



RIVER TIDINGS

FALL 2015



IN THIS ISSUE

*New Water Quality
Monitoring Collaborative*

*Forging Connections Along
the River*

*DRA Fields Feed
the Hungry*

*Map: Updates from
the Field*

*Training the Stewards
of the Future*

**Top: Volunteer water
quality monitors Tam
Green and Gisela Heimsath-
Rhodes collect data on the
Damariscotta River.**

Photo by Hannah McGhee

DRA Provides Leadership for New Coastal Water Quality Collaborative

Recent media stories are highlighting rapid changes in the Gulf of Maine, from rising water temperatures to increasingly harmful levels of acidity. How do these changes affect the Damariscotta River, and how should our communities and DRA respond?

To find out, we needed to put our own water quality data for the River into a regional context. We've been conducting water quality research on the Damariscotta River Estuary for more than three decades, allowing us to locate and address sources of pollution in the river, resulting in measurable improvements.

Given the scope of changes taking place in the Gulf of Maine, however, Sarah Gladu, DRA Director of Education and Environmental Monitoring, recognized we could better make sense of "our" river by working with other groups along the coast.

These other groups saw the same potential.

Thus DRA and seven water monitoring organizations from Casco Bay to Penobscot Bay met in December 2013 and founded the Maine Coast Observing Alliance (MCOA). They assembled an impressive team of scientific advisors and elected Sarah as chair.

MCOA has established consistent water sampling methods, developed rigorous quality controls, secured compatible equipment that is precisely calibrated, and created a new database for sharing data. Most importantly, the data are being analyzed as a whole.

This spring, common data pulled together by MCOA were used in testimony by our local representatives in favor of a bill to address ocean acidification. By the time you read this, the first MCOA report will have been published, promising new insights about the Damariscotta River, our neighboring estuaries and the Gulf of Maine. Look for the report on our website soon.



Steven Hufnagel,
Executive Director

A View From the Farm

Dear Members and Friends,

On a recent Sunday I took a walk with my family around the loop at Dodge Point. We played with bricks at Brickyard Beach. One brick we saw had finger marks on it, linking us to people who worked in this spot 150 years ago.

The River and the lands that surround it continue to offer up surprises and connections like this wherever we look – when we look! Through its conservation and education programs, DRA is committed to preserving these connections, drawing them out and building on them.

This issue of *River Tidings* highlights ways we're making connections along the river, with a new water quality monitoring collaborative, the tilling of fields for a Foodbank Farm, linked trails, robust environmental education programs for people of all ages, communities of volunteers, and lands purchased in conservation.

Your investment in DRA conserves places and advances programs that provide ripples of benefit throughout the community. While sound policies are essential, the real hope for the future of the River is a community that values this natural treasure. Thank you for helping to build such a community.



An aerial view of the shoreline connecting Round Top, in the foreground, to Great Salt Bay Farm, visible beyond the bridge.

Photo by Tom Field

Trail to Forge Connections Along the River

Lee Cohen (1927-2011) was a DRA Trail Tamer long before they were called that. He was instrumental in creating several of our favorite trails and setting the stage for many more to come.

One vision he had was a trail connecting Round Top Farm and Great Salt Bay Farm. It would follow the east bank of the Damariscotta River, knitting together historic farms, shell middens, fields, woodlands, orchards, and former shipyards.

The legal puzzle pieces are at last in place to allow Lee's vision to become a reality. Three recent acts of generosity have made this possible:

- Jack and Martha Lynch transferred a portion of their waterfront land to the State of Maine, assisted by DRA, adding several hundred feet of shore frontage to the Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site.
- Riverhill Realty Trust granted DRA a trail license over their land, adding a link between Round Top and Whaleback through a picturesque field along the river, already in use by classes from the school to reach the Farmers' Market.
- Larry Townley and Ken Swasey established trail agreements with DRA over their land. This continues the trail all the way to Oyster Creek, and, unlike on the neighboring farm, explicitly permits dogs off-leash.

Trail design is underway. A valuable community resource is in the making, and we're certain Lee would be pleased!

To find out more about trail agreements or other conservation options on your land, please get in touch with Steven Hufnagel (shufnagel@damariscottariver.org) or a member of our board.

Conserving Special Wild Places

Wildlife sightings are one of the great treats of daily living in our area. Yet the close proximity of wildlife depends on having places where they can successfully feed, find water and shelter, and raise young.

In the past year, we added to our conserved lands two very special places important to wildlife, Crow Island and Salt Marsh Cove.

We purchased the former in February. It's home to a pair of ground nesting osprey and important to the success of neighboring eiders and cormorants.

The latter – now 25 acres in size thanks to an additional gift from siblings Mark and Jewel Hanley – is completely undeveloped. Its calm, secluded waters are a destination for a wide variety of waterfowl and wading birds.

