

A Wish To Preserve
 In his petition to the court, Collins stated that during "her lifetime, when she was of sound mind, in 1977 or 1978 [Mrs. Cutting] expressed to town officials a wish to preserve the upper levels of Beech Hill, where a landmark Norse 'hutte' is located." (See related letter on page 5.) Although Beech Hill has always been private property, the public has long con-

According to Gates, community concern over the future of Beech Hill was one of the primary reasons the land trust was formed. Incorporators of the trust were in touch with Collins early in 1986 regarding the possible sale of the property and how best to preserve open space for public access.

Gates said she hoped the easement "acts as a springboard for the Camden-Rockport community to begin to evaluate its current open space and to work towards increased preservation of the environment we now enjoy."

Trust Works To Save Beech Hill

by Sharon Goodspeed

With a late December closing date set for the sale of approximately 572 acres of land on Beech Hill in Rockport, the role of land trusts in preserving and protecting the open spaces left in Maine is becoming increasingly important.

Although the newly formed Camden-Rockport Land Trust is still awaiting tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, it has been instrumental in a behind-the-scenes attempt to save Beech Hill from development.

Spokesperson Polly Gates confirmed Tuesday that the group had taken "a major step forward for conservation in the town of Rockport" by securing 480 acres of Beech Hill as open space, blueberry fields and wildlife habitat.

Heyls Plan To Preserve Beech Hill The Way It Is

Heyl, who has summered in Camden and "has loved Beech Hill forever," said it has always been her dream to keep the property as it is.



A 40-YEAR LEGACY

The December 4, 1986 edition of The Camden Herald is a Land Trust treasure. Maybe it's the photo of the Beech Nut — looking just as timeless as it does today. Maybe it's the small mailing label addressed to Susan Alexander, our very first member and the namesake of our consecutive giving society. Or maybe it's reading about Grace Cutting and her "wish to preserve" alongside our partners at Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Jane Stetson (Heyl) who purchased the property so it could remain open to the community — a name that, 40 years later, appears again on our Board of Directors.

These newspaper clippings capture a pivotal moment — when people chose to protect Beech Hill

rather than see it developed, setting our organization in motion and preserving a place our community still cherishes and enjoys today. Acts of generosity and community spirit like this have made so much possible over the last 40 years.

FOOTNOTES

Partners referenced in newsletter clippings: Polly Gates, Vice President of the Camden-Rockport Land Trust (now Coastal Mountains Land Trust); Sam Collins, Attorney representing Grace Cutting; Grace Cutting, Former owner of Beech Hill; Jane Heyl (now Jane Stetson), Beech Hill conservation buyer who restored and stewarded the property with husband Bill Stetson until 2000, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, author of easement to be held by Camden-Rockport Land Trust.

