



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

A healthier, more resilient Maine coast

Thank you for supporting conservation of the Maine coast in 2023.

This coast of islands, rocky shorelines, forests, wetlands, winding rivers, and close-knit communities make it unlike any other in the world. MCHT's founders understood this when they formed Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 1970 and sought to protect what makes Maine such a vital and unique place.

Today, the impacts of climate change—rising sea levels, more frequent and damaging storms, species struggling to adapt—provide regular reminders of the importance of protecting healthy ecosystems.

Conserving and restoring lands and waters and the habitats they sustain is our strongest natural defense against climate change. This is at the heart of what we do at MCHT—and our work would not be possible without the collaboration of our many partners and your ongoing support.

In 2023, your donation helped us to build on 54 years of conservation work to protect and restore vital lands and ecosystems. Read on to learn about some of the highlights from the past year. Completed projects resulted in protected watersheds and marshes, new island and mainland preserves and trails for people to explore, resources and networking opportunities for land trusts across the state, and so much more.

Thank you for joining us in this mission. Your support enables us to make this important work possible for Maine and all who care about this very special place.

With great appreciation,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom".

Tom Armstrong, *Chair of the Board*



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate".

Kate Stookey, *President and CEO*





2. Donors gave to support construction of a new barn and visitor center at Aldermere Farm, which is part of the recently completed \$4.4 million campaign to make this preserve, and nearby Erickson Fields, safer, more efficient, and more accessible community assets in the coming decades.



3. MCHT stewards Kyle Winslow and Frank Wilson constructed trails at Meserve Head in Machias. We also installed a new parking lot and welcomed community members at an evening meet-and-greet hosted in partnership with the AmeriCorps programs of Goodwill Northern New England.



6. We finished a project to stabilize the Stone Barn Farm in Bar Harbor, replace the roof and roof bracing, and reconstruct the rear portion of the barn (though it looks nearly the same!). In coming years, we will continue to make important improvements to the land and buildings to increase accessibility and make the Stone Barn Farm preserve an even better community asset.



7. A workshop led by the Ash Protection Collaboration Across Wabanakik was part of the Maine Land Conservation Conference. Coordinated by MCHT, the conference offered virtual workshops and an in-person, day-long event gathering 225 people to engage on topics ranging from climate change to "fearless conservation." This is part of MCHT's work to support and guide Maine's broad conservation community, including the 80 land trusts working throughout the state.



8. Malaga Island, managed by MCHT as a preserve open to the public since 2001, was listed to the National Register of Historic Places. The 42-acre island in Phippsburg was home to a mixed-race fishing community forcibly removed by the state of Maine in 1912. Over the past several years, MCHT staff has been working with descendants of the islanders and other partners to apply for this designation. The image here was taken during a gathering on the island in 2009, around the time when the island became a site on the Maine Freedom Trail.

Cover: We officially acquired and opened an 82-acre preserve of fields, forest, and marsh in Yarmouth, protecting important habitat and expanding opportunities for people to get outside. Marshes are home to countless species, protect communities from flooding and weather-related damage, and sequester carbon—making them a conservation priority in a changing climate.

1. (previous page): A collaboration with the town of Cutler protected 4.4 shorefront acres for a future town park, increased public access to Cutler Harbor for recreation and commercial fishing, and secured access to MCHT's Western Head Preserve. In the coming months and years, we will be developing a plan to improve access and parking.

9. (right): Biddeford Pool Land Trust and Maine Coast Heritage Trust joined together to protect 23 acres of fine sand beach, sand dunes, and freshwater wetlands home to herons, egrets, and Atlantic piping plovers.





4. In August, we joined with volunteers on Marshall Island to collect, bag, remove, and recycle well over a ton of debris in a single day. This kind of clean-up work is endless, regularly undertaken by stewards, partners, and volunteers on all the preserves we care for.



5. As of 2023, Sheep Island is one of four islands off Casco Passage in Blue Hill Bay owned and cared for by MCHT. We look forward to welcoming visitors on Sheep and other publicly accessible island preserves within this special archipelago!



