



COASTAL RIVERS
CONSERVATION TRUST

RIVER TIDINGS

2021-2022 NEWSLETTER



On commuting to
school in a small boat
and other adventures with
Coastal Rivers, p. 5



COASTAL RIVERS CONSERVATION TRUST

We are your community land trust, caring for the lands and waters you love in the Damariscotta-Pemaquid region.

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info@coastalrivers.org
(207) 563-1393
3 Round Top Ln / PO Box 333
Damariscotta, ME 04543

coastalrivers.org



Twice the nature

Letter from the Executive Director

One year ago, in April 2021, Coastal Rivers adopted its new 5-year strategic plan. In addition to key education, recreation, water quality, and climate goals, this plan put our full organizational support and resources behind a bold initiative to double the amount of land we conserve from 4,000 to 8,000 acres by 2026.

It's an ambitious goal – but our rapidly changing climate and the increasing rate of real estate transactions in this area of Maine call for nothing less.

Conserving larger, connected blocks of undeveloped land – as we are doing in the River~Link corridor and on the Pemaquid Peninsula (story on page 9) – is a powerful way to protect wildlife such as bobcats and moose, as well as preserve water resources, enhance human recreation, and confront climate change.

But we can't stop there. To carry that legacy forward requires that we invite new characters into the story, and actively engage our community in caring for the land and enjoying it. That means building knowledge about our unique region, growing a stewardship ethic based on a love of place, learning and honoring the histories of those who preceded us, and enjoying these special places together.

This is the theme you'll find woven through this newsletter as you read about new trails to explore, students and volunteers engaged in citizen science, education programs with local schools, and even the new solar array that not only powers our operations but also serves as a field trip destination for local students learning about renewable energy.

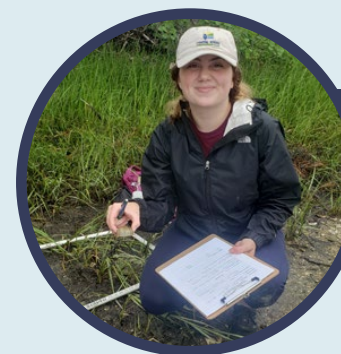
As always, I thank you for partnering with us in caring for this unique part of midcoast Maine!

Warm wishes,

Steven Hufnagel

On the cover: South Bristol 5th and 6th graders head for the *Wendy J* for their morning commute to Witch Island in September. Operation of the *Wendy J*, our “workhorse on the water,” is sponsored by First National Bank. Photo by South Bristol School Principal Chuck Hamm.

Your involvement with Coastal Rivers makes a difference in four key areas:



CLEAN WATER

p. 3-4

Ensuring healthy waterways and vibrant communities by enlisting citizen scientists, who

- Monitor fresh & salt water quality
- Maintain a water quality lab
- Help property owners become LakeSmart certified
- Tackle invasive aquatic species
- Monitor changes to shell middens
- Track horseshoe crab populations



Chuck Hamm / South Bristol School

EDUCATION

p. 5-7

Growing the community of people who care about our lands and waters with

- Workshops, classes, & guided hikes
- Camp Mummichog summer day camp
- Beachcombers' Rest Nature Center
- School programs
- Teacher trainings
- Wabanaki program
- Midcoast Stewards program
- Oyster Gardening



WILD PLACES

p. 8-12

Conserving high quality natural areas for the benefit of wildlife, water quality and people, through

- Donated or purchased properties
- Voluntary landowner agreements, also called *conservation easements*
- Committed, lasting stewardship of all conserved lands



TRAILS & PUBLIC ACCESS

p. 13-14

Connecting people to the outdoors with

- Hiking trails
- The accessible Rhoda and Leon Cohen River Trail
- Working farms
- Access to lakes, ponds, rivers and estuaries for fishing, clamming, and recreation
- Places for bird & wildlife viewing

The future of conservation is here

By Sarah Gladu

Working with young adults is a joy for me and never fails to inspire hope, for they are the future of the conservation field. I had the pleasure and privilege to work with four exceptional young people last summer.

