Places to Walk, Places of Beauty: Two New Projects

The mission of the Blue Hill Heritage Trust is to work with landowners to conserve a variety of places on our peninsula that have special significance to our communities. These places include wildlife habitat, cultural or historic sites, scenic view spots and high quality agricultural land. They also include places where people can walk in the woods or along a stream – quiet, beautiful, undeveloped natural areas where we can get away for a bit of time in order to restore ourselves.

These places are of increasing importance as more people in our community recognize the health benefits of walking. They are also in diminishing supply. Unlike some other areas of the state, here there is very little public land available to provide this recreational opportunity. People have traditionally relied on the generosity of friends and neighbors. As the woods and fields in our landscape get sold and converted to residential or commercial purposes, and as “no trespassing” signs appear, those traditional access points are lost.

Two new projects were made possible by landowners who both recognize the importance of these places and were willing to work with us to ensure continued public access.

Peters Brook

Acting on a conservation interest that had existed for years, Bill Byers, Corinne Byers Sucsy and Marti Byers-Gay worked with us to design a conservation easement that would protect the natural qualities of an 18 acre portion of their family land that forms a key part of the corridor of land along Peters Brook in Blue Hill. The easement allows them to continue to manage the forestland on the property, as they have done for years under the guidance of a licensed forester, but eliminates their development rights in the land. Because they have a strong community spirit, are aware that fishermen and hikers use the land, and recognize that it may be a place appropriate for educational purposes, they also included a provision in the easement which will allow public access over a trail on the land.

As with all conservation easements, the land remains in private ownership but the ownership rights are limited by the conservation restrictions set out in the easement deed. In accepting the grant of the easement, the Blue Hill Heritage Trust assumes responsibility in perpetuity for monitoring, and enforcing if necessary, the terms of the easement. In this case, the Trust also assumes management responsibility for the trail in partnership with the landowners.

What a great gift to our community.

“As a child this piece of woods along Big Peters Brook held a special place in my life. Here was a place to see, feel, smell and sense the very essence of life. It was a sacred space, so fragile, and yet so ready to give up its harvest of woods, fish, rabbits and deer. I learned here to respect the wilderness, that it was OK to hunt fish and cut wood but to do so with a respect for what was being given and taken.”

— BILL BYERS

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Two new projects
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South Street to Parker Point Road Trail

In 2002, Healthy Peninsula, which works to promote healthier lifestyles in our local communities, convened a meeting to discuss the need for places for people to walk. That initial discussion led to the idea of a walking trail from South Street to the Parker Point Road that would provide an off-road walking connection between two parts of the town. With the landowners’ permission, the trail was subsequently laid out on a single parcel of land and then developed by volunteers, including students from the Liberty School and the Bay School, who regularly travel on foot from their schools on South Street to the center of Blue Hill village.

When the land sold a few years later, the new owner, Lorenzo Mitchell, not only supported the idea of a trail across the property, he agreed to take action to ensure both that the trail would continue to be available and that it would have some necessary management oversight. He also wanted to protect the beautiful natural qualities of the interior of the property, with its huge pines and diverse woodland plants and obvious wildlife habitat value. He accomplished this with the grant of a conservation easement to the Blue Hill Heritage Trust.

The twelve-acre easement area includes trail entrances on both South Street and Parker Point Road as well as the interior of the property, where no development will be permitted. The easement expressly allows public use of the trail corridor under the management and oversight of the Trust.

Thanks to this partnership between BHHT and a generous landowner, the story of this community trail continues.

Big Doings in Orland: Great Pond Mountain Wildlands

Our friends at the neighboring Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust, based in Orland, are undertaking a major project worthy of note. They have purchased 4200 acres of woodland on and around Great Pond Mountain, a major element in the visual landscape of all who travel north on Route 15 from Blue Hill toward Bucksport. The land provides diverse wildlife habitat and has outstanding recreational potential given its easy accessibility, including expansive views from several hilltops. The Trust now is in the midst of a $2.86 million capital campaign to repay the purchase loan and provide stewardship funds.

