



RIVER TIDINGS

Caring for the land and the river you love





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.

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damariscottariver.org



Together, doing even more for water quality, conservation, and education



Letter from the Executive Director

The DRA votes are in, and they're unanimously in favor. We are committed to unify with Pemaquid Watershed Association in February 2019!

Despite some inevitable trepidation about the uncharted territory ahead, I'm excited about what this will mean for conservation in the Damariscotta-Pemaquid region.

Conserving and connecting more of the most significant natural lands in our area. Widening and deepening our youth education programs in local schools and beyond. Building an even more robust system of trails, including more that are multi-use and handicap-accessible. And doing even more to measure and protect water quality in our local waterways.

We have worked together successfully with PWA for many years, and we feel that we can do even more as a single organization. Yet we'll still be at a sweet spot in scale—big enough to meet community needs in a changing climate, and small enough to understand those needs in a fine-grained and local way.

What's ahead? A new name, TBD. Relocating our headquarters to Round Top Farm next spring. A somewhat broader geography (see map, opposite). The leadership of our combined boards.

The staff you have worked with at both organizations will remain. PWA has not had an Executive Director since October 2017, and I'm honored to have been asked to serve as ED of the new unified organization.

I appreciate your steadfast support along the way. More great things ahead! As ever, please give me a call if you have and questions, concerns or ideas to share.

Warm wishes,


Steven Hufnagel

On the cover: Sledding at Round Top Farm, Winter Fest 2018

Save the date: Winter Fest 2019

Free fun for the whole family!

February 10, from 12:00 to 3:00 PM
At DRA's Round Top Farm

→ To stay up-to-date, sign up for our eNews online at damariscottariver.org.





WILD SHORES, *forever*

Glidden Ledge is a dividing line on the Damariscotta River, a place where the more brackish waters above meet the somewhat saltier waters below. Billions of gallons pass over these ledges daily, and wildlife abounds as nutrients and prey churn through.

Thanks to the generosity and foresight of Sarah Peskin and Bill Kelley, land on both sides of this divide is now forever conserved. While the characters in the story, both human and wild, may change over time, the natural shoreline will remain.

That's because Bill and Sarah made the decision to invite DRA into their vision for the future of their property: 62 acres of land with 1,200 feet of shoreline along Fitch Cove and the shoreline below Glidden Ledge on the Damariscotta River.

This was done with the help of a voluntary conservation

agreement, also called a **conservation easement** (see sidebar), which they donated to DRA, thus forming an ongoing partnership.

Wading bird habitat, places for terrestrial wildlife like foxes and deer, breeding areas for horseshoe crabs, and coastal forest are secured because of their foresight.

So too are many cultural and historical values of the land, which include a traditional clamming spot and the site of an historic brickyard. A brickyard that at its peak cranked out more than 800,000 bricks in a single year!

Taken together with the Town of South Bristol's Walpole Woods across the road and another conservation easement in between, Sarah and Bill's easement gift has resulted in a protected expanse of more than 150 acres.

And we know that when it comes to conserved lands, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

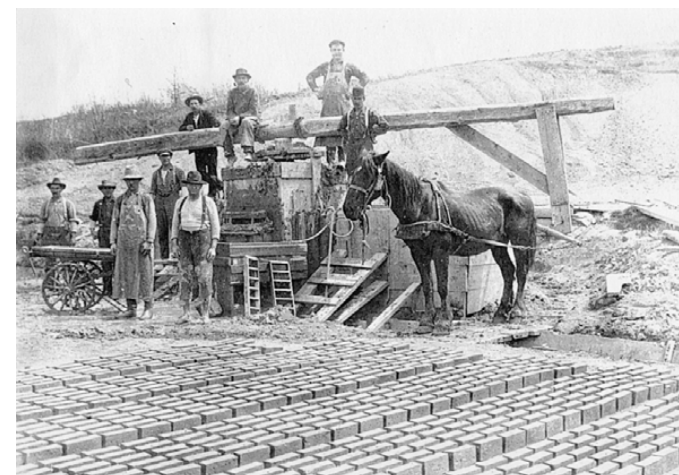
Who benefits? Clammers who depend on continued access and clean waters free of septic and driveway runoff. Wildlife that feed and breed there. Every boater who passes by its wild and scenic shores. Neighbors who depend on fresh well water and benefit not only from less withdrawal, but also more recharge of groundwater. Local schoolchildren who will be invited to explore the remains of this important industrial site, bringing local history to life.

You, too, played a role in this conservation story. Thanks to your support, staff and resources are ready at hand to help landowners like Sarah and Bill achieve their conservation goals, long into the future.

“We're so pleased there's a local land trust that understands the unique values of a property like this, and demonstrates such a high level of professionalism.” – Sarah Peskin

With your continued help, this property and others like it in this midcoast region will be there for wildlife and for all of us, for many generations to come.

Below, top: Unfired bricks laid out to dry at a 19th century Maine brickyard. Bottom: Fragments of brick in Fitch Cove are evidence of the historic brickmaking operation.



