and over 111 miles hiked, I can confidently say that this has been the greatest choice of my career.

One important lesson I learned over this time is to take it slow. The DCC crew oversees multiple easement and fee properties, 15 of which I got to see during my time here.



Clearing trail at Reversing Falls

No day is ever the same. Some days are spent all at one property, mowing, managing blowdowns and making sure trails are clear. Other days, we're doing smaller tasks and going through three or four properties. Sometimes I was able to help other members of the DCC team. With Matt on outreach, I accompanied summer camp kids on informative hikes. I also helped Lexie make sure the office ran smoothly.

I also had the opportunity to participate in monitoring a few of the properties, including Falls Island, Dennys River Mill Pond, and Rodgers Island, two of which I got to do by boat. I was lucky enough not only to experience Falls Island in person, but also visit with an archaeologist who has been researching Wabanaki occupation on the island over the last few thousand years.



Clearing Orange River Campsites

Being an intern is both about helping take care of the properties and learning. During my time with Jackson and Steven, the stewardship team, I learned more tree and bird identification skills. While I'm not a master yet, I can say that some bird calls are now familiar, and I recognize most trees and even have little tricks to help me remember the differences. I also learned a lot of other unexpected skills, like helping change the oil, learning to drive stick shift, and even repairing equipment that stewardship uses on a daily basis.

I am very glad that this summer was full of wonderful experiences. Everyone should take on an internship they love. There's a lot of information available in the world, and sometimes it's found in the great outdoors.



A Summer of Fun: DCC Events

By Matt Kelley, Outreach Director

Summer in Maine is short, it is no secret. When temperatures begin hitting 60 degrees, land trusts such as DCC are moving full steam ahead. Taking on the role of Outreach Director in late April meant there was little time to settle into the role before a busy summer event schedule had begun. These programs vary from volunteer days to environmental education, to paddles and hikes. DCC has held thirteen events open to the public through September. Here are some of the highlights.

- Vernal Pools Walk at Vining Lake led by naturalist Grace Bartlett
- Orange River Community Paddle with Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Downeast Salmon Federation, Cobscook Institute and Cobscook Shores
- Wildflower Walk at Pigeon Hill led by Sherrie Sprangers
- Annual Celebration & Summer Meeting
- Browney Island Cleanup with Maine Island Trail Association
- Mushroom Workshop led by Greg Marley at Machias Chamber of Commerce and Middle River Park
- Maine Outdoor Film Festival hosted at Milbridge Theatre
- Ninth Annual Bad Little Trail Run at Machias River Preserve

Collaboration with other organizations and volunteers is essential to offer quality events to the public and best benefit to the land. This is highlighted in events such as the Orange River Community Paddle. Several organizations have worked together to protect this land and waterscape of the Orange River watershed. Each year all of the partners and the public come together to paddle the river in celebration of this success. Similarly, we worked with Maine Island Trail Association for the two-day Browney Island Cleanup. We removed more than 100 lobster traps and more than 300 pounds of trash from the island with the help of volunteers.

The Annual Celebration on July 18th was our biggest event of the year. On a beautiful afternoon approximately 100 supporters came together at Schoppee Farm to celebrate the impact of DCC's work. We appreciate all who helped create such a memorable time. We intend to keep that same energy flowing into next year's event.

For the first time, DCC brought the Maine Outdoor Film Festival to Washington County. Over 50 attendees enjoyed an assortment of outdoor adventure and conservation films in the beautiful Milbridge Theatre who graciously hosted the event.

It was a summer filled with fun events. We are incredibly thankful for our the help from our volunteers and partners. Please keep your eye out for our upcoming fall and winter activities such as the Pumpkin Glow October 24th at Mowry Beach in Lubec.



Vernal Pools Walk



Orange River Community Paddle



Browney Island Cleanup



Mushroom Workshop



Bad Little Trail Run

(Making Here Better continued from page 1)

This structure, the 'Make Here Better Stage', is dedicated to the memory of Bill Kitchen, Machias' Town Manager, whose boundless energy for and belief in community engagement lives on after him. "Bill championed bringing live music and the performing arts to Machias, and we are excited to directly support that community spirit," said DCC Executive Director Colin Brown.

Progress has been made throughout the summer. Step by step, the ground was cleared and leveled, concrete foundation poured and set, and the flooring was installed. All that is left to bring the potential of the 'Make Here Better Stage' to life is the timber frame, currently being crafted by Tim Beal. The frame raising will be happening soon, and a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony will be held to mark the launch of this great community asset.

If you wish to support this worthy community effort with a donation, you may do so by making a note to the stage when you fill out our online donation form or send in a note with your check. Businesses wishing to donate should contact DCC Executive Director Colin Brown at colin@downeastcoastalconservancy.org



Earthwork



Poured pad



Finished Floor

Special appreciation to individuals and businesses who have donated in support of the Make Here Better Stage :



**Philip and
Robin Pinto**

**Meadowbrook
Materials**



**Ann and
Phillip Sharp**

Mesange LLC



**Kate and
Tony Jans**

**Gray's
Concrete**



Thank you to our 2025 Community Partners in Conservation!

The generosity of our supporters is vital to protecting these spectacular places that we love! Our Community Partners in Conservation are local businesses and organizations that support the mission and work of Downeast Coastal Conservancy. Please help us thank our partners by giving them your support!



Maine Blackfly Breeders Association

Pleasant River Wildlife Foundation

All Souls Church By The Sea

Cathance Lake Association

Downeast Amateur Astronomers

Luminance Skincare

Machias Ridge Riders Trail Club

Peacock House Bed and Breakfast

Pleasant River Garden Club





DOWNEAST
COASTAL
CONSERVANCY

PO Box 760
Machias, ME 04654

www.DowneastCoastalConservancy.org

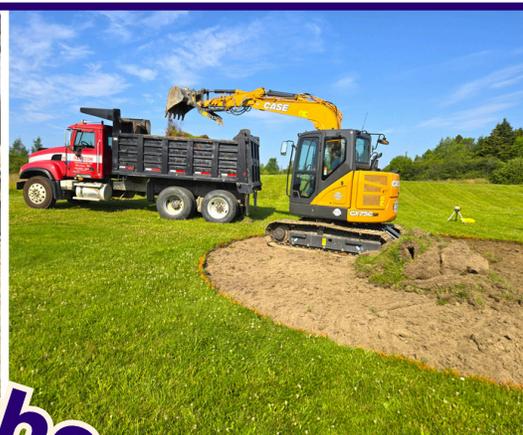
info@DowneastCoastalConservancy.org

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.

Printed on recycled paper.



Support the stage!

Help DCC finish this project and benefit the greater Machias community!

Make a note "For the Make Here Better Stage" on our online donation form or send it in with your check. Businesses contact colin@downeastcoastalconservancy.org.