With your help, we are focusing on the conservation of these special places, protecting and enhancing vital habitat throughout the region. Volunteers help us manage the 3,000 acres of land already in our care in ways that benefit wildlife, while committed donors like the Hanleys make it possible to piece together connected corridors that can support larger species such as moose and bear.



Nesting osprey

Photo by Tom Arter

DRA Fields Feed the Hungry with the Midcoast Community Foodbank Farm

The summer of 2016 will bring renewed agricultural life to the Great Salt Bay Farm, as the DRA partners with local farmers Megan Taft and Sara Cawthon to revitalize the fields of this historic farmland. As part of a regional effort to address food insecurity, two acres of the Great Salt Bay Farm will be cultivated to grow crops for distribution at the Ecumenical Food Pantry located at the Second Congregational Church in Newcastle.

The farm will operate on a modification of the popular Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, where individuals, families and businesses can purchase a farm share which will then be donated to the Ecumenical Food Pantry.

Sara Cawthon and Megan Taft by the newly tilled field.

Photo by Hannah McGhee



DRA Trail Tamers: Creating Access, Building Community

Volunteers are at the heart of most DRA endeavors. Maintaining and expanding our trail network is no exception. Meet the Trail Tamers.

This intrepid crew – currently under the leadership of board member Bob Barkalow – meets at least once a month from May to October.

Armed with gloves, clippers, loppers, handsaws, chainsaws, good humor and bug dope, the team directed its energies toward eight preserves this year: Baker Forest, Whaleback Shell Midden, Tracy Shore, Stratton Island, Library Park, Great Salt Bay Farm, Rutherford Island Preserve, and, in collaboration with PWA, Crooked Farm Preserve.



A Trail Tamers crew takes time to pose after a productive workday at Baker Forest.

Photo by Hannah McGhee

Trail Tamers created new trail segments, cleared blowdowns, opened targeted views, improved trailheads, and built several bridges.

While 15-20 energetic women, men and teens show up for each event, Barkalow estimates that this season's crew totaled nearly 35 individuals. DRA is immensely grateful to these volunteers for their contributions to the stewardship of our properties in conservation.

Interested in becoming a Trail Tamer? Email dra@damariscottariver.org to be added to the mailing list.



Damariscotta River Association Updates from the Field

4

River~Link: Trail improved and bog bridges installed.

Marsh River Bog: Duck box monitoring confirms successful merganser and wood duck nesting.

DRA Great Salt Bay Farm: Location of Midcoast Community Foodbank Farm. New off-leash trail to Oyster Creek (stories, pages 2-3).

Round Top Farm and Whaleback Shore (p.2): New trail along the river.

Dodge Point: Site of invasive species workday held with the state to address harmful invasions.

Sproul Preserve: New parking, trailhead, trails and improved water access.

Stratton Island, Tracy Shore, Library Park, and five others: Trails improved during Trail Tamers workdays in 2015 (p.3).

Salt Marsh Cove Preserve: Additional acreage donated to DRA. Features wildlife, coastal wetlands, and water access (p.3).

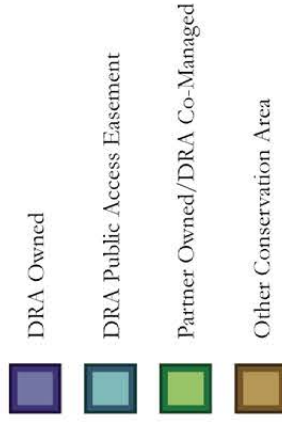
Rutherford Island Preserve: New trailhead, parking, bench and boardwalks offer easier access to the river.

Crow Island: Purchased by DRA in February (p.3). Features nesting habitat, scenic views, boat access.

Legend



Conservation Lands



Data sources: USGS Scamdis server; NED (1/3 arc sec), NHD, NLCD (30m); Maine Office of GIS; e911 road data; coastline, town boundaries, parcel data. Damariscotta River Association; Property boundaries, edits. All data projected in: UTM 19N, North American Datum 1983. Made by Raumb Line Maps, 2014. Updated November 2015 - H. McGhee

See this map and trail maps to our preserves at
www.DamariscottaRiver.org

5



Preschoolers in the Frogs and Polliwogs program learn about flowers.

Fostering Future Stewards

A vital part of conservation is ensuring that the next generation of stewards is in place to carry our work into the future.

It is never too early to begin. We know that early experiences with caring adults, giving children a chance to explore in nature, ask their own questions and test out their own ideas, often translate into a lasting connection with the natural world. Nor is it ever too late to become a steward of the River. Some of the most dedicated DRA volunteers and supporters connected or re-connected with the river and the natural world later in life.

Highlighted on these pages are some of the environmental education programs we offer both children and adults. These hands-on programs, engaging all the senses, offer some of our best hopes for the protection of our natural heritage.