10. In 2023, Joe Taft and other MCHT stewards monitored and reported on the over 300 conservation easements that MCHT holds. These legal agreements between landowners and MCHT limit development and preserve ecological and community values of land—and they're a critical tool used to accomplish conservation goals. Easements make up around 50% of our conservation holdings (the 45,095 acres we're responsible for monitoring and caring for).



11. At Old Pond Preserve in Hancock, we're working with restoration specialists to improve the functionality of the marsh in one of the first restoration projects of its kind in Maine. As part of our Marshes for Tomorrow Initiative, an effort to save this critical habitat in a changing climate, we're consulting partners and sharing what we learn with others caring for marshes. MCHT steward Tatia Bauer, pictured here, presented on this work with her colleague Bob DeForrest (MCHT) and Sara Williams (Downeast Salmon Federation), at Rally, the Land Trust Alliance's annual gathering.

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Your impact in 2023

Everything you read about here is possible thanks to you and others giving to conserve the places and natural systems Maine communities love and depend upon. Your 2023 donation helped protect habitat for wildlife, build the coast's resilience in a changing climate, and foster connections among the state's 80+ land trusts and other partners working together to make sure all people in Maine have access to land and water. Thank you!

Learn more about your impact at mcht.org/2023-impact.

The maps on the following three pages span the entire coast of Maine and showcase some of the work made possible thanks to donor support.

● **New places** conserved in 2023

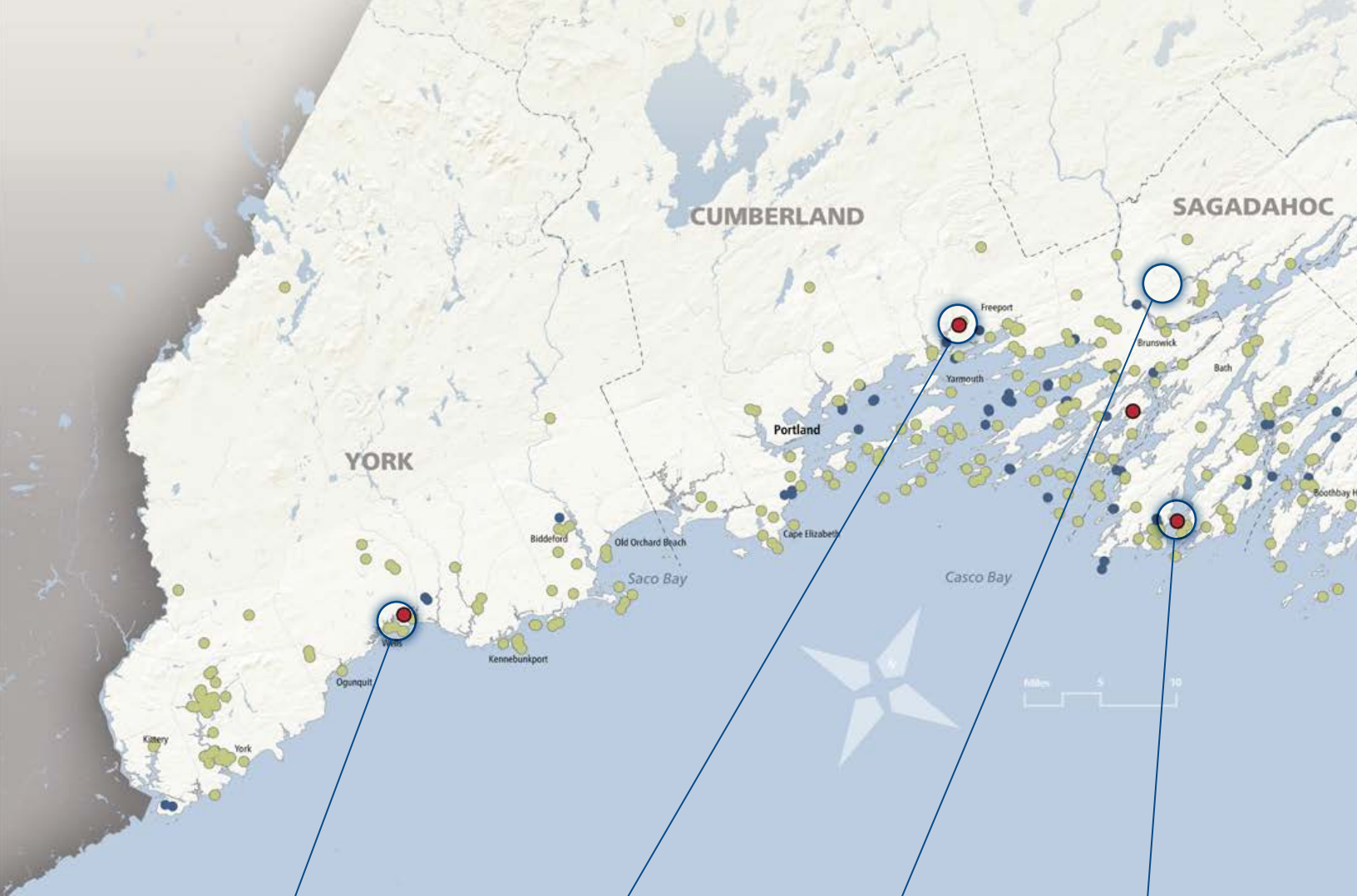
The **17** new places conserved in 2023 comprise a total of **1,253** acres (that's about the size of the total land acreage of Portland) and include **13.5** miles of shoreline (that's the distance from Rockland to Lincolnville).

