



LAUNCHING INTO LEARNING LANDSCAPES

Supporting Land Access and Nature-Based Education in Local Schools

Mill Brook Preserve Bridge

Helping our community access the beautiful, natural spaces in our region has always been a core aspect of our mission. Two years ago, eager to expand our engagement with younger audiences, our staff travelled to California to learn about Feather River Land Trust's Learning Landscapes program — a model that *conserves* land adjacent to schools, *enhances* the land with trails and outdoor classrooms, and *supports* educators in having the confidence, skills, and resources for providing on-going, quality outdoor education.

Over the last two years, we have been developing our own Learning Landscapes program tailored to meet the needs of the schools in our community. The Searsport School District was among the first to partner with us. In July 2021, we preserved 28 acres of woodland, known as the Mill Brook Preserve, adjacent to the elementary, middle, and high school. We began collaborating with Searsport teachers and exploring ways to bring their classes outdoors as a regular part of the school day. Leah Trommer, our Community Engagement Coordinator, recounted her first memory out with a class:

"I watched the alternative education class at Searsport High School exit from heavy, metal doors and walk towards me; hesitant, mumbling about the cool fall air and the other things they could have been doing. We walked straight from the pavement, hopped onto the cross-country trail, crossed one road, then landed (five minutes later) on the Mill Brook preserve.

The students expressed mild interest as we hiked, but when we came to the brook, churning with the night's rain, banked with vibrant mossy rocks, and freshly equipped with a rugged and substantial bridge, they fell silent. 'Go for it! Take ten minutes, then we'll circle up and journal.' All they heard was 'go.' They were off, no longer high school seniors, carrying more weight of the world than I could fathom; they were children, scrambling down the bank, investigating the bridge, turning over rocks, dabbling their hands in the water; free and completely immersed.

The next week, they greeted me by name, asking to return to the bridge. By my third visit, they were leading the hike and I had to quicken my pace to keep up. This is the heart of the mission of Learning Landscapes — to provide young people with the chance to develop lasting connections with the natural world in support of individual, community, and ecological health."

To date, we have established relationships with seven schools (pre-K through grade 12) in Knox and Waldo counties. If you head out there yourself, you may see us scoping out land for an outdoor classroom, building trails and bridges with students, leading excursions, making art with natural materials, or simply recreating! Research supports that access to safe, outdoor spaces has a tremendous impact on children's academic and emotional development, leading to happier, healthier, and smarter students. We are excited to be a part of this educational journey and to continue growing Learning Landscapes in our community.

CONSERVATION IN THE DUCKTRAP AND ON MOUNT TUCK

Four families conserve forests after many years of careful stewardship



Aerial view of the Ducktrap River Watershed

At the end of a remarkable year for conservation in our service region, the Land Trust was able to complete two great projects, one in the Ducktrap River Watershed and one on Mount Tuck, thanks to the patience, generosity, and collaborative spirit of landowners with whom we worked. Both projects were the culmination of decades of patience and stewardship on the part of the landowners, who originally bought their respective properties with a desire to preserve them as open spaces. We are grateful to have worked with them, ensuring their vision for open landscapes is maintained forever. These were the final two projects of a great 12 months, during which the land trust closed on 14 projects and protected 654 acres.

Slab City Conservation Collaboration



Slab City Neighbors at closing

In December 2021, three Lincolnville families donated fifty-eight beautiful, forested acres near Black Brook that expand our Ducktrap River Preserve. Whitney and Tony Oppersdoff, Mark Lutz and Carol Arone, and Dominique and Landis Gabel were a part of a group of neighbors that originally purchased the property in 2004 to protect the land from development.

After stewarding the land for a number of years, they collectively decided to donate the land to Coastal Mountains Land Trust to ensure that it would remain undeveloped in perpetuity. The property contains a mixed coniferous forest, streams that drain into Black Brook, and an informal trail network. We are grateful for the group's foresight and generosity and are honored to take on the responsibility of caring for this special property.