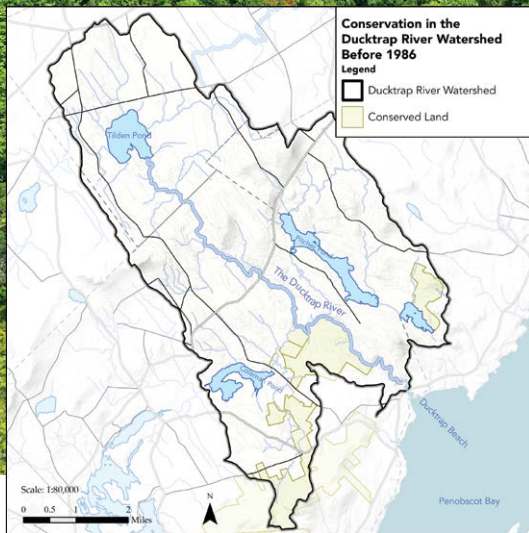




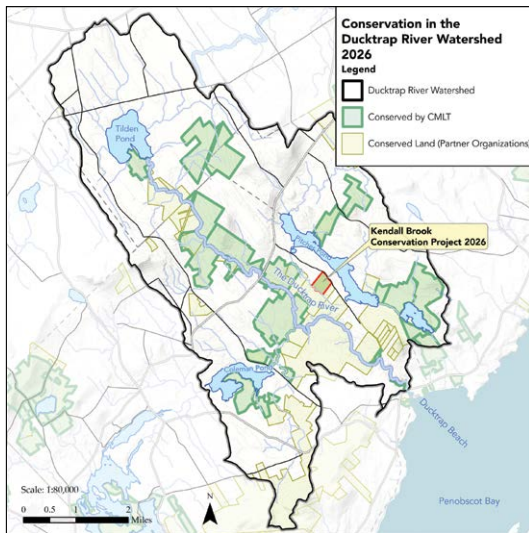
CREDIT: ERIC BURR

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE WATERSHED

Decades of partnership result in significant conservation in the Ducktrap



Conserved Land in Ducktrap Focus Area 1986



Conserved Land in Ducktrap Focus Area 2026

This spring, Coastal Mountains Land Trust acquired a beautiful 55-acre property in Lincolnville on Kendall Brook, one of the three main tributaries of the Ducktrap River.

For over 30 years, a coalition of 26 organizations, including Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Ducktrap Wildlife Preserve Inc., has worked to protect habitat for Atlantic Salmon by conserving land along the river and its three main tributaries. To date, over 85% of the river’s shoreline and over 5,500 acres of land have been conserved.

This most recent acquisition is one of a few remaining parcels the partner organizations have looked to conserve. It has 1,580 feet of frontage on Kendall Brook and abuts a Ducktrap Wildlife Inc. property, which is bounded by the Land Trust’s Ducktrap Preserve, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife land, and Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands property. The property has strong natural values, including Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat along its shore and a mixed-age coniferous upland forest to buffer the brook.

The purchase received support from a variety of sources, including two generous anonymous donors, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the Climate Resilience Conservation Fund. The Fund is supported by NOAA’s Climate Resilience Regional Challenge and administered by Maine Coast Heritage Trust in coordination with the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. The purchase was also made possible by a special wetland mitigation fund dedicated to land conservation in the Ducktrap watershed, which is overseen by the Land for Maine’s Future Board, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Maine Department of Transportation.

Looking at the map from 1986 beside one from today reveals just how much progress has been made in this special part of the Ducktrap watershed. We are grateful for the generous community support and grants from state and federal agencies that have made this change possible.

GROWING LANDS, GROWING RESPONSIBILITY

Ongoing and evolving stewardship protects land for generations



Work crew at Waldo Pound Preserve



Removing bog bridge at Fernalds Neck Preserve



Building bridge at Ducktrap Preserve



Installing kiosk at Head of Tide Preserve

When Beech Hill was conserved in 1986, the goal was simple: protect a special place from development. Conservation, however, is not a one-time act – it's an ongoing responsibility. Successful conservation requires thoughtful stewardship – the responsibility to manage and care for our lands.

The roots of our stewardship program trace back to volunteers Bud and Sonia Spalding, who organized a dedicated group of stewards to care for the land, monitor conservation easements, maintain boundaries, keep trails open, and build relationships and trust with neighbors.