Ashley Eugley: Horseshoe crab pilot project

For years, Coastal Rivers volunteers have been documenting adult horseshoe crab spawning populations in Days Cove and Great Salt Bay – but we have had no data about the juveniles or what their populations look like over time.

So when Bard College student Ashley Eugley of South Bristol contacted me to inquire about an internship

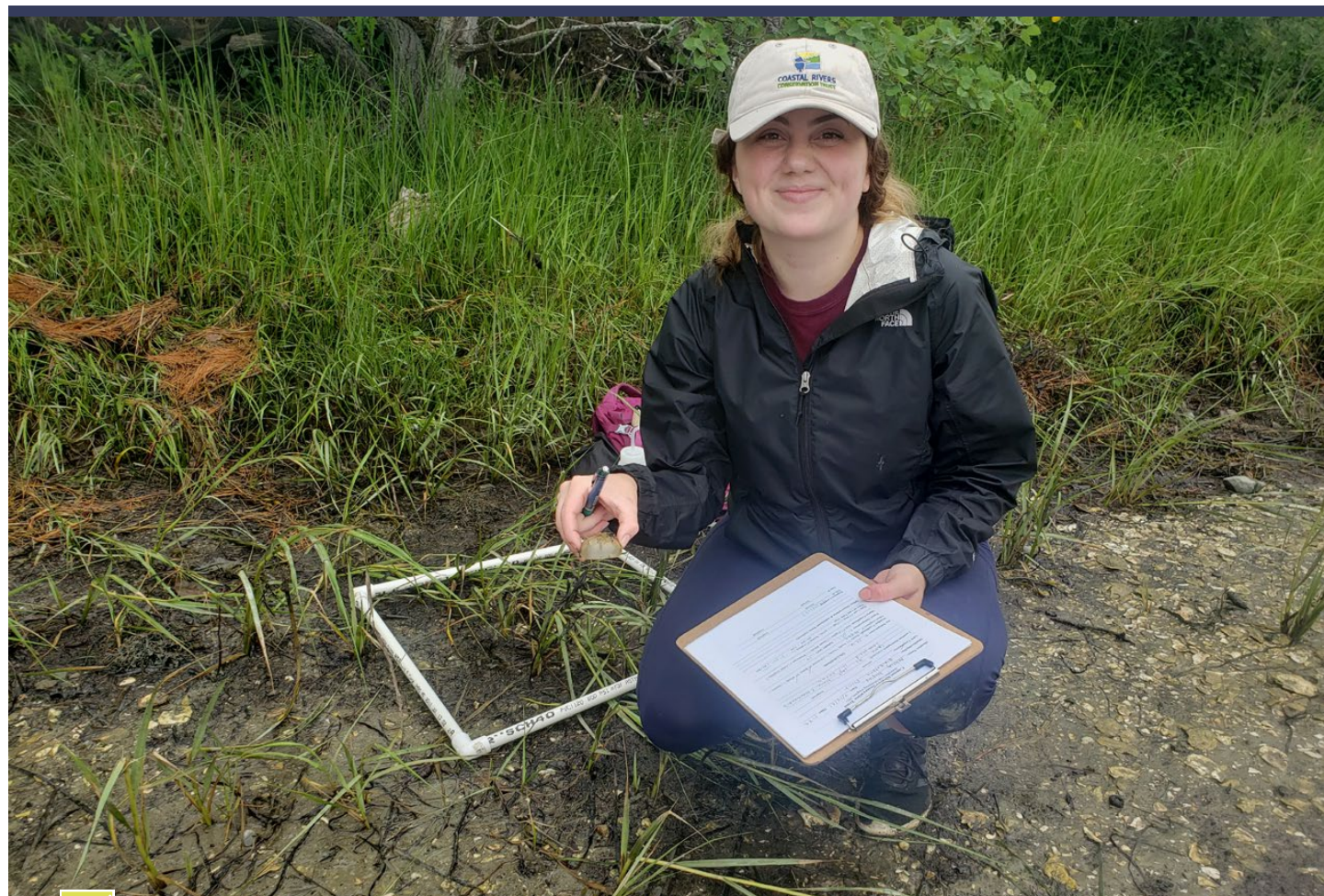
with Coastal Rivers, I began developing the idea for a project to collect data about juvenile horseshoe crabs.

