



Maine Heritage



CREATING COMMON GROUND

Courtesy of Women for Healthy Rural Living

Milbridge Commons Wellness Park is a recent and welcome addition to downtown Milbridge.

If you're curious to know what four-and-a-half acres can do for a community, go to Milbridge, Maine.

In the center of town at the water's edge, there's a place called the Milbridge Commons Wellness Park where, on a recent warm October day, a father and his young daughters flew a kite; three students lay in the grass pouring over textbooks; people stretched their legs; children played gleefully on a newly installed playset while their grandmother looked on; a

young person tended rows of beautiful, elaborate gardens, and another stopped by with a canvas bag to pick fresh, free vegetables.

The story of Milbridge Commons starts with the group Women for Healthy Rural Living (WHRL). On a mission to advance and promote the "health and well-being of the woman, her family, and her community," in 2013, this local nonprofit started an Incredible Edible program for members of the community to harvest fresh, free vegetables

from a collection of gardens around town. The program was a success; the gardens were regularly picked clean.

"We were looking to expand our gardens," says WHRL's Executive Director Chris Kuhni. "The community was also asking for a safe place to walk—they wanted a playground. We needed a significant piece of land to make that happen. We certainly didn't have the resources to purchase the land or turn it into something that the community could access.

CREATING COMMON GROUND

CONTINUED FROM COVER

So we approached Maine Coast Heritage Trust and told them about our idea.”

MCHT’s staff and board thought it was a great one. “This is the power of partnership,” says MCHT project manager Patrick Watson. “MCHT brings our particular set of skills, knowledge, and resources to the table, and WHRL brings theirs. Together we’re able to accomplish something that wouldn’t have been possible on our own.”

MCHT closed on the purchase of the 4.6-acre parcel in 2017. Over the next several years, MCHT land steward Deirdre Whitehead collaborated with WHRL to turn the land into a multi-purpose greenspace. Drainage systems were installed; wide, gently sloping trails were built; and with the help of volunteers, WHRL’s lead gardener Janis Lesbines designed and planted a beautiful, mandala-like garden that overflows with food free for the picking in the growing season.

Susan Jordan Bennett, Associate Director of WHRL, says Milbridge Commons has changed the community, particularly for local kids and students. “They touch the lambs ear, smell the dill, count the butterflies. The whole place is a playground for them.” And this fall, WHRL added a play unit.



MCHT photo

A child stops to smell the flowers in the garden at Milbridge Commons Wellness Park.

April Norton, a Milbridge resident who works as Senior Director of Human Resources for Wyman’s, frequently visits the Commons with her son, who likes to play in the grass or on the play unit while she walks the trails. “I can’t say enough about it,” she says. “It’s such a safe, inclusive space. People go there to enjoy other peoples’ company, their own company. WHRL offers classes, enrichment programs. People just really want to be there. It’s really proving to be much more than anticipated.” 🌱



WHY RIVERS MATTER IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

To save Maine’s vulnerable wildlife in a changing climate, it’s

essential that we protect and restore connected habitat. Healthy, free-flowing rivers provide ribbons of connected habitat, not only for fish, but for all wildlife species, who benefit from the cooler, moist habitat and depend on the water and food these rivers provide. Free-flowing rivers also allow sea-run fish like alewives to complete their annual migration from the ocean up Maine rivers to inland lakes and ponds to deposit their eggs.

When alewives (sometimes called the “fish that feed us all”) are numerous, other animals have a better shot at surviving and adapting to a changing climate. Unfortunately, up and down the coast, Maine rivers are blocked by dams, culverts, and other barriers, which has led to a decline in alewives and, along with it, a decline in the habitat value of our rivers and the land along their banks.

To reverse this trend and make the coast and its wildlife more resilient to climate change, we launched the Rivers Initiative in 2017. Over the past five years, we’ve been working

to protect land, remove barriers, and restore habitat and fish passage in three key Downeast river systems: the Bagaduce, the Narraguagus, and the Orange. Now, we’re expanding the Initiative to include the Sheepscot River in the Midcoast and the Mousam River in Southern Maine, unique watersheds where a little investment in land protection and river restoration has the potential to go a long way. 🌱

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RIVERS INITIATIVE AND OUR PROGRESS DOWNEAST AT [MCHT.ORG/RIVERS](https://mcht.org/rivers)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

FOREVER GRATEFUL



Tim Glidden

A handwritten signature of Tim Glidden in black ink.

“THOSE WHO CONTEMPLATE THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH FIND RESERVES OF STRENGTH THAT WILL ENDURE AS LONG AS LIFE LASTS.” — RACHEL CARSON

When I left State service to join Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 2011, I didn't know the coast like I do now. This job drew me in and drew out of me things I didn't know I cared about. There is an intimacy in the relationship between land and sea that is incredibly powerful. We respond to it instantly. We want to share in that relationship, and we are willing to work hard to sustain and protect it.

Over the ten years I've served as President of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, I've developed wonderful relationships with so many of you and, even with those I've not had the privilege to meet in person, I feel the strong connection that comes from a shared passion for the common cause of protecting Maine's incredible coast. MCHT is a place where, for more than 50 years, people have come together for the coast, to accomplish so much more than any of us could individually.

We've accomplished a great deal together over the past ten years. The mark of a truly great organization is one that can do well in the most challenging times.

