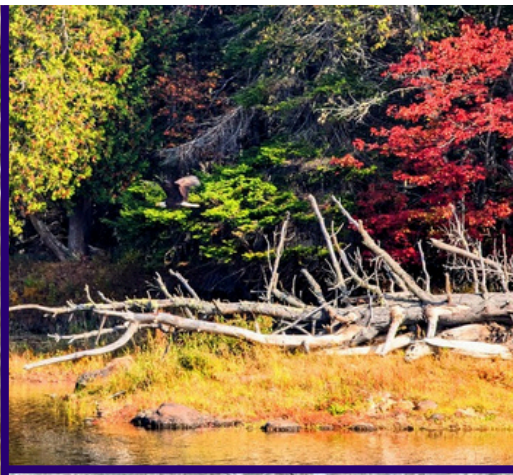
Downeast Coastal Conservancy

Landmarks

The Newsletter of Downeast Coastal Conservancy

Fall 2026







Caring For The Resource

Machias River Preserve is DCC's largest parcel of conserved land, 917 acres of contiguous riverfront and forest habitat, and 7.3 miles of trail. This property was acquired along with Middle River Park as part of the major Two Rivers Project in 2012 with the goal of protecting wild land and public access. Since then, Machias River Preserve has become beloved by locals and a draw for folks visiting the beautiful Downeast region.

With increased use and aging infrastructure, the need to focus stewardship efforts on this preserve was apparent. In 2024, a rerouted section of the Heritage Trail was identified to eliminate several bridges that washed out every spring with seasonal high flows. These bridges required extra maintenance time and were reaching the end of their lifespan as safe trail infrastructure.

Work began in 2025 with the first steps of the reroute being implemented by a Maine Conservation Corps trail crew. Also during this summer the Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS) Ancestral Lands Trail Crew assisted DCC with the replacement of bog bridging on the Money Island Trail.

In spring 2026, the entire 7.3 mile trail network was assessed. Foot bridges were rated for safety, drainage, soil compaction, and erosion issues were flagged, then high use areas were identified. This assessment transpired into months of trail work during the 2026 trail season.

The first half mile of the Heritage Trail, from the trailhead to the Machias River is a high use section and was first to receive significant improvements. Drainage features were built strategically by cutting in ditches and armoring their banks with large boulders. Material was brought in and used to build up the tread and provide a firmer, less erosive, durable foot path.

Next, stumps were grubbed out of the ground, pits and mounds were smoothed out, and bog bridging and check steps were installed on the rerouted section of trail which had been started in 2025. Lastly, three bridges on the Heritage Trail, and two bridges on the Munson Pitch Trail were replaced. Remaining bridges deep into the trail system will continue being replaced in future trail seasons.


3

DCC is appreciative of the WaYS Ancestral Lands Trail crew for their assistance with the ongoing improvements on these trails over the past two years, for the assessment help and equipment the local MCHT office offered to support this work, and volunteers. The public response to this work has been immediate and immensely positive. There is still much to be done at Machias River Preserve and other DCC trails as the stewarding of these lands never concludes.


1


2

Same sites fall 2026!


1

“Trail runners and other users of DCC's Machias River Preserve are so grateful for the trail improvements... The work on the bridging is exceptional...” - Jonathan Aretakis, Bad Little Trail Run participant & Downeast local


3


2

A Note From The Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a quick hello. Six weeks into my role as Executive Director, my main priority has been simple: to listen and learn from our partners, community members, staff, and board—and sneak out on a few visits to the lands you help us protect.

Looking back, it's deeply gratifying to know that I am now part of the community working to protect this special place—a landscape I first got to know and care about decades ago, a week or two at a time every few years. In the pages ahead, you'll see how DCC is focused on using best practices to preserve, restore, and provide access to these wild lands.

It's been great talking to some of you who support DCC in these first few weeks, and I look forward to meeting those I haven't yet. I'm excited to work alongside our dedicated staff, our hardworking Board, local communities, and you, as we continue this vital work together.