Mount Tuck Addition



PHOTO CREDIT: JACOB GERRITSEN

Penobscot River from Mount Tuck Summit

Since 1980, Beth and Wayne Smith have cherished the 66 acres of land they have owned on Mount Tuck in Stockton Springs. After enjoying many years of recreation and personal stewardship of the property, they responded to the substantial progress of our recent Mount Tuck conservation efforts over the past several years by working with us to sell their land — bringing our Mount Tuck Preserve to a total of 217 acres and furthering our progress toward conserving the whole mountain for wildlife and community recreation. We permanently conserved the Smith's land in January 2022. Located at the head of Penobscot Bay, where Maine's second longest river meets its largest bay, this coastal mountain includes a summit overlooking scenic viewpoints to the east and south. Please consider supporting our work on Mount Tuck, so we can complete our planned conservation efforts and two-mile trail in the coming months for all to enjoy!



Beth and Wayne Smith

SPRING OPTIMISM

From the Director

I have always been an optimist — which is why, especially over these past two years, I have so valued being part of the team of members, volunteers, and staff that join together to further the work of this Land Trust. In the face of the pandemic and the series of crises our world has gone through, the Land Trust continues to be a great source of optimism — a place for people to make good things happen locally, like the conservation of a beautiful forest by a group of neighbors, the construction of new cedar kiosks by loyal volunteers, or the excitement of a group of school kids getting outdoors to explore a stream near their school.

Spring is an exciting time of change. As I watch for the re-emergence of the first leaves in the woods and the return of spring migrants to the sky, I am made even more optimistic by the many new ideas, projects, and people active at the Land Trust. Even as we celebrate our recent conservation and trail successes

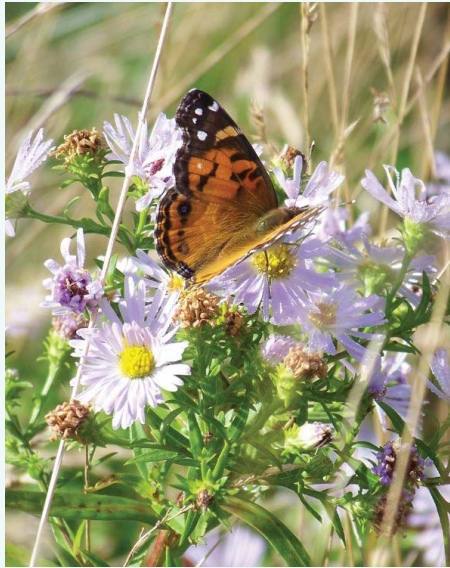


PHOTO CREDIT: BILL LOUGHRAN

on Ragged Mountain, Beech Hill, and Mt. Tuck, the organization continues to challenge itself to grow, to learn new things, and to ensure that our work involves our community in the broadest way possible. As you will read in this issue of *Landscapes*, the Land

Trust is actively reaching out to new communities, exemplified by the launch of our *Learning Landscapes* program with local schools, our engagement with the Wabanaki community through the First Light Initiative, and the expansion of our land conservation efforts into towns, such as Knox, where we are protecting land for the first time.

Working to conserve land for the community, forever, is a terrific act of optimism. As ever, you are invited to become even more involved with the Land Trust as your time and energy allows. Consider being a trail volunteer, serving on a committee or the Board, investing further in a specific project financially, or as an ambassador spreading the word about our work to others. Hope to see you soon!

Ian Stewart

PASSING THE BOARD CHAIR BATON

Dan Johnson elected as President of the Board

Strong Board leadership has been a hallmark of Coastal Mountains Land Trust since its earliest days. This past fall, Judy Wallingford, who served admirably for two and a half years throughout an extremely active period of land conservation and organizational growth, passed the leadership to Dan Johnson of Camden. Judy will continue to serve as an active member of the Board and ongoing advisor as our immediate past president. Dan, a former high school history teacher, began his volunteer service with the Land Trust fifteen years ago as a trail volunteer, hauling heavy 4x4 beams up Ragged Mountain. He has been a Board member since 2014, during which time he also served as the organization's treasurer.



