

Maine Heritage

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

FALL 2013



Strengthening Local Ties to the Land

MAJOR SUPPORT FROM MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST ENABLED HARPSWELL HERITAGE LAND TRUST TO CONSERVE 16 SHORELINE ACRES ON WHITE ISLAND THAT DAYTIME VISITORS CAN ENJOY.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust routinely helps local land trusts complete conservation projects that they could not otherwise accomplish. In addition to advancing their own land protection projects, MCHT staff members assist local trusts in a variety of ways such as landowner negotiations, fundraising and stewardship planning. Recent local partnerships have assured permanent public access to beautiful coastal settings, as the following examples demonstrate.

WHITE ISLAND, HARPSWELL

Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) now owns and manages a preserve at the southern end of White Island, a half-mile east of the public boat launch at Mere Point. MCHT Project Manager Keith Fletcher stepped in to help HHLT (which was temporarily short-staffed) and negotiated a purchase agreement with the landowners. MCHT helped write a successful U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Wetlands Grant that served as the project's primary funding source, supplemented by a modest contribution from MCHT and HHLT funds.

In addition to protecting important bird habitat, the new preserve

includes 3,200 feet of shoreline with pocket coves where visitors can explore and picnic, looking out to protected shoreline on Birch Island. Judy Marsh, co-owner of Paul's Marina on Mere Point, observes that "public access is key. It's great that we've got one more place for folks to go, especially with increased activity on the bay coming from the State boat ramp."

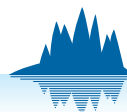
BIG TIP TOE MOUNTAIN, VINALHAVEN

What began as a small park is now a more appealing destination, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Vinalhaven Land Trust (VLT) and MCHT. After a private 40-acre tract on Big Tip Toe

Mountain was listed for sale, MCHT helped negotiate its purchase, paid for the property appraisal, and brought to the project \$100,000 in grant funding through The Pew Charitable Trusts.

"I think this project is great for the town," reflects Vinalhaven Town Manager Marjorie Stratton. "It's a nice addition to the existing town park and opens up an area that people already assumed was town-owned. Now people can continue walking up Big Tip Toe Mountain to enjoy the views." With a trail expansion planned by VLT, visitors will gain additional hiking opportunities stretching down to the Fox Island Thorofare shoreline.

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Maine Coast Heritage Trust
A Statewide Land Conservation Organization



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN by Tim Glidden

Finding Your Place

To be deeply rooted in a place that has meaning is perhaps the best gift a child can have. If that place has beauty and a feeling of permanence it may suggest to him unawares that sense of identity with this physical earth which is the humblest and happiest of life's intuitions.

— Christopher Morley

That quote, which I shared with some of you at a summer MCHT event, captures the enduring connection with the land that is central to our conservation work. Many of us trace our own efforts in this field back to childhood experiences of being “deeply rooted” in a beloved natural setting.

Yet fewer children today enjoy those experiences, as our keynote speaker Cheryl Charles observed at the Maine Land Conservation Conference last May. Young people in this country now average 55 hours a week with electronic media and rarely have opportunities for outdoor explorations.

The Trust's programs and preserves counter this trend, helping young people, in Charles' words, “learn to love the living world.” We saw that dynamic in action recently when several dedicated teachers brought 90 ninth-graders from Lewiston High School to visit our Malaga Island Preserve off Phippsburg. Their studies that day centered



KATHY MARRPAT



RICH KNOX

THROUGH MCHT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, RANGING FROM HALF A DAY TO HALF A YEAR, YOUNG PEOPLE IN MAINE ARE GETTING VIVID EXPERIENCES OF THE NATURAL WORLD.

on the island's troubled racial history, but their experience of place proved equally powerful for students—many of whom had never set foot on a boat or island before.

Two groups of high school students had longer weekend stays on our Saddleback Island Preserve this year, thanks to a partnership with the nonprofit Teens to Trails. One student who participated in the kayaking weekend at Saddleback described her time there as “incredible... it was so fun. I'd never been before and it was even better than I expected. I want to do it again, as much as I can.”