Building on a similar study completed in 2019 by local Lincoln Academy student Zak Bhe, the goal of the research was to identify where juvenile horseshoe crabs are living in the Damariscotta River Estuary.

Ashley took this project and ran with it. She was amazing. She arrived knowing little about horseshoe crabs, where they live or what they do, and she left us in the fall having made an amazing discovery through her data collection.

Ashley's data indicate that **Great Salt Bay may be the only location where juvenile horseshoe crabs**

2021 summer intern Ashley Eugley took on a pilot project to identify where juvenile horseshoe crabs are living in the Damariscotta River Estuary.



are found in the estuary. In terms of local conservation, this discovery elevates the importance of protecting what appears to be a critical nursery grounds for these ancient animals.

There is more research to be done, but Ashley's and Zak's important work has given us a solid foundation for further research.

Eliot O'Mahoney: Courtesy Boat Inspections

While Ashley was out searching every cove for juvenile horseshoe crabs, Lincoln Academy student Elliot O'Mahoney completed his Courtesy Boat Inspector (CBI) training. He began work as an official CBI in mid-June and spent every weekend during the summer at the Pemaquid Pond boat ramp as a first line of defense against invasive aquatic plants (IAPs).

IAPs are non-native plants that can spread quickly in fresh water bodies, growing into thick mats that cover the surface. These invaders have the potential to infest our local ponds, endangering wildlife habitat, limiting recreational opportunities, and reducing property values.

Efficient, thorough, and courteous, **Eliot spoke with many dozens of boat owners over the course of the summer, educating them about invasives**, inspecting their boats, and even talking with them about the dangers of lead tackle and referring them to the Lead Tackle Exchange program.

Katie Kennedy and Ellie Nordwind: Invasive Plant Patrol

Katie and Ellie are two high school seniors who live in the DC area but come to Maine for summer vacation. They emailed me early in the summer, wanting to be put to work as volunteers for the entire two weeks of their Maine vacation.



As a Courtesy Boat Inspector, Lincoln Academy student Eliot O'Mahoney was a first line of defense against invasive aquatic plants at Pemaquid Pond.

The pair completed on-line training before they got here, and we followed up with in-person aquatic plant identification practice once they arrived. **Then I sent them out to conduct Invasive Plant Patrol (IPP) surveys at every fresh-water public launch and road crossing – areas that are easily accessible and thus most at risk of infestation.**

Katie and Ellie are a class act – fun loving-and hard-working too. At the end of their two week visit, they gave me all their data sheets and a sweet card, thanking us for the opportunity to learn a lot and do meaningful volunteer work.

There is no doubt in my mind that each of these bright young people will continue to make great contributions in the course of their lives, and I love that Coastal Rivers has been a place they could make real contributions to our region, build their résumés, and make new friends.

► We plan to expand our CBI and IPP programs with new interns and volunteers in summer 2022. To learn more, contact Sarah Gladu at 207-563-1393 x340 or sgladu@coastalrivers.org.

A week of school on Witch Island

A partnership with South Bristol School offers the best kind of experiential learning



Chuck Hamm / South Bristol School



A day on Witch Island, clockwise from left: Free time is spent exploring the shoreline. For morning art class, students paint watercolor landscapes at the shore. During a mid-day break, kids work on their “emergency shelters” in the woods. Sarah Gladu and science teacher Jason Bigonia introduce the afternoon’s science assignment, a study of terrestrial plants. A student documents her observations within a randomly selected quadrat area.

Fifth and sixth graders at South Bristol School (SBS) enjoyed a different kind of learning experience the week of September 18, 2021. Along with their teachers and Education Director Sarah Gladu, they commuted to Coastal Rivers’ Witch Island Preserve every morning in two small boats.

This biannual program offers an unforgettable opportunity for students to experience place-based learning right in their backyard, while tapping into Coastal Rivers’ expertise in nature education. The students’ regular subjects – as well as some new ones – were adapted to their island setting each day.