Dan Johnson



Bud and Sonia Spalding

HONORING THE LEGACY OF BUD AND SONIA SPALDING

Irwin (Bud) and Sonia Spalding, long-time members of the Coastal Mountains Land Trust family, continue to be remembered and celebrated through our work in conservation, stewardship, and community engagement. Since the very beginning, including founding the Land Trust’s stewardship program in the late 1980s and serving on the Board from 1992–1998, Bud and Sonia volunteered their time and resources to protect and benefit the natural and human communities in our region. Now, through their bequest, the Land Trust continues to

benefit from their commitment. Known for their enthusiasm and stopping by to say, “Keep up the good work!”, their gift is incredibly meaningful and brings a smile to our team. It is our commitment to Bud and Sonia and other Summit Circle members to keep up the good work, *forever*.

If you are interested in becoming a Summit Circle member and learning more about planned gifts to ensure the Land Trust’s future, please visit www.coastalmountains.org/planned-giving or call Tempe at 207-236-7091.

MUDDY TRAILS

Best practices for spring recreation

Spring has sprung on the coast of Maine, and we get it that it isn’t always spring-like conditions. One day it dumps 6” of snow, the next it’s 55° and sunny, and the back and forth can really move soils around and cause damage to our trails. When the snow finally melts around town and at trailheads, it’s tempting to get outside and hope that the trail will be just as clear and dry. But experience has taught us that ice and frost can hang on late into April on shadier trails. And that middle elevation between the trailhead and the summit? It’s a muddy mess.

As the snow melts and the spring rains fall from the sky, the ground can only hold so much water. While walking around muddy areas may keep your feet dry, walking on the edges of trails beats down the vegetation, widens the trail, and causes more damage to both trail and environment. Trails that are over-saturated are vulnerable to long-

term damage from soil compaction and erosion with every footstep, making it harder for vegetation to grow and leaving rocks and roots exposed. Muddy trails aren’t the only erosion issue here on the coast. Erosion is also sped up from the historical layout of trails here in New England – the “old” way of trail design was getting to the top the quickest by heading straight up the hillside. We are working to build more sustainable trails that shed water and resist erosion. Trail stewards, many of whom are volunteers for the Land Trust, work hard to keep our trails in good shape.

When you go out, please help us take care of our local trails by being aware of local weather and respecting trail closures. Stick to lower elevations, south-facing slopes, and gravel trails, which tend to dry out earlier in the season. Most importantly, wear good boots and stay on the trail.



BETTER FOR MUD SEASON

Beech Hill Farm Road; Round the Mountain Trail; Belfast Rail Trail and Harbor Walk; Camden Hills State Park Multi-Use Trail; Hatchet Mountain; your neighborhood in-town walks

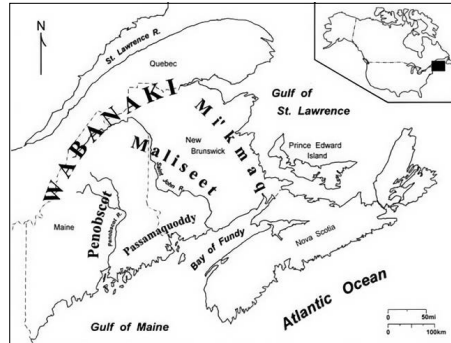
AVOID DURING MUD SEASON

Fernald’s Neck (preserve may be closed due to road conditions); Bald Mountain; Hosmer Brook Trail and Georges Highland Path on Ragged Mountain; McLellan-Poor Preserve Trail; Camden Hills State Park Carriage Road Trail

SOVEREIGNTY BILL SUPPORT

This spring, Coastal Mountains Land Trust submitted testimony to the Maine Legislature in support of LD 1626, *An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act*, otherwise referred to as the *Sovereignty Bill*.