Best,

Robert Wood

Conservation Caught on Camera



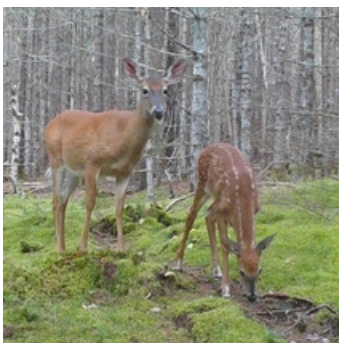


Game cameras are strategically placed to maintain an understanding of wildlife activity on DCC's conserved lands. These cameras are placed away from trails, in areas with signs of increased wildlife activity. Throughout the summer, these cameras captured many photos of DCC's efforts in action. These animals are on land that will continue to be wild, undeveloped, and a sanctuary allowing them to thrive.

Animals that were captured on camera and showcased in these photos include raccoon, bobcat, and whitetail deer. Thank you to our local Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Regional Biologist, Steve Dunham, for sharing pictures from state-operated duck data collection of Moose on DCC land! Other animals not shown include barred owl and coyote, among others.









Beaverdam Stream Habitat Enhancement







DCC Stewardship recently completed a habitat enhancement project in Beaverdam Stream at DCC's Beaverdam Stream Preserve in Wesley. The project was identified and pursued by Stewardship Director Steven Poulos and gained quick support from the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. Shortly after assessing stream conditions in 2025, DCC applied for a Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund grant with DMR as the sponsoring agency.

Beaverdam Stream was once used to float timber to downstream reaches. This practice, known as "log driving" was common in Maine, greater New England, and in western states from early European settlement to as late as 1976 (Kennebec River, ME). To increase the efficiency of moving timber, stream channels were straightened, side channels were blocked, in-stream habitat was removed, and dams were built. As a result, many streams lack habitat complexity that supports native fish, flora, and fauna.

Strategic Wood Addition is a method used to enhance stream habitat by reestablishing natural processes that have been reduced or eliminated. This process starts with an initial "keypiece" being dropped, limbed, a butt-end sharpened, and driven into the bank. More trees are added for weight and volume before a final "finisher" is felled on top of it all. Once felled, some trees sit right where they land, while others are moved using a grip hoist and positioned to be most effective. The resulting structures, over time, with high-flow events, will encourage water to access its floodplain and move and transport sediment. This dynamic movement of water, sediment, and organic matter creates optimal conditions for coldwater fish and the food they eat.

This project will be monitored over time to assess the effectiveness of added wood on stream morphology, habitat quality, and fish populations.



DCC has engaged an estimated 400 individuals through events and programming in 2026!

- Winter Family Fun Day at Middle River Park
- Vernal Pools at Vining Lake
- Reversing Falls Star Party
- Orange River Community Paddle & Hike
- Annual Celebration at Middle River Park
- Maine Outdoor Film Festival at Milbridge Theatre
- Vining Lake Paddle
- Moss & Lichen Workshop at Ingersoll Point Preserve
- 10th Annual Bad Little Trail Run at Machias River Preserve and Middle River Park

Estimations made based off of event registration and attendance records as of October 14, 2026


Vernal Pools


Maine Outdoor Film Festival


Orange River Community Paddle & Hike


Moss & Lichen Workshop

First Summer of The *Make Here Better* Stage

When Middle River Park was first acquired by DCC in 2012, 10 acres were set aside for "community". Since then, the grassy hill overlooking the Middle River in the heart of Machias has seen plenty of visitation, activity, and events. However, the initial promise of expanding the community value of those 10 acres had not seen much action.

Until now! This was the first summer of the *Make Here Better* stage in action. Middle River Park and the stage hosted:



Ribbon cutting marking the ceremonial beginning of the stage at DCC's Annual Celebration

Twelve Community Events!

- 8 Kitchen Concert Series events, 14 different artists/bands. Organized by the Town of Machias
- DCC's Annual Celebration
- Margaretta Days, organized by the Machias Historical Society
- Easter Egg Hunt led by American Legion Post 9
- Kite Flying Day led by Porter Memorial Library
- 3 other non-community-based events



The SwampWalkers performing a Kitchen Concert Series event

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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.