About $750,000 remains to be raised. You can help, or learn more, by contacting GPMCT at POB 266, Orland, ME 04472.

BHHT Board Member
Paul Birdsell Comments:

Two comparisons come to mind in attempting to describe what this area offers. One is that it represents a little bit of the Great North Woods located in the middle of what is becoming an increasingly busy coastal area. Also, it seems to embody some of the values of Acadia National Park, with its gravel road system and its peaks with extensive views, some of Acadia itself. It is a unique piece of conservation land.

2006 Walks & Talks: A Full Moon Hike, Berry Picking, Workshops

It was rewarding to begin our eighth annual Walks & Talks season with two successful workshops on the grounds of our own Carleton House office property, as well as a tour of one of our early farmland conservation properties. We are off to an enthusiastic start! We hope you will join us for one of the series of events that continue through September. They are family-friendly, free and open to the public.

~ Pam Johnson, Board President

For information, to register or for directions, please call 207-374-5118.

Monday, July 10th – 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Full Moon Hike Up Blue Hill Mountain
Jim Dow, BHHT’s Executive Director, will lead a moonlit hike up Blue Hill Mountain. Bring flashlights and meet at the town parking lot on the Mountain Road in Blue Hill.

Saturday, July 22nd – 9 a.m. to Noon
Stream Ecology at Peter’s Brook
Learn about streams and the plants and animals that live there while touring a new conservation property along Peter’s Brook. This conservation property will become a classroom where workshop leader Mark Whiting will teach participants basic stream ecology as well as how to protect and take care of a stream.

Saturday, August 5th – 9 a.m. to Noon
Blueberry Pick and Hike at Cooper Farm on Caterpillar Hill
Join us for a free blueberry pick. Bring your own containers and stay all morning or just stop by. A marked trail is also available for a morning walk. A guided tour of the trail will take place at ten o’clock for those interested.

Saturday, August 19th – 9 a.m. to Noon
Explore Great Pond Mountain Wildlands
Tour this 4,200-acre conservation property in Orland, recently purchased by our neighboring land trust, the Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust. The beginner to intermediate hike will include both even and uneven trails with some steep climbing.

Saturday, Sept. 9th – 9 a.m. to Noon
Managing Forests for Wildlife and Wood Products
Learn about forest management techniques that conserve wildlife habitat and forest biodiversity while realizing economic or other benefits. Rob Bryan, a Forest Ecologist from Maine Audubon will lead a tour of a 160-acre demonstration woodlot and discuss the creation of a plan that will manage for both wildlife habitat and forest products.

Summer 2006
Volunteers: We couldn’t do it without them

Thank you to the following volunteer trail workers, trip leaders, photographers, wildlife surveyors, committee members, and office helpers who have recently donated their time and expertise:

- Dick Bartlett
- Peter Beaven
- Leslie Clapp
- Peter Colman
- Leslie Cummins
- David Drake
- Tim Farrar
- Peter Clapp
- Tim Garrity
- James W. Dow
- Bruce Norelius
- John Merrifield
- John Richardson
- Misha Mytar
- Susan Hand Shetterly
- Andrew Gagne
- Stan Myers
- Sal Rooney
- Hugh Sadlier
- Tim Seabrook
- Bob and Ruth Gagne
- Bryan Gagner
- Leda Beth Gray
- Fred Heilner
- Andy Kandutsch
- Bob Marville
- Chick Moseley
- Stan Myers
- Sal Rooney
- Hugh Sadlier
- Tim Seabrook
- Bob and Ruth Sullivan
- Rick Tonge
- Anne Walker
- and Holly Weinberg.

New volunteer opportunity

We need a handyman who likes old buildings to help with various maintenance and renovation projects at our new office. If you have building skills, time and an interest in keeping up the home that William Carleton built in 1815, please call us.