● **Lands cared for** in 2023

Our stewardship staff monitored and cared for a total of **45,095** acres (that's about the size of Deer Isle and Stonington combined), including maintaining over **100** miles of trail (that's about the distance from Brunswick to Bangor).

● **Partnership projects** from 1970 – 2022

In addition to conserved land under our care, MCHT has worked with partners to conserve hundreds of places throughout Maine. In 2023, **10** of the 17 new places conserved were partnership projects.



Wells

Chloe March of Hampden, Maine worked with Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve in 2023 on projects inventorying species, researching and removing invasive species, and assisting in research and data collection.

Supported **11** conservation interns working for land trusts throughout the state.



Yarmouth

At Cousins River Fields and Marsh, we added over a quarter-mile of hardened, wide trail and other infrastructure to support accessible community use, including a new parking lot, signage, and picnic benches.

Built nearly **6** miles of new trail and maintained over **105** miles of trail and **50** campsites across the coast.



Brunswick

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust was one of ten land trusts across Maine awarded funding through the L.L.Bean Maine Land Trust Grant Program administered by MCHT. The \$10,000 they received will complete a long-awaited trail re-route at the Cathance River Nature Preserve.

Distributed **\$65,000** to **10** land trusts throughout the state through the L.L.Bean re-grant program.



Phippsburg

In Phippsburg, we worked with a generous landowner to conserve an access site for local clambers and diggers.