Longer-term Trust programs, like Teen Ag Crew and Summer Stewardship work, can prove even more transformative for participants. Courtney Gautreau, a high school student who worked full-time this summer at MCHT's Erickson Fields Preserve, spoke eloquently about how that experience of the land transformed her worldview:

“Since being on Teen Ag Crew, I have noticed that I listen more to things changing and evolving around me. I've gotten more aware of my surroundings, like hearing birds. I never used to hear birds... I have gained a lot of confidence, and I have found my place... I see myself as an advocate for other teenagers in the community, and as an advocate for farming... [Now] kids in my school are able to eat fresh foods they don't get at home that I've helped grow and provide.”

With the number of Trust preserves and outreach programs growing steadily, we are hearing more of these heartfelt testimonials from young people. They are poignant reminders that even in this electronic age, the land has not lost its capacity to touch our hearts and shape our destinies.



BRENDA WEIS

THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH A LOCAL OUTFITTER AND TEENS TO TRAILS, MCHT INVITED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO MCHT'S SADDLEBACK ISLAND PRESERVE FOR TWO WEEKEND VISITS THIS YEAR.

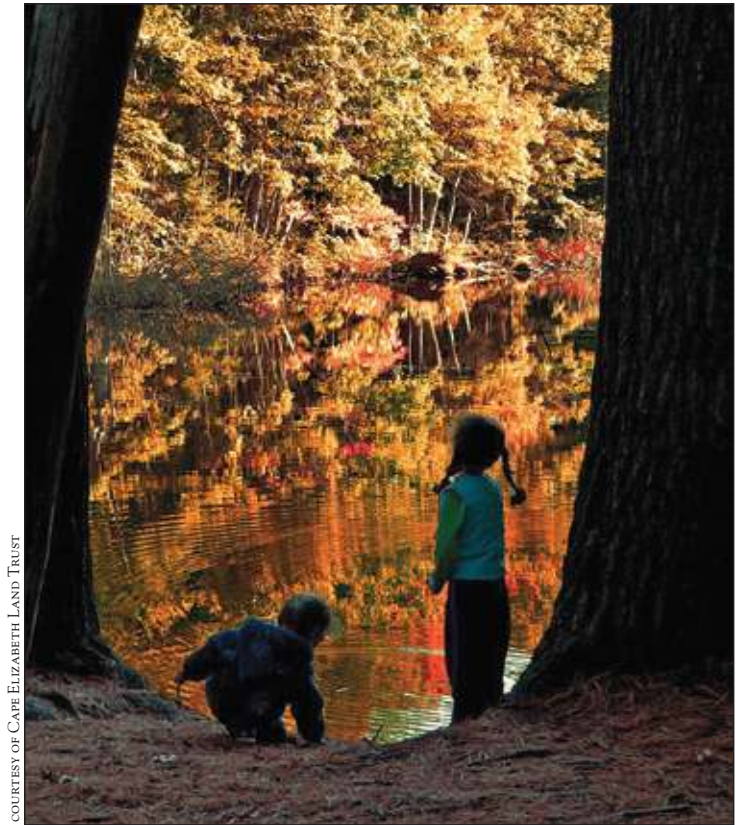
Strengthening Local Ties to the Land

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ROBINSON WOODS, CAPE ELIZABETH

A popular community preserve nearly doubled in size to 146 acres, thanks to the generosity of the land donors and a strong alliance between MCHT and Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT). First established in 2003, CELT's Robinson Woods preserve encompasses streams, a marsh and pond, open fields, rocky oceanfront and mature woodlands (with trees dating back three centuries). Community members routinely walk on preserve trails and students enjoy school programs there.

The Robinson family, longtime MCHT supporters, donated both parcels to CELT but wanted MCHT to hold the conservation easements. "We love to have the participation of MCHT," says CELT Executive Director Chris Franklin. "They exemplify best practices in the field and help us look at things in a more comprehensive way: they've helped on everything from protection and stewardship issues to legal advice. We go to them with questions on lots of our projects as they are such a resource."



COURTESY OF CAPE ELIZABETH LAND TRUST

MCHT SUPPORTED CAPE ELIZABETH LAND TRUST IN NEGOTIATING TWO LAND GIFTS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN INVALUABLE COMMUNITY RESOURCE.

Complementary Forces for Conservation

When Suzanne McGinn and her family moved to Cape Elizabeth from the Midwest a decade ago, she was impressed by the rural landscapes and the natural beauty of its land trust preserves. She and her family spent many enjoyable hours exploring outdoors, particularly at Robinson Woods (see cover story).