Learning the Ways of the Wabanaki

In all he does, Passamaquoddy educator David Moses Bridges cultivates a profound appreciation for our area's history and natural resources. He and DRA Director of Education Sarah Gladu worked together this October to present the DRA Wabanaki Living Skills and Culture program, now in its twelfth year, to over 400 children from thirteen area schools.

Wabanaki tribes, Bridges explains to each group, have thrived in this area for 12,000 years. He shares traditional stories and talks about how the Wabanaki built shelters, fed themselves, and lived from season to season. Students try some of these ancient techniques themselves, including building wigwams.



A student makes herself at home in a wigwam.

One of only a few remaining master birchbark canoe craftsmen in the world, Bridges also demonstrates how to harvest, shape and etch birch bark, giving students a chance to create their own designs.

"We have now shaped our Native American curriculum around our annual field trip to the Damariscotta River Association. ...[T]he program allows us to make connections with the kids that we couldn't just by reading stories and showing pictures. When they are able to create traditional crafts using the same types of materials in the very spot where Native Americans once made them . . . you can't provide that same experience in a classroom!"

*— Jennifer Gregg, Great Salt Bay Community School
Lincoln County Teacher of the Year*

DAMARISCOTTA RIVER ASSOCIATION



From left: Bristol School students prepare to board the *Wendy J* for a day on Witch Island (Tom Arter). Working with transects on the shore (Hannah McGhee). Documenting plant species in the woods (Sarah Gladu).

Witch Island Becomes a Classroom

Every day for a week in September, Jason Bigonia's 5th and 6th grade class took the DRA boat *Wendy J* to Witch Island in South Bristol and spent the day engaged in learning on the island.

The program merged the students' regular studies with an island curriculum developed specifically by Bigonia and DRA Education Director Sarah Gladu to teach about biological diversity. During the week, the art, music, literacy and physical education teachers all joined the students on the island and adapted their classes to the outdoor environment and special curriculum.

Midcoast Stewards Give Back to Conservation

This spring DRA once again hosted and led the acclaimed Midcoast Stewards Program. This field and lecture program – offered in collaboration with the Maine Coastal Program – consists of 40 hours of ecology and cultural history of our Midcoast Maine region.

Participants heard lectures and participated in discussions on topics from habitats and succession to aquaculture. They studied glacial sedimentation at a gravel pit, did some volunteer work on Audubon's Hog Island, observed the mating flight of the woodcock at dusk, and spent a day on Monhegan Island.

After completing the program, these participants bring their experience and knowledge to bear, committing to a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service to the protection of Midcoast Maine's natural and cultural resources over the next year with a conservation organization of their choice, often going on to take leadership roles within those organizations.



"The more time and experience you have with a place, the more likely you are to respect and protect that area. I love seeing the kids dive into science. They were out there identifying all sorts of species and having to think about how species interact. The kids had great questions and they really had to think about relationships in nature."

— Jason Bigonia, South Bristol School



Oyster Gardening

With guidance from professional growers and instructors, participants in the Oyster Gardening program grow 500 oysters from seed, over two to three years, for personal consumption.

The course is offered every other spring, with the next session beginning in 2016. To learn more, contact Sarah Gladu at sgladu@damariscottariver.org.

Above: Bringing in the harvest at Blackstone Point. Left: Darling Marine Center scientist Dr. Larry Mayer addresses the Midcoast Stewards class.

Photos by Hannah McGhee



David Moses Bridges offers samples of wild groundnut to DRA volunteers at a program for adults.

Photos this page by Hannah McGhee



FALL 2015



Damariscotta River Association

PO Box 333
110 Belvedere Road
Damariscotta, ME 04543

Address Service Requested

Contact Us

Steven Hufnagel, *Executive Director*
shufnagel@damariscottariver.org

Sarah Gladu, *Director of Education
and Environmental Monitoring*
sgladu@damariscottariver.org

Darryn Kaymen, *Operations
and Program Manager*
dkaymen@damariscottariver.org

(207) 563-1393
Open Monday–Friday, 9–4:30

www.damariscottariver.org



A planned gift to DRA is a powerful way to leave a lasting conservation legacy for the Damariscotta River and the communities it sustains. We look forward to discussing giving options with you. Please contact Steven at shufnagel@damariscottariver.org or 207-563-1393.

Photo by Emily MacKenzie

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Damariscotta River Association is to preserve and promote the natural, cultural and historical heritage of the Damariscotta River and adjacent areas for the benefit of all.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Emily MacKenzie, *President*
Normand Saucier, *Vice President*
Robert Barkalow, *Treasurer*
Carolyn McKeon, *Secretary*
Thomas Arter, Jim Donovan,
Thomas Field, Joseph Guttentag,
Robert Hunnold, David Lawrence,
Alden McFarland, Peter McKinley,
Matthew Newman, Barnaby Porter,
Joel Russ, Tenley Seiders, Heidi Shott,
Priscilla Ulin, Josephine Vaughan