Surry First Graders Use Blue Hill Mountain Conservation Land as a Classroom

One part of our mission is to increase public understanding of the value of land and water conservation. We were thus thrilled to learn that Anne Martina, a first grade teacher at the Surry Elementary School, had found a way to make our Blue Hill Mountain conservation land a classroom for her students. Here is her report.

“I wanted the children to know and love Blue Hill Mountain, and to go there often with their families. Pairing that goal with our school’s emphasis on fitness and healthy nutrition, we set out to climb the mountain once a month from September to June. Each month’s hike had a particular focus in science or social studies, learning about the rocks, the trees, the animals, the Native Americans. In November we did parts of the trail in silence, thinking about the Native Americans who spent time on Awundi, and also to hear sounds we miss because of all of our chatter. The children were joyous and exuberant most of the time. The children recorded all of this in a journal, and in the Spring, they each made a map of the mountain and the trails, which included a key for locating and naming certain areas.”

Land for Maine’s Future Program Selects BHHT Farmland Forever Project

In May we were pleased to be notified by the Land For Maine’s Future program that our latest farmland protection project was one of 31 projects throughout Maine that were selected as finalists for the current round of funding approved by voters last November. To receive the funding we must now work with the landowners and the Maine Department of Agriculture to finalize the details of a conservation easement, as well as locate private matching funds.

This project seeks to protect the soil resources of the King Hill Farm in Penobscot, a diversified, family owned organic farm established in 1971, serving both local and state-wide markets. Its soils are among the highest quality of any farm in Hancock County as a result of decades of careful management by the owners. Because the transaction will involve the purchase of development rights in the land, we applied for help from the Land for Maine’s Future Program, our state’s land conservation funding program created by the Maine Legislature in 1987 and supported by a series of bond issues approved by Maine voters.

This project continues our Farmland Forever program, which to date has ensured that over 1600 acres of privately owned, high quality local farmland will remain available for agricultural purposes. If successfully completed it would be our third farmland partnership project with LMF.

Conservation Land as an Artist’s Inspiration

Sedgwick Artist Leslie Anderson visited our office recently to paint. Among the paintings inspired by her visits was this one done at Carter Nature Preserve. It is one of a set of four paintings (12“x12” acrylic on canvas) that she donated to us in gratitude for our work, with the hope that we will use them for fundraising purposes. They are proudly displayed at our office. Come and look. Thank you, Leslie.

Summer Trail Intern

Andrew Gagne is joining our stewardship team this summer as our Trail Intern. Andrew grew up in Blue Hill, graduated from George Stevens Academy in 2005, and is currently a student at Plymouth State University majoring in Adventure Education. We are grateful to Healthy Peninsula for helping to fund this position through its mini-grant program.

Our Farmland Forever program has preserved over 1600 acres of prime farmland.
Camp Stream Parcel Added to Kingdom Woods Conservation Area

The late Conrad Rupert once owned hundreds of acres of land near Camp Stream close to the Blue Hill/Sedgwick town line. Conrad carefully managed the forests on this land, for which he had great affection. When he decided to sell some of it, he not only looked for the right buyer, he added his own deed restrictions to ensure that his careful stewardship of the property would continue. One of the parcels that he transferred years ago has now come to us.

The parcel includes about forty acres of land and a long stretch of Camp Stream, which has its headwaters near North Blue Hill and flows into the Bagaduce River in West Sedgwick. Like most water bodies, it has special importance to wildlife, including eagles, which have been seen perched on its shores. The parcel was of special interest to us since it abutted the edge of our Kingdom Woods Conservation Area, a primary purpose of which is to provide wildlife habitat.

When the owners, a group of women who had acquired the property from Conrad for conservation purposes, approached us about accepting ownership, we were pleased with the opportunity and the result. Since Conrad was also one of the early visionaries of our Kingdom Woods Conservation Area, we think he, too, would be pleased.

Our Stewardship Committee began the forestry project last winter.