Most recently, this organization powered through the Great Recession, an onslaught of anti-conservation vitriol, and a global pandemic. We had a successful Campaign to raise over \$130 million for the Maine coast and forged ahead with record levels of achievement and deep investment in community-centered conservation.

Working at MCHT has given me an appreciation for the rich range of views you all have shared on the importance of our work. I have learned with every visit and every meeting, something new and important about conservation and the land and its unique ability to inspire and nourish. Your stories enlightened me and, taken together, pointed the way to MCHT's success.

There are certain qualities that are part of MCHT's DNA, qualities that I'm confident will remain intact as this organization continues to grow and evolve—and, soon, under new leadership. At MCHT, we are patient. We learn. We take our time to get it right. Rachel Carson, who knew the Maine coast intimately, famously wrote: “Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” This job gave me that chance to stand at the edge of sea and learn the truth of which she spoke. And I will be forever grateful for that.

LARGE-SCALE CONSERVATION EFFORT MAKES MAINE MORE RESILIENT

Narraguagus Lake and nearby forests and wetlands conserved by The Nature Conservancy.

In September of this year, The Nature Conservancy acquired a 13,500-acre property west of Cherryfield to add to their Spring River Preserve, which now totals 23,500 acres. This is one in a string of conserved properties linking the Downeast coast to the northern forest.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust, one of many partners in the project, contributed funding to make it possible. “This work improves fish passage and the quality of the land along the shore, creates more recreational opportunities, and restores ecosystems critical to the sustainability of Maine’s fishing industry,” says MCHT president Tim Glidden. “This is all part of our efforts to create resilience in the face of a changing climate.”

Large-scale land conservation efforts like this are increasingly important as Maine’s plants and animals migrate and adapt to warming temperatures and other

impacts of climate change. At Spring River Preserve, they have room to roam and a better shot at survival. This conservation success also benefits important aquatic habitat in the Narraguagus River watershed, which has been a focus area for MCHT’s Rivers Initiative.

Over the past several years, we’ve conserved several other land parcels in the Narraguagus watershed and we continue our work with local communities and state and federal agencies to improve fish passage at some key sites along the river. “This 13,500-acre conservation project represents an important step in our ongoing efforts in this region,” says MCHT project manager Jacob van de Sande. 🌍

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RIVERS INITIATIVE AT
[MCHT.ORG/RIVERS](https://mcht.org/rivers)

FEATURED PRESERVE WITHERLE WOODS, CASTINE

The story of Witherle Woods Preserve begins with the donation of a 97-acre parcel in 1985 to create Maine Coast Heritage Trust’s first preserve. Since then, MCHT has worked with generous landowners in Castine to expand the preserve to the 193-acre oasis you can enjoy today.

Witherle Woods, which spans much of scenic peninsula, has a long history of human activity. The French used the site as a trading post, and archeological research

has located fortifications from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 on the property.

Today, the preserve offers more than 6.5 miles of trails through a changing forest. After storms in 2007-2008 caused major blowdowns, MCHT worked with a forester and logger to salvage the timber, ensure public safety, and prepare for a healthy future forest. If you’re looking for a nice place to cross country ski this winter, here it is! 🌨



HEAD TO [MCHT.ORG/PRESERVES/WITHERLE-WOODS](https://mcht.org/preserves/witherle-woods) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PRESERVE.

IN BRIEF

Local Marina Gives Back

This fall, the community at Paul's Marina in Brunswick came together to raise \$50,000 to help conserve Casco Bay's Little Whaleboat Island. To celebrate the marina's 75th anniversary, hundreds of people each gave \$75 (at least!) to the cause.



Getting Food to Those Who Need It



We're always looking for creative ways to get food from Erickson Fields Preserve into the hands of those who need it. Beyond food pantries, we're working with community partners to share produce in local libraries, churches, physicians' offices, and other community hubs—and it's working!



Maine Beer Company Announces Little Whaleboat IPA

After pledging \$50,000 to the effort to conserve Little Whaleboat Island in Casco Bay, Maine Beer Company has released a new beer inspired by the project and MCHT's mission to keep the coast healthy and open to all.

Sheep Island in Owls Head Is Conserved!

When this island went on the market, our inboxes filled with messages from locals asking if we could protect it and keep it open to the public. Now it joins nearby Monroe Island and Ash Island as an MCHT preserve!



These are the highlights! To see expanded versions of all the stories, visit:

[MCHT.ORG/MAINEHERITAGE](https://mcht.org/MaineHeritage)

IF YOU HAVEN'T MADE YOUR 2021 GIFT TO MCHT YET, THERE'S STILL TIME! GIVE BACK TO THE COAST TODAY AT [GIVE.MCHT.ORG](https://give.mcht.org).



KEEP THE COAST *MAINE*

Everything you read about in this newsletter is possible thanks to the generous support of Maine Coast Heritage Trust donors.

Donors are creating more public access to the coast, strengthening coastal communities, making Maine more resilient to climate change, and so much more. Thank you to all who are a part of MCHT and the ongoing effort to keep the coast Maine.

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WHAT'S INSIDE:

Creating Common
Ground in Milbridge

13,500 Acres
Conserved

& More!

NAME THAT PLACE

Some hints...

This was our very first preserve!

This place witnessed military action during both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.

Now forested, the land was mostly meadow in the nineteenth century and a popular place to take carriage rides.

SEE INSIDE FOR
THIS FEATURED PRESERVE