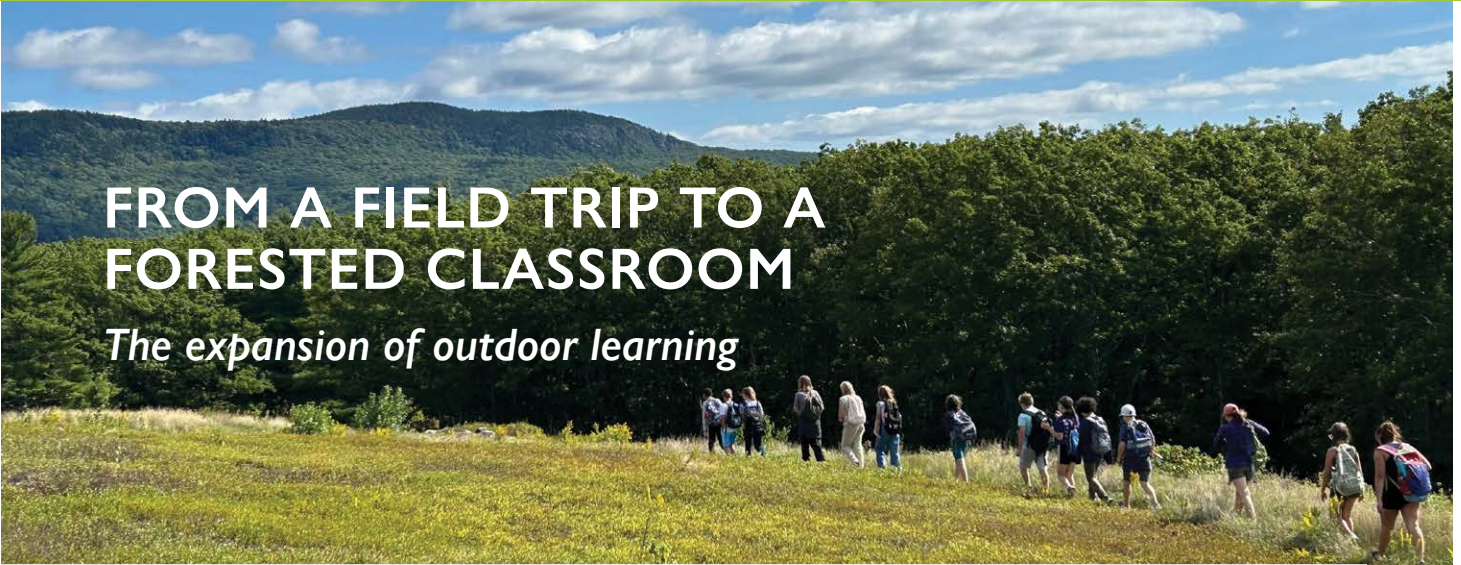
As we protected more land, our stewardship responsibilities grew right alongside it. In 1999, the Land Trust hired its first Conservation Lands Manager to oversee 2,000 conserved acres, marking a transition from an all-volunteer effort to a stewardship program led by both volunteers and paid staff. Today, three full-time stewardship staff, two seasonal employees, and a robust volunteer corps care for more than 13,500 acres of conserved land and over 55 miles of trail across 16 towns, from Prospect to Rockport.

Increased recreational use, invasive species, climate change, and the complexity of managing over 130 miles of preserve boundaries (and being a good neighbor to hundreds of property owners) now shape much of our stewardship work. Trail systems are designed with resilience in mind, using modern techniques like frequent grade reversals to reduce erosion and withstand heavy use. Early detection and rapid response efforts help address invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed and hemlock woolly adelgid, before they become widespread and costly to manage. Boundary monitoring has also evolved through the adoption of *Landscape*, a GPS-enabled data collection platform that supports accurate, long-term stewardship records.

While much has changed since 1986, the heart of our work has not. Stewardship remains a collective effort, carried forward by volunteers, staff, and partner organizations to care for land in ways that respect both nature and community. As we celebrate 40 years, we are grateful for all the people who have helped carry this work forward; from volunteers trudging through snow to clear fir saplings along the boundaries at Hurds Pond, to seasonal staff and Maine Conservation Corps building stone staircases up Bald Mountain in the heat of summer, and the dedicated staff who've worked here over the past 27 years. Together these ongoing efforts help keep conserved lands as welcoming places for people to connect with nature, while also protecting wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems.