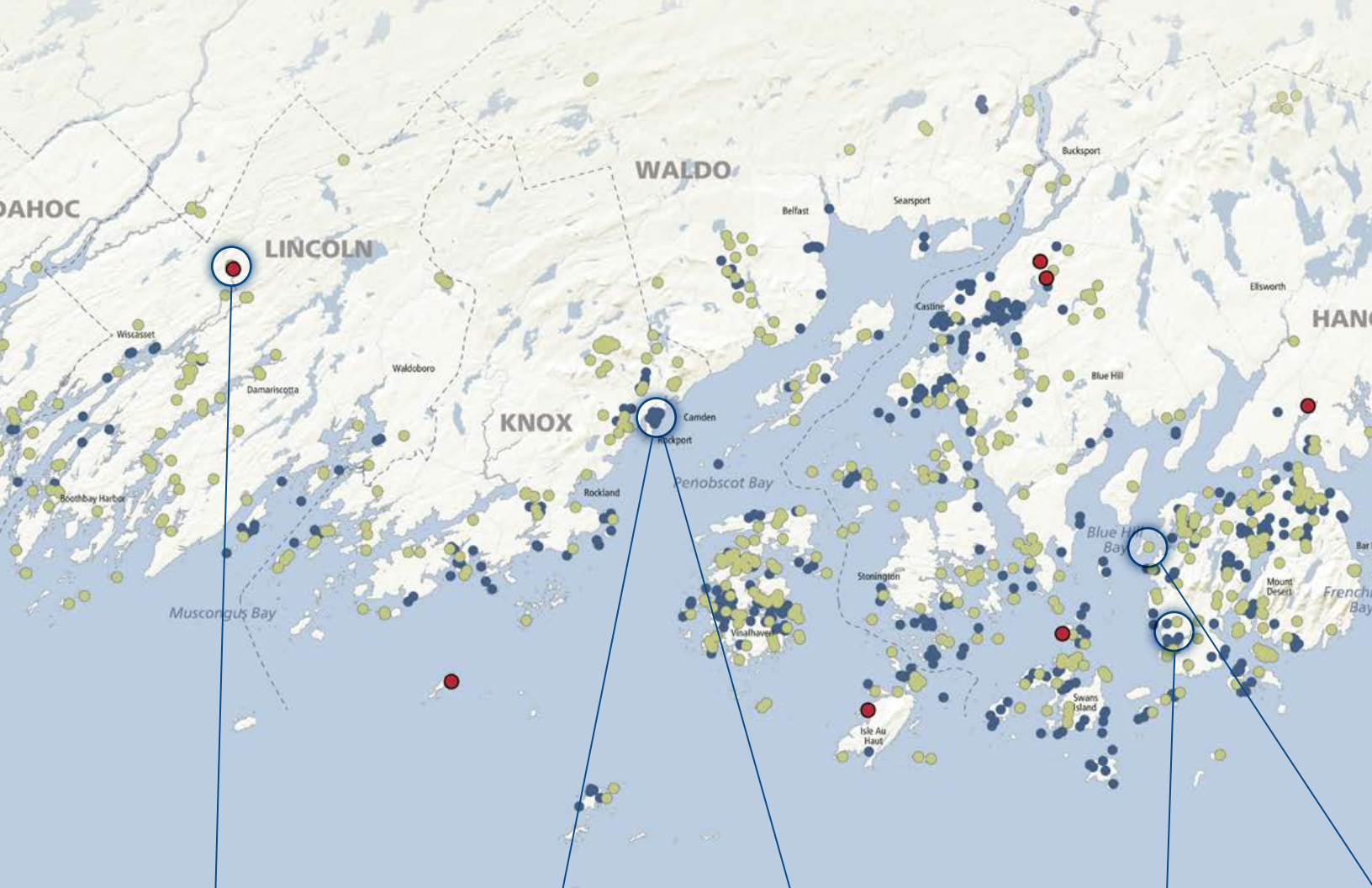
Added **6** new MCHT preserves and expanded **2** existing preserves.



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Alna

We contributed to a Midcoast Conservancy project protecting 12 acres on the Sheepscot River. Protecting and restoring coastal rivers helps build resilience in a changing climate and has an outsized impact on the health of the Gulf of Maine.

Completed **4** projects to advance our Rivers Initiative.



Rockport

At Erickson Fields in Rockport, we worked with partner organizations, volunteers, and members of our Teen Ag Program to grow and distribute fresh vegetables in the Midcoast to increase food access for Mainers in need.

Donated over **14,000** pounds of fresh produce from Erickson Fields and **2,500** pounds of hamburger from Aldermere Farm.



Rockport

Mama Satin cares for her little one after giving birth. At Aldermere Farm Preserve, a new barn and visitor center now houses the world-class herd of Belted Galloway cattle.