As an organization, we have been participating in the First Light learning journey, a collaboration designed to build bridges between conservation organizations and Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac communities who seek to expand Wabanaki stewardship of land. In just a few hundred years since the Wabanaki tribes welcomed European settlers to these shores, the Wabanaki have lost 98% of their population, access to most land and waters, their ability to sustain themselves in traditional ways, and so much more.



Map by Stephen Bicknell, University of Maine

Our goal in participating in the First Light learning journey is to learn and listen for ways we can collaborate with local indigenous organizations to identify opportunities to support their interests in land stewardship and access.

Supporting tribal sovereignty in Maine is in line with our mission of conserving land for the benefit of the natural and human communities of the western Penobscot Bay region. We believe that restoring the Wabanaki tribes' ability to manage tribal lands, waters, and resources will benefit future generations of all Mainers. We also believe that the inherent right of Maine's Wabanaki tribes to govern themselves should be restored and put on equal footing with the more than 570 other tribes throughout the nation.

As we seek to continue to conserve, steward, and make land open and available for all people to enjoy, we will continue to learn about and more actively support the rights and voices of the indigenous peoples of Maine.

To learn more about the movement for tribal sovereignty, please visit the Wabanaki Alliance's website at wabanakialliance.com.

CEDAR SAWDUST & A JIG FOR EVERY OCCASION

Late last summer, stewardship staff purchased lumber from local sawyers including white pine boards from Lee Stover in Waldo and northern white cedar posts and shingles from CK Shingle in Liberty. The wood was for a couple of projects, the largest being the prefabrication of multiple kiosks to go up at some of our newly acquired preserves.

In early December, our Wednesday Volunteer Field Crew met for the first build session at the Land Trust's new stewardship barn on Beech Hill, located along the trail connecting to the Erickson Fields Preserve. The barn has proved its worth ten times over this winter. It has provided optimal gear storage for farm management and general stewardship activities, and offers a dry, well-lit space for a crew of volunteers and staff to craft the structures necessary for the stewardship of our lands.

The kiosk-building process was made much easier thanks to the many jigs (devices which hold pieces of work and guide the tools operating on it) and tools, either built or brought by Peter Barlow, a regular Wednesday Field Crew volunteer. Peter



(holding the saw above) came to the barn with a tote full of tools, guides, storyboards and jigs, some having seen years of use, others crafted for this specific project the week before. Thanks to Peter's arsenal of carpentry paraphernalia, we were able to cut and replicate tenons for the kiosk frame, slots for the backing boards, and rhombus-shaped pine for roof components, quickly and easily.

Peter has now done a few above-and-beyond volunteer projects with the Land

Trust and his quality of work is unwavering. Peter has reset stones in the historic Beech Nut building and built a watering system to ensure that the sod roof of the Beech Nut is well maintained in years of drought. The donation of expertise is one of the more valuable assets the Land Trust receives from the community. We have artists, engineers, mathematicians, carpenters, and many, many more experts in their craft that join our Wednesday Field Crew, and the projects we take on are undoubtedly bettered by their involvement.



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NEW FACE AT THE LAND TRUST

Tempe Landi, Development & Communications Coordinator



In January, Tempe Landi joined the Coastal Mountains Land Trust team as Development and Communications Coordinator. Tempe comes to the Land Trust having worked in a variety of fundraising capacities, most recently at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY. A native of New Jersey, Tempe attended William Smith College in Geneva, NY, and completed her master's degree at the University of Rochester.

Stepping into this role is especially meaningful to her as midcoast Maine is home to family and many close connections; she has a deep appreciation for the many trails and preserves protected by the Land Trust.

Tempe lives in Lincolnville with her husband, son, and golden retriever. She is responsible for the Land Trust's fundraising and communications efforts and will work with the community, staff, and Board to advance the Land Trust's mission.

Serving the communities of

Rockport, Camden, Hope, Lincolnville, Northport, Belfast, Belmont, Morrill, Waldo, Swanville, Brooks, Knox, Searsport, Stockton Springs, and Prospect

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LANDSCAPES