FROM A FIELD TRIP TO A FORESTED CLASSROOM

The expansion of outdoor learning



Nature journaling on Bald Mountain Preserve

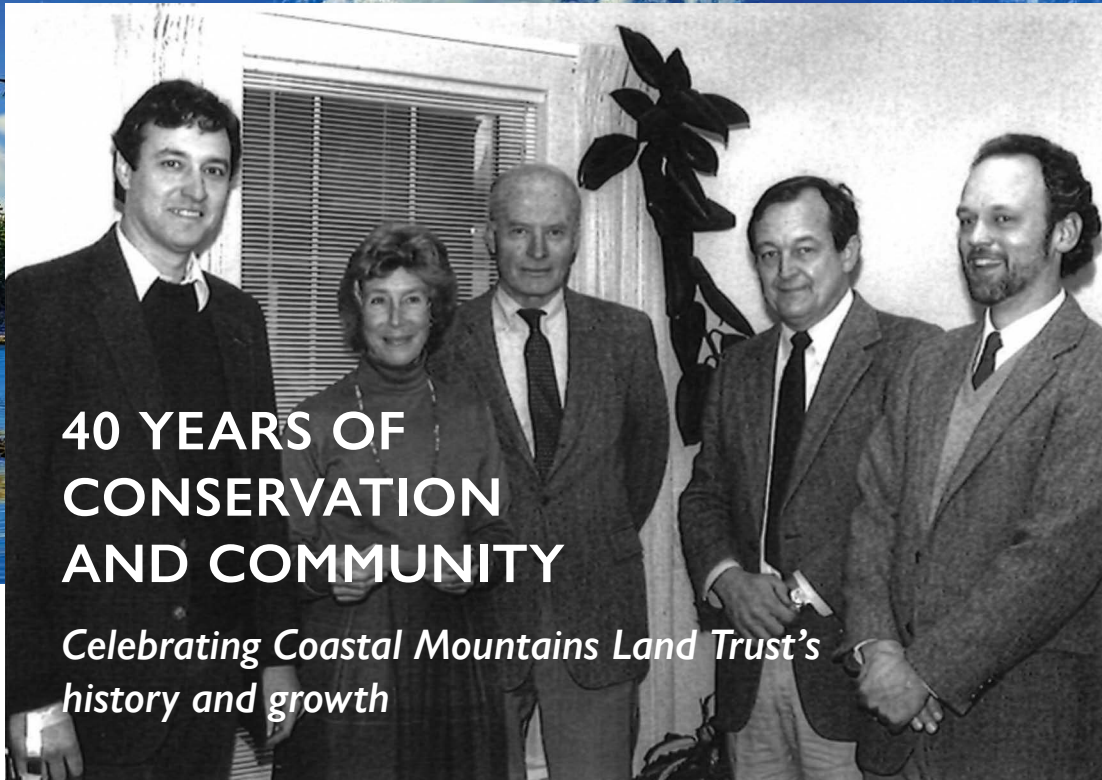
Connecting people with nature has always been an important part of Coastal Mountains Land Trust’s mission. By partnering with schools and creating access during the school day, we reduce barriers to connecting kids with the outdoors and create more equitable opportunities for every child to experience nature.

Observing Coastal Mountains Land Trust’s 40th anniversary gives us a moment to pause, look back, and reflect upon how the Land Trust’s work has been supporting the trajectory of change within our communities and our schools. In the world of outdoor learning, while each district and classroom is unique, there is an over-arching shift from a one-time field trip to a more consistent and integrated learning experience. This change is supported by the quiet, steady vision and work of organizations like the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, UMaine’s Tanglewood 4H Camp and Learning Center, Herring Gut Coastal Science Center, Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership, the Maine Math and Science

Alliance, and countless others who provide experiential professional development for educators and work within the classrooms. Coastal Mountains Land Trust joined this network of support using our strengths as a Land Trust to guide students on preserves and teach them about nature.