Activities included observational art and journaling, hiking, building shelters, writing with the five senses, music composition, estimation and measurement, scientific species counts, working with the Fibonacci

sequence, and studying biodiversity. Sarah also wove Wabanaki studies into each day, telling traditional stories and teaching about wild edibles during walks around the island.

According to the kids, highlights included being near the water all week, getting to ride a boat to the island, hearing and retelling Wabanaki legends, shelter building with Sarah, and “finding animals, dead and alive.”

“Students were afforded some much needed time outdoors simply being kids,” observed SBS Principal Chuck Hamm, who was able to spend two full days on the island. “[The Island] program was one of the facets of South Bristol School that drew me to apply here... Experiential learning, especially outdoors, is a rare thing in education these days.”

Outdoor learning can be transformative for students.

The teachers we partner with have observed that a child who struggles to concentrate at a desk or in front of a laptop can be a completely different student in an outdoor setting: calm, focused, and thriving. For people of all ages, spending time in nature can reduce stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure, increase energy and focus, and improve mood.¹

The Island Program is just one of many ways Coastal Rivers partners with local teachers in innovative ways to leverage the power of the outdoors.

This year at Great Salt Bay Community School (GSB), Coastal Rivers educators worked with guidance counselor Jill Davis to offer a series of weekly experiential outdoor field trips for 7th and 8th graders.

Also at GSB, in Coastal Rivers' yurt classroom at the school, we are teaching a hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program for 5th

and 6th graders that explores the role of forests in addressing climate change.

We also lead a weekly program with students from Lincoln Academy's edLab and IDEAL programs, for whom the traditional classroom has not been a good fit. Our outdoor classes together delve into a range of topics, from Wabanaki studies to invasive plants and animal tracks and signs.

According to Anna Myers, Director of edLab at Lincoln Academy, "Our students

thrive when given opportunities to get outside and learn about local ecology and indigenous people, connecting with the environment and each other."

The way we see it, we all benefit from every moment these children spend outdoors deepening connections to the land and the plants and animals that live here. After all, they are the stewards of tomorrow, and the future of conservation!

"Our students thrive when given opportunities to get outside..."

— Anna Myers, Director of edLab at Lincoln Academy

1. [apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature)

South Bristol School Principal Chuck Hamm and teacher Kayla Wright with 5th and 6th graders on Witch Island.



**Doubling
down
on land
conservation**

A new (as yet unnamed) preserve on River Road in Edgecomb adds 165 acres to the River~Link corridor.

What do moose, bobcats, wood thrushes, and brook trout have in common?

All have a need for large, quiet, undisturbed, and connected forests and wetland habitat. Moose and bobcats are shy creatures that avoid people and roads, and need a lot of room to feed, find mates, and raise their offspring. Wood thrushes seek out deep woods for their nests. And brook trout favor cold, clear water above all else – silt-free streams shaded by tall trees and enriched by decomposing bits of leaves and forest debris.

This is why filling in the River~Link wildlife corridor in Newcastle and Edgecomb is one of our top conservation priorities. In fact, River~Link is growing by leaps and bounds. Since July 2020, **we've added four new properties and 515 acres to River~Link.**

That's on top of ten other nearby properties, totaling 730 acres, already held in conservation by Coastal Rivers – bringing the total area we care for in the River~Link corridor to 1,245 acres (see map on next page).

Add in the properties owned by partner agencies and organizations and under conservations easement with private landowners – Schmid Preserve (Town of Edgecomb), Dodge Point (Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands), and others – and **the conservation corridor is approaching 3,000 acres in area.**

Right here in midcoast Maine, that's a vast swath of intact wild forest, quiet rocky ridges, clean, cool streams, and productive wetlands.

This is joyful news indeed, which prompted one member of our Board to exclaim, "The moose are dancing!" While we can't confirm this to be true – moose being the shy animals they are – we do love the image.



A conservation corridor calls for concerted collaboration

River~Link extends from the Damariscotta River west to the Marsh River, from Newcastle south through Edgecomb and into Boothbay. This connected expanse of permanently protected and publicly accessible properties now totals nearly 3,000 acres (and growing!) and represents a haven for wildlife, protection for nearby waterways, and a hiking experience unique to this part of Maine.