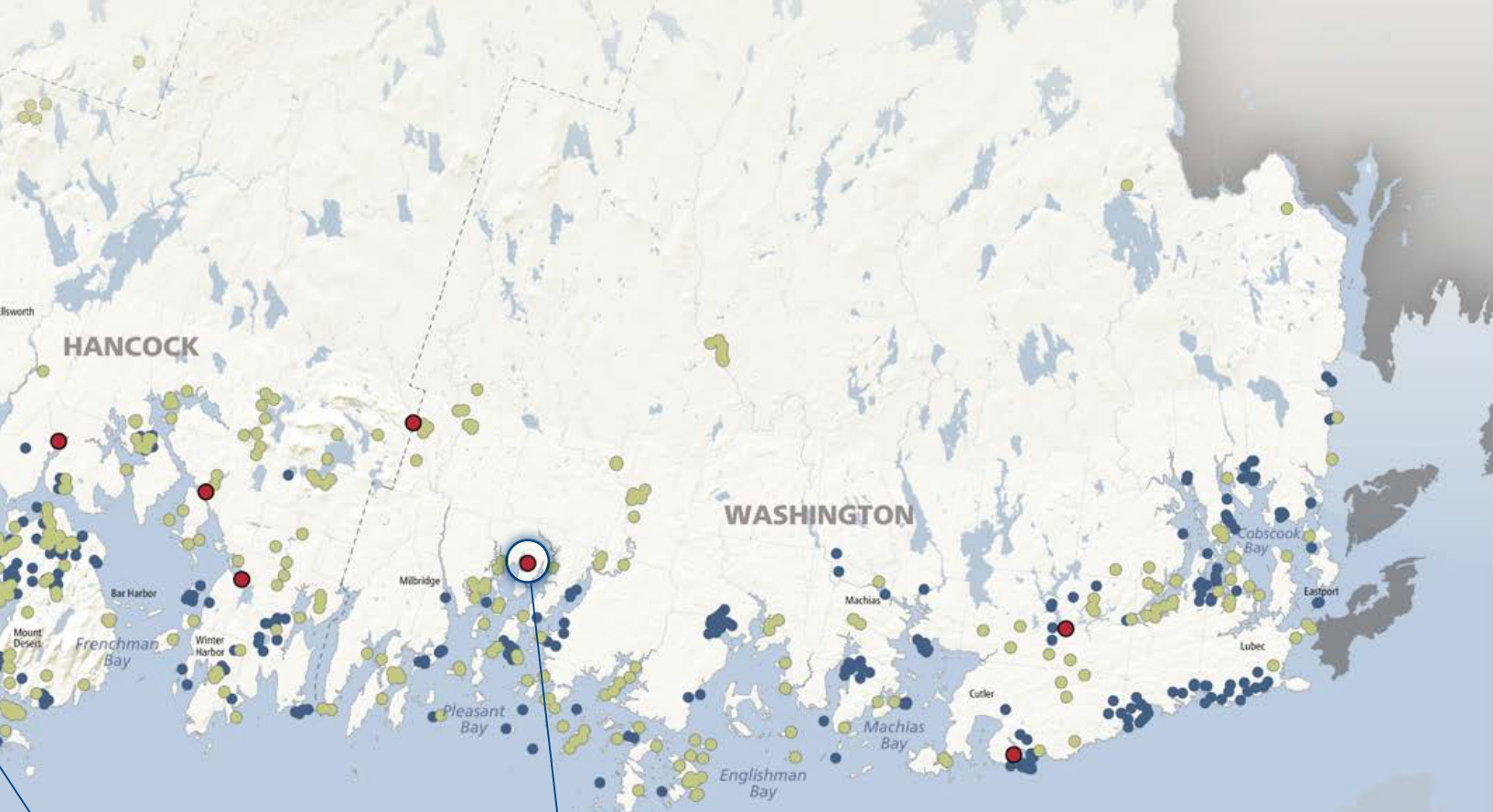
Welcomed **18** Belted Galloway calves at Aldermere Farm Preserve (in the new barn)!



Bernard

At Kelley Farm Preserve, Peg and Laura Lee grew food in a community garden plot, one of 53 plots offered across two preserves on Mount Desert Island.

Coordinated over **70** events and programs for community members and conservation colleagues, reaching over **4,200** people. Held more than **20** events for more than **700** donors and volunteers.