In 2021, the Land Trust adopted *Learning Landscapes*, modeled after Feather River Land Trust’s work in California, and took a deliberate step towards helping shift the culture of outdoor learning from “one-time” outdoor education field trips to everyday curriculum-integrated access to nature. Research shows that unique, immersive outdoor experiences are beneficial, but it’s consistent access to nature which helps increase children’s social-emotional and academic vibrancy. Today, the Land Trust has conserved two learning landscapes (land for outdoor learning adjacent to schools), supported the creation of three outdoor classrooms, and trained over 100 educators in providing outdoor learning opportunities for their students. We are thinking beyond our borders and working in tandem with other land trusts in the state, the Maine Environmental Educators Association, and Maine Early Childhood Outdoors, to form an environmental education coalition within the Maine Land Trust Network, sharing how land trusts can make an impact in this space. On a local scale, we envision a future where each educator who possesses the motivation to take their curriculum outside, has access to a learning landscape for *everyday* access to nature.

Building lasting relationships between people and the land is no longer seen as optional – it is essential. Through in-depth public programs, increased partnerships with schools, and collaborations with community organizations, the Land Trust is investing in the next generation, fostering a conservation ethic that will sustain these lands for decades to come.



40 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY

*Celebrating Coastal Mountains Land Trust's
history and growth*

CREDIT: TIM SHAW

Photo from the 1987 Courier-Gazette: Camden-Rockport Land Trust (CRLT) delivering a check for a conservation easement on Beech Hill. L-R: Willard Pease, attorney; Polly Gates, VP of CRLT; Peter Heimann, founding board member of CRLT; Robert Martin, President of CRLT; and Bruce Jacobson, Executive Director of Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

On September 5, 1986, Camden-Rockport Land Trust was officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization. Founded by a small group of local residents concerned about the future of Rockport's beloved Beech Hill, the organization was created to conserve, care for, and celebrate the natural places that shape and sustain the community.

In July 1987, the all-volunteer Land Trust accepted its first conservation easement, permanently protecting 572 acres surrounding Beech Hill. A year later, the donation that established the Hodson Preserve marked another milestone — evidence of a growing, shared commitment to conservation.

Four decades later, with a new name — Coastal Mountains Land Trust — the organization has grown into a professional, community-based land trust with a staff of ten, caring for more than 13,500 acres across 16 towns in the western Penobscot Bay region. Our preserves include many of the natural highlights of this area, and are managed to protect

wildlife habitat and biodiversity, while providing public access for recreation and opportunities for the public to visit, enjoy, and benefit from the lands we protect.

Even as our reach has expanded, the Land Trust remains grounded in collaboration and partnership, guided by the belief that meaningful conservation is strongest when people work together. 40 years of persistence, partnership, and community effort supporting our mission have created a legacy that continues to grow. As a thank you, we hope you will save the date of **Wednesday, August 12, 2026**, to join us for a special **40th Anniversary Celebration** as we look back with gratitude and forward with excitement! Once again, *thank you* for being an important part of our history and future.

Ian Stewart
Executive Director



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Setophaga coronata,
Yellow-rumped warbler

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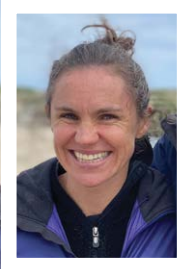


MEET OUR NEW STAFF



Tommy Diehl
Stewardship Coordinator

Tommy is responsible for managing our conservation easement program, stewarding preserves north and east of Belfast, and working with volunteers. Tommy earned his Masters of Natural Resources degree from Oregon State University in 2024. Previously he worked for the Maryland Park Service, the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust, and the Sebasticook Regional Land Trust. He is excited to bring his experience with trail work, volunteer coordination, and habitat restoration to the coastal mountains.



Rosie Hughes
Learning Landscapes and Public Programs Coordinator

Rosie will support Learning Landscapes and our community events. Born and raised in Belfast, she returned to the Midcoast during the pandemic to raise her young family after nearly 15 years working in international humanitarian aid and journalism worldwide. She's excited to bring her communication, community-building, and project management skills to the Land Trust and help connect people with the land that has long shaped her.

Serving the communities of
Belfast, Belmont, Brooks, Camden, Hope, Knox, Lincolnville, Monroe, Morrill, Northport, Prospect, Rockport, Searsport, Stockton Springs, Swanville, and Waldo

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