The 7-mile River~Link Trail is accessible from trailheads on River Road at Dodge Point in Newcastle and on McKay Road in Edgecomb. From McKay Road, the trail continues south to Boothbay Region Land Trust's Zak Preserve.

A project of this scope doesn't happen by accident. Many years in the making, this sweeping trail and wildlife corridor is the result of close collaboration between numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals, including

- Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust
- Boothbay Region Land Trust
- Individual donors and foundation supporters
- Land for Maine's Future
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Conservation
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program, administered by The Nature Conservancy
- Midcoast Conservancy
- Private landowners
- The Towns of Boothbay, Edgecomb, and Newcastle
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

It bears repeating

Even while we continue to grow River~Link, we have already begun to build a sister corridor on the Pemaquid Peninsula, with all the same benefits to wildlife, water quality, and people. Stay tuned!

Piecing it together

Four new Coastal Rivers preserves, shown here in red, collectively add over 500 acres to the River~Link Corridor in Edgecomb and Newcastle.



May 2021: 200 Acres, Middle Road, Edgecomb

Featuring mature forest, an extensive alder swale, and a network of stone walls and old stone foundations, this key addition to the northwest portion of River~Link was purchased from the heirs of Carl Piontkowski.

We are grateful to Robert (Bob) and Roberta McLaughlin for committing generously to the purchase of this property. Bob's involvement in conserving what's now known as River~Link dates back to his time on the Board of Damariscotta River Association (now part of Coastal Rivers), when he helped bring about the conservation of the Sherman Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust likewise contributed almost half of the total project costs, with the balance gifted by Sarah Jeffords.



July 2020: 77 Acres, Kenneth and Hopestill Schaller Preserve, Newcastle

Named in memory of its donors Kenneth and Hopestill Viall Schaller, this property includes a wetland evocative of Jurassic Park, ridges of open hardwood forest with picnic-ready grassy understory, and dark, tannic streams like black tea. The preserve is part of a transformative set of gifts from the Estate of Kenneth Schaller.



