



4 CLASSES ON 4 PRESERVES IN 48 HOURS

Learning Landscapes Program Engages Student Stewards in Hands-On Ecology and Trail Projects

Belfast Area High School students planting trees along the Ducktrap River.

Student Stewards have been on the trails this year! This new Learning Landscapes program empowers students to become the eyes and ears of Land Trust preserves, explore local ecology, and help with trail projects. This year, a total of eight classes from five different schools participated in Student Stewards. A favorite moment for Land Trust staff was hosting *four* different school groups on *four* different preserves in 48 hours!

In conjunction with the Maine Forest Collaborative, students from the Ecology Learning Center in Unity visited the McLellan-Poor Preserve in Northport as part of their year-long research and community engagement projects about the invasive species Japanese knotweed. Students spent their time at McLellan-Poor learning different knotweed management practices and exploring the reservoir. Simultaneously, students from Rivers Alternative Middle School in Union helped stewardship staff complete a 50-foot section of new turnpike trail at Beech Hill Preserve.

The following day, stewardship staff hosted a group of juniors and seniors from Belfast Area High School at the Ducktrap River Preserve. This excursion entailed planting 25 maple and yellow birch trees along a sunny stretch of riverbank. The students planted these trees to reduce erosion of a tributary stream and increase shading along the river to benefit brook trout and Atlantic salmon, two species of anadromous fish they spent the year learning about.

As trees were planted along the Ducktrap, other members of the Land Trust staff hosted a class from Camden Hills High School's alternative educational



Stewardship Project Manager, Ryan O'Neill shows a student from Zenith how to use a prism to collect forest inventory data.

program, Zenith, at the Goose River Trails for tree coring and identification. As Student Stewards, this class visited four areas of conserved land throughout the spring to learn about soil, trees, birds, and vernal pools.

Student Stewards is one of the many ways Learning Landscapes, our program that seeks to connect kids with the outdoors, is fostering this work in our community. Learning Landscapes is now in its third year and continues to grow! Beyond Student Stewards, Coastal Mountains has conserved two properties next to schools, is working to create outdoor classrooms, and is providing outdoor learning professional development to public, private, and homeschool teachers across 18 schools.

EXPANDED CONSERVATION ON SPRUCE MOUNTAIN

New 30 acres benefit wildlife corridor, recreation, and water quality

As part of the conservation work on Bald and Ragged Mountains, the Land Trust recently acquired a 30-acre property from Barry and Christy Howe on Spruce Mountain in Rockport. This new parcel brings the total land conserved on Bald, Ragged, and Spruce Mountains to 3,100 acres.

The Spruce Mountain parcel lies on the northern slope of Spruce Mountain and is entirely forested with primarily hardwood trees. The land also helps to further protect the water quality of Grassy Pond, a public water supply, as it connects two separate parcels conserved as part of the Grassy Pond Conservation Easement, owned and managed by Maine Water Company.

This land ensures a contiguous wildlife corridor and conserves more land adjacent to the popular Georges Highland Path, created and managed by Georges River Land Trust. We are grateful to Barry and Christy Howe for working with us.



Aerial view of Grassy Pond

ROUND THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL UPDATE

Progress and plans for 2024 and 2025



In 2024, the Land Trust staff and volunteers will continue the ongoing maintenance and continued development of the well-known trail project on Ragged Mountain: the Round the Mountain Trail. In 2020, the Land Trust opened 6.5 miles of trail, including over 30 bridges between the Thorndike Brook Trailhead in Hope and the Camden Snow Bowl. The newest completed section extends the gravel portion around the north end of Ragged Mountain and connects with the Georges Highland Path.

This summer and fall, the Land Trust will invest in maintenance of the existing trail, improve access from the northern end of the mountain, and continue to plan the next phases of construction. Pending the necessary permits from Maine DEP, we are hopeful to begin work near the Camden Snow Bowl in 2025. The Town of Camden is completing a site plan review process on their land that will help us plan for future construction. Meanwhile, as storms become more frequent, we will continue to learn about and make sustainable improvements to the existing trail. On the north end of the mountain nearest Gillette Road, we will rebuild the access trail to support this work.