Johns Island

MCHT closed on the purchase of Johns Island and acquired nearby Black Island and Sheep Island. All three of these preserves are in Casco Passage and open to the public.

Acquired **3** more coastal islands, now MCHT preserves.



Harrington

This 59-acre property includes salt marsh, forested wetlands, and wading bird and waterfowl habitat and contributes to salt marsh protection efforts in Pleasant Bay.

Completed **6** land projects to advance our Marshes for Tomorrow Initiative.

Donations by the numbers

4,245 people gave to MCHT in 2023, with **919** giving for the first time. Welcome to MCHT! We're so happy to have you.

381 people gave monthly, which helps us be more proactive and strategic in our conservation work. We're grateful to have **964** people giving at *The President's Circle* level, and **228** donors age 50 and under supporting this work as members of MCHT's Next Wave.

The Maine coast is a world treasure worth caring for. We're on a mission to ensure it's healthy, working, beautiful, and open to all.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization protecting and caring for vital coastal lands. We're partnering with individuals, organizations, businesses, and communities to conserve iconic islands, critical wildlife habitat, coastal watersheds, water access sites, downtown greenspaces, and beautiful places for people to explore. Our Land Trust Program supports and strengthens Maine's entire land conservation community of over 80 land trusts.



Acres Conserved
with Partners



Coastal Islands
Protected



Preserves Open to
the Public



Miles of
MCHT Trail

A look ahead

In 2023, Maine Coast Heritage Trust invested in developing a new strategic plan. After sifting through research, hearing from partners, and identifying where and how we think MCHT is poised to make the greatest impact in the coming years, priorities are emerging.

We've identified exciting opportunities to affect more informed choices about land use to protect wildlife habitat, to inspire more people to engage in conservation, to broaden our partnerships and networks, and to respond to climate change.

We plan to embark on a new strategic plan later in 2024, which advances many core aspects of our work to ensure Maine's coast is healthy, resilient, and open to all.

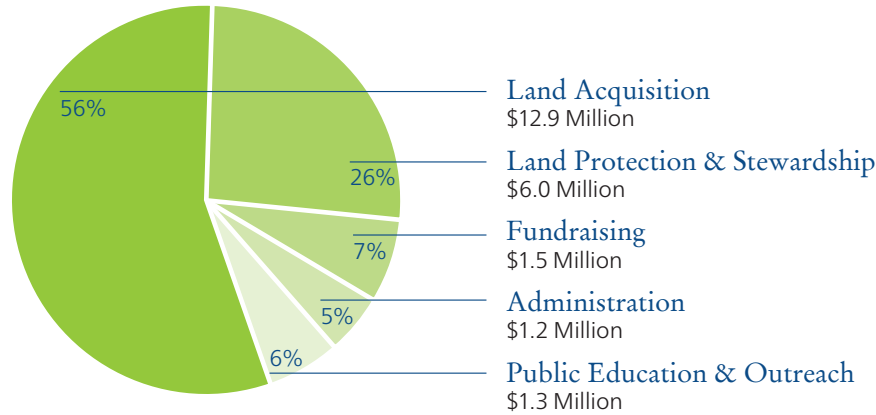
Learn more about priorities we're building on at mcht.org/our-work.



Chris Bennett Photography

Generosity in action, 2023

We value your gift to Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and we're making sure it goes as far as possible for the Maine coast. For every \$10 MCHT spent in 2023, \$9 went directly to protecting and caring for coastal lands and islands and connecting people to the coast.



Where do those funds come from?

- Private Restricted Contributions & Grants (61%)
- Investment Draw (18%)
- Annual Fund (13%)
- Public Restricted Grants (5%)
- Other Revenue (3%)

The above represents a summary of how your generous contributions were spent during 2023 and the sources of funds applied. Our 2023 audited financial statements and Form 990 will be available later in 2024. A complete set of MCHT's 2022 audited financial statements are available at mcht.org/financials.

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(as of October 2023)

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Your donation empowers Maine Coast Heritage Trust
and others across Maine to conserve our common ground.

Thanks for all you made possible in 2023.