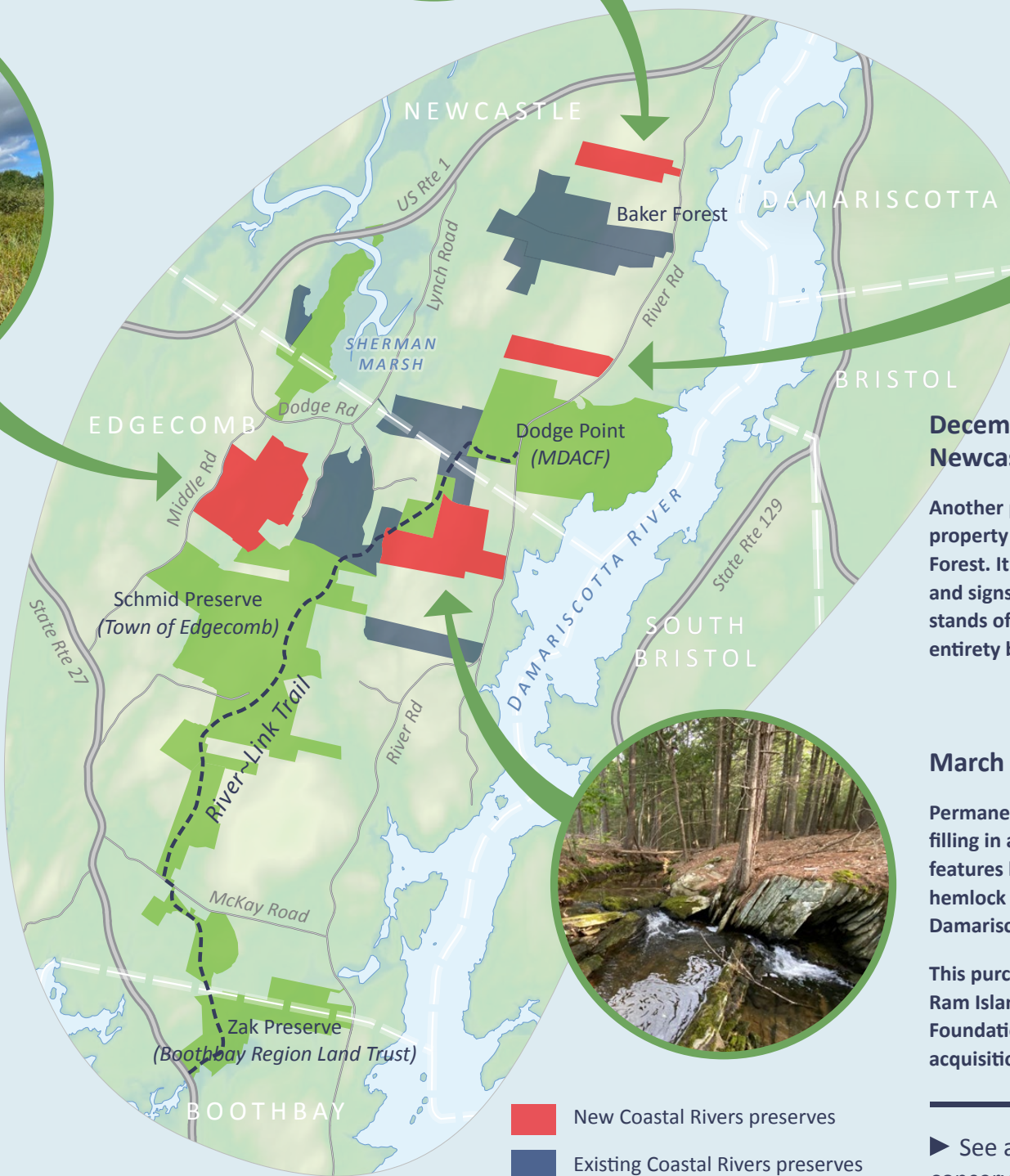
December 2021: 73 Acres, River Road, Newcastle




Another purchase from the heirs of Carl Piontkowski, this property lies in the gap between Dodge Point and Baker Forest. It's a moose haven, with lots of fresh moose tracks and signs and a canopy of mature trees, including large stands of hemlocks. This purchase was made possible in its entirety by Bob and Roberta McLaughlin.

March 2021: 165 Acres, River Road, Edgecomb

Permanently protecting a section of the River~Link Trail and filling in a large area of the conservation corridor, this parcel features beautiful streams and waterfalls, vernal pools, and hemlock groves. Water from the property flows to both the Damariscotta and Marsh rivers.

This purchase was made possible by the support of the Ram Island Conservation Fund of the Maine Community Foundation – also a partner on several previous River~Link acquisitions – joined by Bob and Roberta McLaughlin.



-  New Coastal Rivers preserves
-  Existing Coastal Rivers preserves
-  Conserved by partner agencies and organizations

► See a complete map of Coastal Rivers' conserved properties at coastalrivers.org/about-us/what-we-do/land-protection.



Treasured viewscape and trail lovingly conserved on Great Salt Bay

Thanks to the foresight of Lawrence (Larry) and Barbara Townley of Damariscotta, and the generous partnership of their children Lonny and Mary, productive farmland along one of the best viewsapes in town has been forever conserved.

Through a provision in their wills, Larry and Barbara gifted to Coastal Rivers a 17-acre conservation easement along Oyster Creek on Great Salt Bay in Damariscotta. It's right next to Coastal Rivers Salt Bay Farm Preserve, which recently grew by 32 acres with the addition of the Chapman Field & Forest property.

Larry passed away on March 7, 2021, predeceased in 2019 by Barbara. Married in 1957, they bought the property on Great Salt Bay in 1994 and lived in the home they called The Farm at Hollyhock Inn for well over twenty years.

In addition to being good neighbors and friends, Larry and Barbara were long-time supporters of Damariscotta River Association, now Coastal Rivers, and Larry was President of the DRA Board of Trustees in the late 1990's.