When her children entered school, McGinn realized there were no programs linking the kids to these outdoor resources. She joined the board of Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT) and began co-chairing its Education Committee (a role she held for nine years before being termed off earlier this fall). The Committee has successfully launched several programs in the schools that enhance the curricula and get students out to learn and work on preserves.



SUZANNE MCGINN

NEEL MCGINN

As McGinn became more engaged in CELT's educational programs, she learned more about the work of Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Attending MCHT's Maine Land Conservation Conference several times broadened her perspective: "I began to see how valuable to our state all of what MCHT offers is," she reflects. "For the whole land trust community, they're a good teacher."

MCHT holds easements on CELT's Robinson Woods Preserve, and has collaborated with CELT on numerous projects. It's helpful, McGinn says, to have that "perfect complement to local work operating at the statewide level."

Meeting and talking with MCHT staff members reinforced for McGinn the "impressive scope of MCHT's work. The more I learned," she says, "the greater my appreciation was and the stronger my support."

Erickson Fields, Rockport



KATHY MARRIAT

MCHT's ERICKSON FIELDS PRESERVE, BEST KNOWN TO DATE FOR ITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS, WILL SOON HAVE A TRAIL SYSTEM FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ENJOY.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust's 93-acre Erickson Fields Preserve is an increasingly important resource for agricultural education and food production in the midcoast. MCHT acquired Erickson Fields in 2007, with strong community support, to protect its farming legacy and prime agricultural soils. Located along a gateway road into Rockport, the property had been farmed for more than 200 years by the Erickson and Wheaton families.

MCHT's Aldermere Farm had

hayed the land and grazed cattle on the property for years, but conserving it allowed the Trust to pursue a vision that integrated the community into the land's agricultural use. MCHT soon established garden beds used by local residents for vegetable and flower growing. Trust staff actively support youth gardening activities at Erickson Fields, working collaboratively

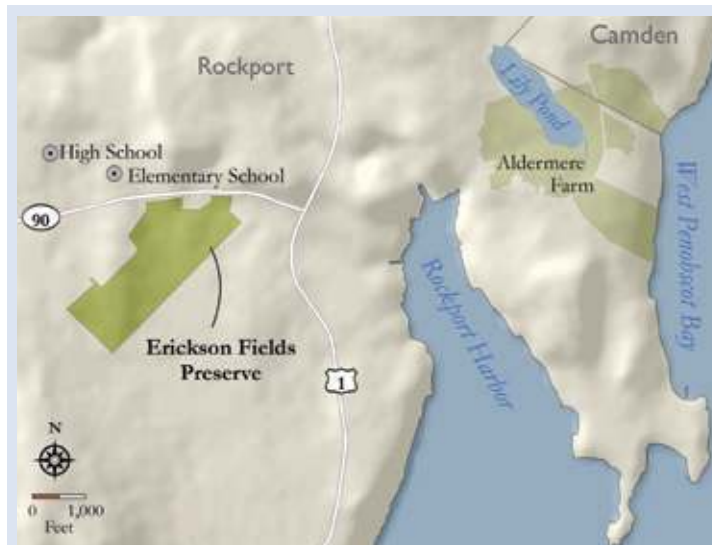
with local schools, Youthlinks, and Cooperative Extension (Kids Can Grow). "These programs help ensure that young people have access to farmland, understand how food grows, and appreciate the many benefits of conserved land," explains Aldermere Farm Program Manager Sarah Post.

In 2010, MCHT launched a more ambitious model of community farming, creating a social entrepreneurial "Teen Ag" program that employs high-school students full-time in summer and part-time in spring and fall—planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting more than 7,000 pounds of row crops for schools, restaurants, a senior living community, and food banks in midcoast Maine.

"While continuing to be a production hub for local food, Erickson Fields will soon offer a new fitness trail to help community members maintain a healthy lifestyle," explains Aldermere Farm General Manager Ron Howard. MCHT's Trail Crew began work this summer on a gently graded 1.5-mile loop trail that accommodates two people walking or jogging side-by-side. Cross-country teams at Camden Hills Regional High School, situated just a half-mile from the preserve, will use the trail (which is expected to open in 2014).



MCHT



DIRECTIONS:

Erickson Fields Preserve lies on the south side of West Street (Route 90) in Rockport, a half-mile west of Route One.