We are incredibly grateful for the community support that has made this one-of-a-kind project possible. New additions you'll see soon include installations of the first few mile markers on the trail sponsored by local organizations including the Midcoast Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association (McNEMBA), Trail Runners of Midcoast Maine (TRoMM), and the Ragged Mountain Foundation.

Summer is a wonderful time to explore this trail. Bring a friend and check out our work!

LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY AND MAPPING OUR FUTURE

Letter from the Director

This year, the Land Trust is completing the final year of its 2020–25 strategic plan. We are incredibly proud of the milestones reached over the past five years, including but not limited to the success of the Round the Mountain effort, the creation of the Learning Landscapes program, and the growth of our land conservation and stewardship work across 15 towns. With an eye to the future, we are spending much of this year thinking about our work, listening to the community, and planning for what is ahead.

At the center of our next strategic plan (which will outline goals through 2030!) is a commitment to continue to be and become an even more inclusive organization that listens to and welcomes input and participation from all members of our community. *We want you to participate!* As a first step, we invite you to consider completing our community/member survey to provide your input in our planning process:

<https://forms.gle/iiosY4fFqxqEpP4R7>



Call to request a paper copy.

What follows is a brief description of the phases of the planning process to gather, encapsulate, and prioritize the work ahead.

DEVELOPING OUR 2025–2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



Winter 2023

Our planning process began with a Board and Staff “Blue Sky” Retreat at which we dreamt about what our organization will have accomplished by its 50th anniversary in 2036!



Spring 2024

The Land Trust hosted 11 listening sessions that welcomed over 120 community representatives to discuss the needs of the communities we serve and what the evolving role of the Land Trust and conservation can be in supporting those needs.



Summer 2024

We are hosting a pair of organizational retreats to digest, discuss, and prioritize the findings of our community listening sessions. Following these retreats, the staff and board will begin incorporating the community input and the findings of our organizational discussions to begin framing and drafting our next plan.



Fall 2024

The staff will draft and finalize the layout of our 2025–30 plan. In late fall, it will go before the Board of Directors for final discussion and approval.



Winter 2024-25

The plan will be released publicly and shared through all the Land Trust’s communications channels.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

How digital tools enhance stewardship efforts in the field

Technology has transformed the day-to-day work of our stewardship staff in the field. One of our most portable and useful tools is the *hypsonometer*, a device that allows us to measure distances, tree heights, and trail slopes with remarkable precision. This high-tech range finder streamlines many of our field processes, making it easier to monitor the health of our woodlands and plan for sustainable trail management. Accurate measurements are critical for maintaining trail sustainability and the hypsonometer delivers this information within seconds — a much faster reading than using two people and a tape measure!

The other new addition to our digital toolbox is a *field tablet*, loaded with apps and software designed specifically for land stewardship. These portable devices enable us to record observations, map habitats, and document conservation efforts directly on-site. Digital tools like *Gaia GPS* and *Landscape* help our team navigate and analyze terrain with real-time data and mapping capabilities, invaluable for planning restoration projects and tracking changes over time. Instead of juggling paper maps, pencils, and notebooks, our tablets access and update our records instantly, ensuring that our data remains accurate and up to date.

In addition to these core technologies, we leverage a range of naturalist apps to enhance our fieldwork. Apps like *iNaturalist* and *iMapInvasives* play a pivotal role in species identification and invasive species monitoring. With *iNaturalist*, we can quickly identify plants and animals, contributing to citizen science databases that help track biodiversity. If you are an *iNaturalist* user, you can contribute to the “Coastal Mountains Land Trust Project” by logging observations on our preserves. These apps, combined with our other tools, create a comprehensive digital toolkit that empowers us to steward the land more effectively and responsively. While technology and the natural environment might seem like unlikely partners, these resources are refining the ways we care for our treasured landscapes for future generations.