Lonny reflects, "Mom and Dad sought their own piece of paradise in retirement. They realized their shared dream in Damariscotta at The Farm at Hollyhock Inn by the shores of the Great Salt Bay and Oyster Creek. They lived that dream amidst a welcoming community of friends and neighbors, and always enjoyed sharing the sweeping hay fields for passive recreational pursuits. I'm thrilled that we are able to fulfill our parents' dream that the property under the conservation easement perpetually remains ecologically pristine and available for the enjoyment of all."

Mary concurs, "It's our joy to share this property with the town of Damariscotta and the many friends we've made."

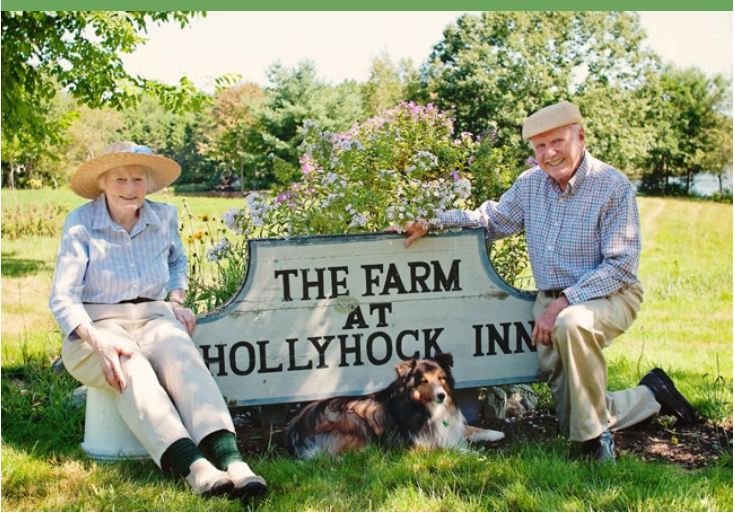
The gift of the conservation easement came to fruition on December 21, 2021. As with all conservation easements, the land will continue to be owned by the family, with certain permanent restrictions that endure even if the property is sold.

Along with the land, the Townleys made a generous contribution to Coastal Rivers which the Board has invested in stewardship funds to help us care for our conservation easements.

Like Salt Bay Farm and Round Top Farm, both now held by Coastal Rivers, the Farm at Hollyhock Inn was once among the holdings of Edward Freeman that stretched from the center of town in Damariscotta by Oak Gables all the way to the Damariscotta-Nobleboro town line at Oyster Creek.

The property includes rolling fields and a sweeping stretch of shoreline. Haying of the field will continue, while the vegetative shoreline buffer will be widened to protect water quality in Great Salt Bay. What's more, public access to a much-loved mown trail where dogs are permitted off-leash – one of few such trails in the area – is now permanently protected.

Left, the Townley easement (foreground and left in this photo) lies along Oyster Creek, an arm of Great Salt Bay. Below, Barbara and Larry Townley, along with their Sheltie Peter, pictured at their home on Belvedere Road in Damariscotta.



What is a conservation easement?

You may be acquainted with many of Coastal Rivers' 71 preserves: special natural areas like Plummer Point, La Verna, Crooked Farm, Witch Island, and Salt Bay Farm.

Fewer people are aware that Coastal Rivers also holds almost as many conservation easements. While not as visible as public access preserves, conservation easements, or voluntary landowner 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 Coastal Rivers to become a partner in forever maintaining the natural resource values of their land.

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, Coastal Rivers commits to ensuring that the particular values and resources named in the easement are not harmed.

Most of the 61 conservation easements held by Coastal Rivers were donated by landowners who wanted the wild or working nature of their land maintained forever. The Townley Easement (adjacent article) combines scenic, wildlife, and water quality goals. In addition, unlike many of our conservation easements, it offers public access as well.

► **Interested in learning more about options for conserving your land?** Contact Joan Ray, Director of Land Conservation, at 207-563-1393 x310 or jray@coastalrivers.org.



Highlights of the new trail at Keyes Woods Preserve include views of a quiet, winding stretch of the Pemaquid River (above) and intriguing old stone foundations (below).