CHRISTINA EPPERSON

Caring for MCHT's Islands

If you've ever been out on an island preserve enjoying a gorgeous summer day, you may have fantasized about having work that took you to these settings routinely—like a regional steward job with Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Trust stewards readily acknowledge that there can be some story-book days that don't feel like work, but maintaining MCHT's numerous and varied island preserves (which now total 64) is far more demanding than most people realize.

The roles and responsibilities of each steward vary markedly, reflecting the area geography. Regional steward Terry Towne works extensively on two vast islands—Marshall and Frenchboro—that typically require a four-hour round-trip from the office. “If you've got four hours invested in travel,” Towne notes, “you're not going to work four hours and call it a day.” He typically works at least eight hours on islands, making for a 12-plus-hour day by the time he's ashore.



Two Trust stewards use larger boats, but others must rely on smaller skiffs and even kayaks. Adaptability is key, notes Deirdre Whitehead, a regional steward downeast: “I can check forecasts and radar and leave from a town where it's clear only to find—after an hour or more of driving—that the peninsula I planned to depart from is shrouded in fog and I can't paddle out.” Whitehead's flexibility with travel ex-



AMONG THE MANY TRANSPORT CHALLENGES THEY FACE, MCHT'S REGIONAL STEWARDS OCCASIONALLY NEED TO REMOVE LARGE VOLUMES OF ISLAND DEBRIS. TRUST STEWARDS RECEIVE ADVANCE PERMISSION FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES (MARINE PATROL) FOR CLEANUPS INVOLVING DERELICT FISHING GEAR (WHICH THE LAW ORDINARILY PROHIBITS HANDLING).

tends to sharing boats with sheep being transported to Flat and Nash islands.

Even when weather accommodates, there is the challenge of hauling materials. Since few island preserves have docks, supplies often get transferred from boat to dinghy and from dinghy to shore before being hauled to the job site—which can be a mile or more from the landing over rough terrain. Bog bridging can be a particular challenge, Towne says, noting that there's nearly half a mile of bog bridging on Marshall Island alone.

Stewards plan on deliberate redundancy with tools and equipment. When a tractor goes out to Marshall Island for mowing, a second tractor is on board in case the first has mechanical trouble. “If you're paying \$2,000 roundtrip for a 5-hour landing craft trip,” Towne notes, “you better make sure you can get the job done.”

Beyond what is hauled to islands for repairs or construction, there is the challenge of hauling off unwanted debris—such as fallen-down buildings and

derelict fishing gear. Regional steward Douglas McMullin has had to contend with several large abandoned floats, and Towne orchestrated a cleanup on Frenchboro that filled two barges.

Even transporting people to the islands can be tricky—with multiple dinghy shuttles, often in choppy conditions. When the island visitors are paid professionals, there's added pressure on regional stewards to make every minute count. Yet efficiency can be hard to achieve with all the dynamic variables involved. “When you're up against tides, currents, fog, wind, rocks and imperfect engines, what might have seemed like a routine task on the mainland can become a taxing, logistical feat,” observes regional steward Amanda Devine. “Fortunately, those flawless sunny days when it's great being a steward help carry you through the inevitable times when the tide is ebbing, the wind picking up, the engine is not cooperating, and your lunch got left behind at the boat launch.”

MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

is dedicated to protecting land that is essential to the character of Maine, its coastline and islands in particular.

Since 1970, more than 139,000 acres have been permanently protected, including more than 300 entire coastal islands. MCHT provides conservation advisory services free of charge to landowners, local land trusts and state and community officials. A membership organization, MCHT welcomes your support and inquiries.

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STAFF NEWS

Nicky Blanchard is MCHT's new Director of Development—overseeing efforts to raise more than \$6 million annually to conserve and care for Maine's coast. In her new role, Nicky will draw on her experience in non-profit management and higher education, and her knowledge of MCHT gained over the past three years (part of which she spent as Interim Director of Development). MCHT staff and board greatly appreciate her persistence, creativity and leadership.



MCHT wishes **Heather Halsey** great success in her new work with the agricultural program of Kennebec Valley Community College. During her three years as MCHT's Community Programs Manager (based at Aldermere Farm and Erickson Fields), Heather worked tirelessly to forge many new and successful community connections at local and regional levels.

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Keep current on all the Trust's activities through our website, mcht.org, which offers preserve information, trip sign-ups and more. On our home page, you can sign up for **e-mail updates** that offer advanced notice of upcoming activities and breaking news on land protection progress. You can also like our **Facebook** page and follow us on **Twitter** for more frequent updates.