



Growing Food, Partnership & Middle River Park

In 2025 news outlets and radio stations across the state were reporting on Washington County weekly. However, it was not for the pebble beaches, expansive forests, working waterfronts, breathtaking coastal overlooks, or any other classic characteristics that the Downeast region is known for. Washington County was receiving a tremendous amount of attention, and it was not for a good reason. A county budget crisis had developed. Mismanagement had created a potentially unprecedented situation; Washington County may go bankrupt.

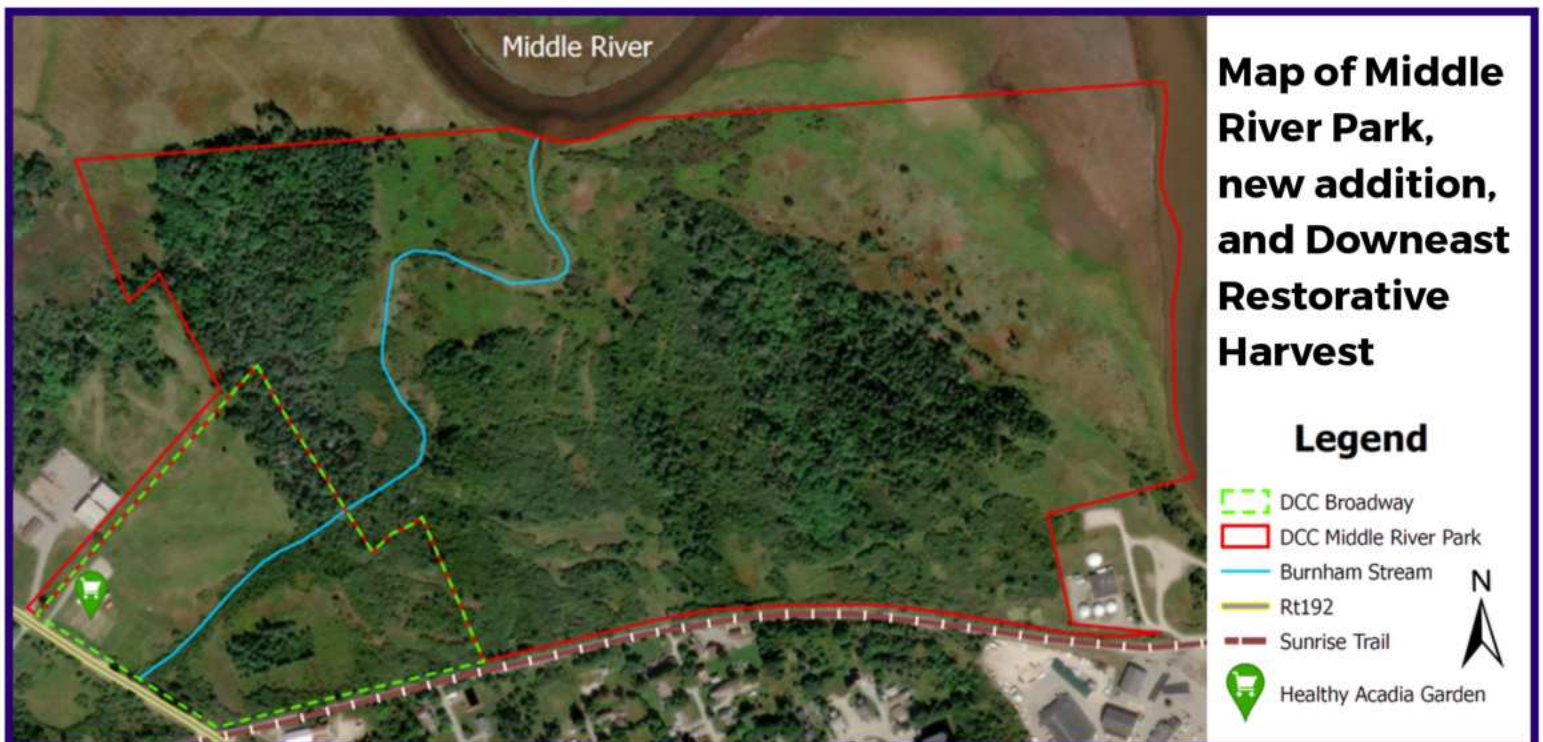
To minimize the burden of the deficit, County-owned land was offered for sale: a 15-acre lot off of Rt 192 in Machias, adjacent to DCC's Middle River Park. "What an incredible opportunity!" was the thought going through the minds of DCC staff and board members alike. Expand one of DCC's most used public access properties, support the county in a time of need, and conserve more land! Reasons for DCC to act did not end there. The land was tied to a multiyear lease held by Healthy Acadia, a nonprofit that strives to empower the people and organizations in Downeast Maine to build healthy communities. This property has been home to Healthy Acadia's Downeast Restorative Harvest project for the last three years, and DCC could guarantee the continuation of their beneficial work.

“Downeast Restorative Harvest, launched in 2022, is a community farm initiative led by Healthy Acadia in partnership with the Washington County Jail, Department of Corrections, local organizations, and community members. The farm focuses on providing healthy, locally grown vegetables, fruits, and herbs directly to the county jail’s kitchen, while also supporting food assistance programs throughout the region.