Stewardship Project Manager, Ryan O'Neill uses a hypsonometer to find the distance of a boundary line from a referenced point, and a tablet running a program called *Landscape* to record a site visit.

SUMMER 2024 EVENTS

July 7 (Sunday) 10:00AM	Art Gone <i>Wild</i> : Outdoor Gallery & Sale	Stover Preserve, Belfast
July 8 (Monday) 6:00PM	Arts on the Hill: MoJO Jazz	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
July 10 (Wednesday) 10:00AM	Wednesday Waldo Walk	Marsh Meadow Preserve, Knox
July 11 (Thursday) 10:00AM	Happy Wanderers Hike	Head of Tide Preserve, Belfast
July 13 (Saturday) 10:00AM	Nature Program: Insect Bonanza	Camden Snow Bowl, Camden
July 14 (Sunday) 1:00PM	Arts on the Hill: Camden Shakespeare Festival	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
July 19–21 Times TBA	Art Gone <i>Wild</i> : Outdoor Art Installation	Head of Tide and Stover Preserves, Belfast
July 28 (Sunday) 1:00PM	Arts on the Hill: Burnurwurbskek Drummers	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
July (Dates TBD by the berries!)	Community Free Blueberry Pick	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
August 1 (Thursday) 10:00AM	Happy Wanderers Hike	Ragged Mountain Preserve, Hope
August 1 (Thursday) 5:30PM	Arts on the Hill: Darshan Music	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
August 14 (Wednesday) 10:00AM	Wednesday Waldo Walk	Main Stream Preserve, Searsport
August 22 (Thursday) 6:00PM	Arts on the Hill: Sugar Snaps Band	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
August 29 (Thursday) 5:30PM	Arts on the Hill: Honey Buzz	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
September 7 (Saturday) 1:00PM	Kites and Ice Cream	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport
September 15 (Sunday) 3:00PM	Arts on the Hill: Sound of Music Singalong with Watts Hall Community Players	Beech Hill Preserve, Rockport

Arts on the Hill is a free outdoor concert series featuring local musicians of different genres from classical to funk, and everything in between. These concerts take place atop Beech Hill Preserve, backdropped by the historic Beech Nut and expansive views of Penobscot Bay.

Happy Wanderers hikes are held in partnership with Maine Health’s Community Health program. These walks take place on the first Thursday of each month.

Nature Programs are led by Maine-based naturalists with different areas of expertise, ranging from vernal pools to geology.

Art Gone WILD is a collaboration with Waterfall Arts, supporting micro-residencies and installations by local artists, and a traveling kiosk providing art supplies which moves from preserve to preserve. Find the kiosk this summer at the Belfast Rail Trail.

Kites and Ice Cream is our annual day of pure bliss and sweet treats where each child receives a free kite and ice cream cone on Beech Hill.

Wednesday Waldo Walks is a new hiking series led by Bindy Pendleton, a member of the Waldo County Conservation Initiative Committee, that explores trails throughout Waldo County.

All events are free and open to everyone!

For more information about these events, including updates or cancellations, visit www.coastalmountains.org or connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/coastalmountainst or Instagram [@coastal_mountains_land_trust](https://www.instagram.com/coastal_mountains_land_trust).





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Salvelinus fontinalis, Brook trout
in the Ducktrap River

PHOTO CREDIT: TIM SHAW



MEET THE SUMMER INTERNS

Eleanor Greer

Knox County Stewardship Intern

Eleanor is a rising senior at Pitzer College in Southern California where she studies Environmental Analysis and Political Studies. She enjoys backpacking, running, and lazy days at the beach with a good book. Originally from Camden, she is excited to return to her roots this summer with the Land Trust!

Anikka Reinwand

Pendleton Stewardship Intern

Anikka recently graduated from Vassar College with a degree in Environmental Studies. She grew up in Midcoast Maine and enjoys gardening, walking the local trails, and exploring new places.

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