Glidden Ledge, acrylic on canvas by Susan Bartlett Rice

You are helping to save wild and working lands

You may be acquainted with many of DRA's 44 properties in the Damariscotta River region; special natural areas like Round Top Farm, Plummer Point, Witch Island, and Great Salt Bay Farm.

Fewer people are aware that DRA also holds almost as many conservation easements.

While not as visible as public access preserves, conservation easements, or voluntary conservation agreements, **quietly play a vital role in conserving wildlife habitat, water quality, and scenic values.**

With a conservation easement in place, landowners continue to own their land, while they invite a land trust like DRA to become a partner in maintaining the natural resource values of their land long into the future.

That might mean maintaining a working farm, working forest, or working waterfront. Perhaps, for a very special natural area with unique plants or animals, it means helping to keep it wild forever. In some cases the property contains an important historic site like a shell midden or shipyard.

No matter who owns that land over time, DRA, with your support, commits to making sure the particular values and resources identified in the easement are not harmed.

Most of the 43 easements held by DRA were donated by landowners interested in seeing the wildness or working nature of their land maintained forever. The Fitch Cove Easement (adjacent article) combines wildlife, forestry, and water quality goals with archeological protections as well.

→ Interested in learning more about conserving land through a **voluntary conservation agreement?**

Contact Steven at 207-563-1393 or dra@damariscottariver.org.



YOU'RE INVITED TO COME EXPLORE WITH US

PROGRAMS JUST FOR KIDS

Frogs and Pollywogs

Hands-on nature for young children



10:00-11:00 AM on the **third Thursday** every month during the school year.

Winter Vacation Camps

Outdoor adventures for school-age kids



December 26-28 and **February 19-22**, from 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Find even more adventures online:

- Jr. Naturalist After-School Program
- Wild Encounters program for homeschool families
- Camp Mummichog summer day camp

PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

Midcoast Stewards

Fostering citizen stewardship of Midcoast Maine's natural resources



April 9 to May 28: 40 hours of ecology and cultural history relating to this region of Midcoast Maine. Learn about beach evolution from a coastal geologist, visit a gravel pit to uncover geologic history, go bird watching, and much more. Get more information and apply online at damariscottariver.org.

Visit our website to find bird walks, classes and workshops, a snowshoe hike, and other programs for all ages.

Be the first to know about upcoming programs!
Sign up for DRA's eNews at damariscottariver.org.



WHAT'S IN THE WATER?

They arrive in the pouring rain, bearing sacks bulging with water samples, and trudge upstairs to the lab. Before long there are dripping jackets hanging on doors and chairs, and voices and laughter spill out into the hall.

Our cheerfully sodden visitors come from the towns of Waldoboro and Bristol. They represent their municipalities, as well as local land trusts and shellfish commissions. Their mission: to locate sources of contamination in the Medomak and Pemaquid river systems that sometimes lead to closures of shellfish harvesting areas.

While Maine's Department of Marine Resources regularly tests bacterial levels in harvesting areas to make sure the shellfish are safe for eating, it does not provide information on upstream sources of pollutants if any are detected.

The towns of Waldoboro and Bristol, however, have a vested interest in keeping shellfish harvesting areas open. Clamming is one of the biggest economic drivers in both towns, representing an annual revenue of up to \$1 million for Bristol and as much as \$1.7 million in Waldoboro.

One way to ensure harvesting areas remain open is to try to prevent contamination in the first place. To get there, both towns applied for and received funding and staff assistance from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Working independently, they both hired FB Environmental, an outside consulting firm based in Portland, Maine, to help them design and carry out plans to assess water quality in their respective watersheds.

Because the two projects were so similar and in such close proximity, and experienced the same storm events, it made sense for the groups to work together.

So what does this have to do with DRA? As it turns out, the new Water Quality Lab at DRA makes it easier, more convenient, and less expensive for groups to analyze water samples here in the midcoast area.

In the case of the Medomak and Pemaquid River projects, the lab also fostered an exciting and productive collaboration.

“It was helpful to use the new lab space, and it brought everyone together. [DRA] was so welcoming. It also brought enhanced energy to the project because everyone could run straight from the field to the lab.”

– Margaret Burns, FB Environmental

The lab procedure measures the presence of bacteria such as *E. coli* with a high level of precision at a low cost. *E. coli* originate in the guts of all warm-blooded

animals. It is common to find low levels in our waterways and their tributaries. However, if high levels are found, it can be an indicator of fecal contamination from humans or from animals either wild or domestic.

Shellfish beds in the tidal section of the lower Pemaquid River have been closed to harvesting since 1989. On the Medomak River, the town of Waldoboro and the local shellfish commission have been working for years to reduce the frequency and duration of clam flat closures. Sources of

contamination have proved frustratingly difficult to pinpoint.

However, slow gains have been made. “The river is the cleanest it’s been in 20 years,” Waldoboro Town Manager Julie Keizer asserts. “We just recently reopened 500 acres of clam flats.”