Located in Machias, the community farm engages incarcerated individuals, people in recovery, agricultural educators, and volunteers in all aspects of food production. Participants gain hands-on experience, develop job-ready skills, and benefit from the therapeutic value of working outdoors and connecting with nature. Downeast Restorative Harvest is more than a source of fresh food—it’s a space for growth, healing, and opportunity. It helps foster confidence, responsibility, and a sense of purpose among participants, while preparing them for successful reentry into the workforce and community. By strengthening local food systems and empowering individuals through meaningful work, the farm is cultivating resilience and lasting positive change in Washington County.”

- *Healthy Acadia website*

The activities of the Downeast Restorative Harvest utilize just two of the 15 acres of land. The remaining 13 acres are forest and grassland, a remnant of the St. Regis pasture. Burnham Stream flows through the property, feeding into Burnham Marsh and eventually the Middle River. Essential riparian habitat, a haven for wildlife, birds, and native plant communities, is protected and connected forever.



With this purchase of 15 acres at 73 Broadway, Downeast Coastal Conservancy has:

- Supported the County in a time of financial need
- Entered into a partnership with Healthy Acadia and its Downeast Restorative Harvest garden
- Guaranteed the continuation of a program that benefits the health and food resiliency of our coastal communities.
- Expanded Middle River Park to over 120 acres of conserved land and reconnected two properties that were historically one, the St. Regis farmland.

DCC is excited by all elements of this recent acquisition: partnership with another impactful local nonprofit, conservation of more land for the nature and people of Downeast Maine, and the potential that this newly protected land holds. Future vision for the property includes connecting the newly acquired parcel to the trails of Middle River Park. This connection would allow visitors to hike from Rt 192 to Rt 1 in Machias (via the trails of Middle River Park) and vice versa. This acquisition also opens doors for collaborations with Healthy Acadia and Downeast Restorative Harvest to better support Downeast Maine.

“Everyone at DERH is excited to steward this land with DCC together, more intentionally. This partnership builds on a relationship that long predates this acquisition, with DCC assisting us over all of our growing seasons with mowing and helping us keep the space tidy. We know collaboration means more food coming out of the field, more nearby trails to explore, and more community engagement with our projects overall. I love how both DCC and Healthy Acadia are committed to making Machias a healthier place, and a more beautiful one, too.”



Volunteers with produce grown at DERH



**- Jasmine Haines,
Healthy Acadia Food
Programs Manager**

Changing of The Guard

DCC wants to formally recognize and say farewell to two employees who have provided significant energy and strength to this organization over the past few years. During his tenure, Executive Director Colin Brown forged strong collaborative partnerships with the Passamaquoddy Tribe, other land trusts, and many community organizations. He led DCC through strategic planning efforts designed to grow this organization and to increase the number of acquisitions, including our new headquarters at 7 VIP Drive in Machias! We thank him for his care and guidance and wish him the best in his new endeavors.

Over the past two years, Lexie Morrill has worked hard to improve our administrative management and general operations in the office. She addressed each last-minute request with a smile and a positive, can-do attitude. As a Registered Maine Recreational Guide, she enthusiastically stepped outside of her office role to assist with canoeing, kayaking, and hiking events for DCC and community partners. Lexie moves forward during the next year to further her education and leadership skills.

Our newest staff member, Gina Grange Joyce, is already mastering the tasks of Operations Manager in the new office. Board Treasurer, Anne Baker, is excited by Gina's contributions already. "We are delighted to welcome Gina Grange Joyce as DCC's new Operations Manager. Gina brings a wealth of experience in accounting and data management that has already had positive ramifications for DCC's finance, development, and human resource efforts."

In this period of change, especially within staff leadership, DCC's board is taking a moment for self-reflection. We are assessing next steps in our long-term goals and strategic planning under the guidance of an organizational development specialist. Later in the summer, when this evaluation is complete, DCC will initiate a search for a new Executive Director. We welcome suggestions for potential candidates from any of our donors, partners, and friends.



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Winter Wonders on The Land

Vining Lake Youth Ice Fishing Derby

After the initial date was postponed due to extremely cold conditions, 12 youth ventured out for the first-ever Vining Lake Youth Ice Fishing Derby on February 7th. Registration to participate was free for the two age divisions: 9 & under and 10 to 15. Youth 15 and under in Maine do not need a fishing license as long as they are accompanied by a licensed adult. An online sign-up made it easy for participants and those working the event.

The DCC crew arrived a little after 7 in the morning. Almost everyone who planned on trying their luck that day was already on the lake. The first few hours after sunrise can be the best time to catch Brook Trout, the target of the day. The longer your line is in the water, the better your chances of pulling in a fish. Some young anglers caught their first-ever fish through the ice, while others operated with experience. Everyone had a great day outdoors enjoying a traditional Maine winter activity.