Tales from the trails

New trail along the Pemaquid at Keyes Woods Preserve

Our newest trail, located on Poor Farm Road in Bristol, is now open to visitors!

Keyes Woods is a beautiful wooded property in Bristol extending east to the Pemaquid River, with over 1,900 feet of shoreline and a free-flowing tributary stream shaded by hemlocks. The outflow of this stream, at a quiet bend in the river, is a hotspot for waterfowl viewing.

Crisscrossed with moss-covered stone walls, the preserve offers a number of interesting features including old stone foundations and glacial erratics. Wildlife such as deer, porcupine, and ruffed grouse are abundant.

Pemaquid Watershed Association, with assistance from Damariscotta River Association, acquired the 70-acre property in 2018 shortly before the two

organizations unified to become Coastal Rivers. Purchase of the property was made possible by the generous support of George Keyes, joined by his brothers Henry Keyes and Jonathan Keyes.

The parking area and kiosk are scheduled to be completed this spring. To visit the preserve, follow Poor Farm Road for one mile and look for a woods road on the right with a chain across it and a couple of small signs. *Please note, because of its importance to wildlife, no dogs are permitted at Keyes Woods.*



As Bittersweet Brigade volunteers will tell you, it's hard work, but also good therapy and good fun.

Bittersweet Brigade: In for the long haul

Every week, weather permitting, the Bittersweet Brigade meets in the hedgerows at Round Top Farm or Salt Bay Farm, clippers and loppers in gloved hands. These intrepid volunteers have a single purpose: to eradicate over-abundant, non-native invasive plants like bittersweet, barberry, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose. Such plants out-compete native plants that are important to birds and insects, while the vines suffocate host trees.



Bremen and Coastal Rivers volunteers showed up in force to tackle projects such as trail trimming and building bog bridges.

A fruitful partnership with the Town of Bremen

In 2021, the Bremen Conservation Commission reached out to Coastal Rivers with an invitation to partner with the town in caring for the Hilton

O'Connor Trail, located on State Route 32 in the Bremen Town Forest.

The 1.4-mile trail meanders through woods, a winding salt marsh, and a wildflower meadow where monarch caterpillars can be found munching on milkweed in late summer.

Together, a joint group of volunteers and Coastal Rivers staff spruced up the trail, removed invasive bittersweet and barberry, and began work on a long bog bridge through a wet area. We look forward to continued teamwork in the 2022 season!



Coastal Rivers volunteers take a well-earned break while constructing sturdy steps over a rough section of trail at Dodge Point in Newcastle.

Improvements at Dodge Point

Dodge Point Public Land in Newcastle is one of the Bureau of Parks and Lands' most highly visited properties. Fortunately for the Bureau, Coastal Rivers takes a very active role in local stewardship of the preserve and its well-loved trails.

This past year, staff and volunteers built sturdy bog bridging in spots along the Shore Trail. These structures make it easier to navigate the trail as well as protect tree roots and help prevent erosion.

► Find a trail to explore, or a volunteer opportunity just right for you, at coastalrivers.org!



COASTAL RIVERS
CONSERVATION TRUST

PO Box 333
Damariscotta, ME 04543 USA

This newsletter brought to you by clean energy

The ground mount solar array behind Darrows Barn at Coastal Rivers Round Top Farm is now online!

The 231 kW system is estimated to generate over 312,000 kilowatt-hours per year. 80,000 kWh will power all of Coastal Rivers' facilities, and the remaining 232,000 kWh will be used by our friends at Kieve-Wavus Education.

According to ReVision Energy, our partner in this net zero journey, the power the entire array produces is equivalent to:

- Offsetting 34,392 pounds of carbon annually
- Driving 277,740 miles in a passenger car per year
- Cooking 1,040,000 bowls of chowder
- Charging 208,000 cell phones per year

Keep tabs on our daily production by viewing the solar's output here: <https://bit.ly/round-top-solar>.



Ten out of ten messenger pigeons agree: Email is the best way to stay current with Coastal Rivers! If you don't get our monthly eNews, be sure to sign up at coastalrivers.org.