The convenience and accessibility of the new water quality lab makes it possible to more quickly and accurately trace the sources of pollutants. Keizer remains hopeful for the future. “We would really like to be able to open additional areas.”

Keeping water clean, thanks to you

So much depends on clean water: aquatic creatures and many forms of wildlife. The men and women who make a living on the water. The thriving tourist economy. Our quality of life.

The above story highlights just one of the ways in which the Water Quality Lab has benefitted the community as well as DRA's own robust water quality program since the lab's establishment in 2017.

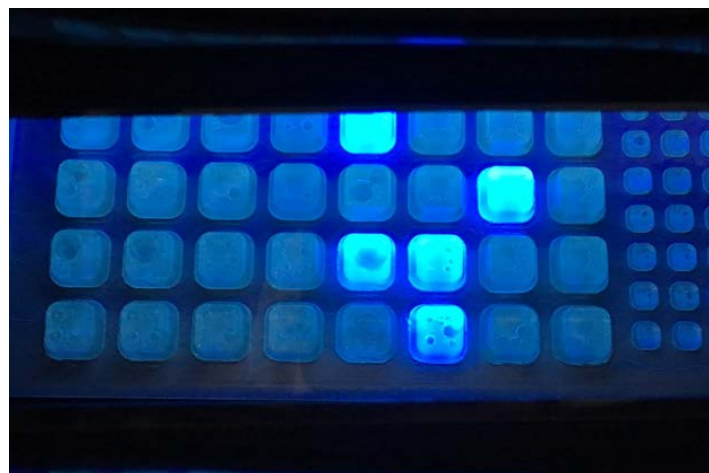
→ Thinking of volunteering with DRA's **water quality monitoring program?**

Get in touch with Sarah at 207-563-1393 or sgladu@damariscottariver.org.

FALL 2018



Waldoboro Town Manager Julie Keizer prepares water samples for incubation at DRA's water quality lab.



Once a sample has been incubated, wells that contain elevated levels of bacteria glow under ultraviolet light.



DAMARISCOTTA RIVER ASSOCIATION

Margaret Burns / FB Environmental

Margaret Burns / FB Environmental

A TRIP TO REMEMBER

“It was an amazing opportunity for these kids to experience the length and breadth of the Damariscotta. Not just the geography and the wildlife, but also the scope of activities that take place on the river, both past and present.”

– Trip leader Sarah Gladu

Six campers from DRA's Camp Mummichog, led by DRA Education Director Sarah Gladu and Seth Walton of Maine Sport Outfitters, had the experience of a lifetime on a four-day canoe trip along the Damariscotta, from lake, to bay, to estuary.

The campers learned different paddling strokes and how to handle their canoes under a variety of conditions, such as wind or a strong current. One breezy afternoon they rafted the four canoes together and rigged up a sail using a tarp.

Along the way, they met people who make a living on the river, such as artist George Mason and Harbormaster Paul Bryant, owner of Riverside Boat Company on the Damariscotta, who talked with them about the history of boat-building on the river.

They also visited researcher Dr. Joe Thompson at University of Maine's Darling Marine Center, where they learned about his work studying squid propulsion and handled a live squid.

The paddlers journeyed from Damariscotta Lake to the South Bristol town landing, camping out at DRA's Great Salt Bay Farm and two islands along the way, including DRA's Stratton Island and a private wild island owned by a friend of DRA.

→ **DRA's Camp Mummichog** runs from mid-June through the end of August. Camp sessions feature nature discovery in many forms: spending time with naturalists, learning hands-on outdoor living skills, doing art projects, making music, taking field trips to islands for exploration, playing nature-focused games, and more. Scholarships are available for all camp sessions. Registration opens in February (be sure to sign up for our eNews at damariscottariver.org!)

You give the gift of awe-inspiring outdoor experiences, all year long, from summer camp to winter walks and talks.





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Address Service Requested



A TRAIL FOR ALL

You are creating safe places for people of all abilities to be in nature.

Walk side by side. No roots, no ruts. Gently graded and kind on the knees. We invite you to stroll, roll or pedal on the new accessible trail you helped make possible as a friend of DRA!

The new River Trail links Round Top Farm with Great Salt Bay Community School. Engineered, 8 feet wide and made of compacted stone dust, the trail takes in Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site, sweeping along the margin of the

old apple orchard, and continues through the fields along the river to Round Top.

A new crosswalk—built with the help of DRA supporters like you in partnership with Friends of Great Salt Bay School—creates a safe connection to the school.

The new trail makes it easier for students to access Whaleback and Round Top Farm, and puts the existing school gardens at Round Top in easy reach, as well as DRA's Community Skating Rink and the Damariscotta Farmers' Market.

→ **Keep those walking shoes handy, because the trail you see today is just the first leg of a longer trail, one that will connect all the way to Great Salt Bay Farm on Belvedere Road. In fact, we dream of a loop all the way around Great Salt Bay. Will you help?**