Winter Family Fun Day

Winters in Downeast Maine can be unpredictable. It is never guaranteed that there will be enough snow to sled down a hill or build a snowman. However, this past winter was one of the most consistently snowy winters in recent history. For DCC's Winter Family Fun Day on a beautiful, sunny February 21st, the sledding hill and trails at Middle River Park were lush with snow. The first Frosty Feet Snowshow Run, led by Bold Coast Runners, saw 30 participants take to the trails. Our local 4-H and Maine DIF&W partners set up interactive tables in the newly crafted "Make Here Better" stage, and Cobscook Shores provided cross-country skis for youth and adults as well as basic lessons.

16 young adventurers took part in the custom cardboard sled race. The furthest distance was achieved by the four Dunham brothers in their classic toboggan design, and brother and sister duo Aerland and Caid Mottram won best design with their tugboat, the "Sea Lark".

Welcoming New Staff

Operations Manager Gina Grange Joyce

Gina joined Downeast Coastal Conservancy in March 2026 as Operations Manager. She combines her passion for Maine's natural environment with an extensive background in finance, strategic operations leadership, and administrative leadership. Her prior work has focused on strengthening organizational sustainability, improving systems and controls, and supporting mission-driven operations.

Born and raised in the rugged beauty of Maine, Gina has always had a deep appreciation for the outdoors. Whether exploring the coastline, hiking forest trails, or spending time on the water, Maine's natural landscape has shaped her love for adventure and community. She continues to embrace the lifestyle and environment she values most, rooted in the natural beauty and close-knit spirit of Downeast Maine.

Gina holds a Master's degree in Accountancy from St. Joseph's College and a Bachelor's degree in Business Management with a concentration in Accounting from the University of Maine at Machias. Now settled in Columbia, Maine, Gina enjoys life with her husband, Peter, and daughter, Gia, continuing to find inspiration in the state's scenic surroundings.



Gina & daughter Gia at DCC's Middle River Park eclipse viewing

Seasonal Steward Ginny Majka

To best maintain trails and manage conserved areas, DCC has expanded its stewardship program. Ginny Majka has been hired as DCC's first Seasonal Steward. She will be part of the DCC Stewardship team from mid-May through September.

Ginny grew up in Downeast Maine, with her roots in Washington County. A graduate of Washington Academy, she spent much of her childhood in Alexander and Whiting, where her connection to the natural world first took shape.

Ginny holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Planning and Policy from the University of Southern Maine. After completing two AmeriCorps terms in the Southeast, Ginny went on to work extensively with the National Park Service, including roles at Acadia National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, and most recently, at Baxter State Park.

Outside of work, Ginny spends her time working on creative projects, running a photography business, using analog cameras, cold plunging year-round, hiking, canoeing, and paddleboarding. Ginny is excited to contribute to conservation efforts and deepen her connection to the landscapes of Downeast Maine.



There's No Place Like Home

Like Judy Garland, we have long dreamed of a place, a building. A place in which this 38-year-long organization could put down roots. A place of security where we could create the tools needed to fulfill DCC's mission and work.

Finally, with the help of so many, we have reached that goal!

There's no place like home! This line speaks of a common and deep-seated yearning in poetry, in theater, in song. "Be it ever so humble" There is nothing fancy about this new home. It is humble, and functional. It serves our needs in space and light and warmth.

With sweat and hand tools, paint and volunteers, we are transforming a dull office into a cheery, welcoming space. There is still much to be done inside and out. We hope to be able to share it with all of you soon.

There is no place like home! This physical frame speaks of our confidence in who we are as an organization and in the stalwart support of our donors and members who stand with us. This home is a structure of promise through which we look to our collective future. I am excited as we share this uplifting work and the blessings of preserved land and water with our communities in Washington County, Maine.

With deep gratitude for all that you accomplish yesterday and tomorrow.

Robin Pinto, Board President

Operations Manager Gina Grange Joyce,
Board President Robin Pinto, and
Outreach Director Matt Kelley on the
deck at DCC's new office



Save The Date! This Summer's Events

June



Community Paddle
Orange River, Sat. 13th



Solstice Sunset Hike
Pigeon Hill, Sun. 21st

July



**Annual Celebration
& Summer Meeting**
Middle River Park,
Fri. 17th



Milbridge Days Table
Milbridge, Sat. 25th

August



**DCC Presents! Maine
Outdoor Film Festival**
Milbridge Theatre, Sat. 1st



Blueberry Festival Table
Machias, 15th & 16th

August Cont.



Vining Lake Paddle
Vining Lake Community
Preserve Sat. 22nd



Moss & Lichen Walk
Ingersoll Point Preserve
Sat. 29th

September



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

October



Pumpkin Glow
Mowry Beach Sat. Oct. 23rd

Scan the code and click on
["Upcoming Events"](#) to learn more
about scheduled events and register!

Check back regularly
as more events are
added.

Can't scan? Just search
["Downeast Coastal
Conservancy"](#)!



Thank You to Our 2025 Donors!

The generosity of all of our supporters is vital to conserving and maintaining unique areas and landscapes of Downeast Maine. DCC's board and staff are thankful for all of our donors.

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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.

Join Us!

3PM Friday, July 17
Middle River Park, Machias

Rain date July 18

Celebrating last years achievements and discussing future projects

Food - Drinks

Live music

**DCC Annual Celebration
& Summer Meeting**