



***“Hiking has been my salvation! Thank God for BHHT and all you do. I for one am so grateful. It has also brought my daughter and I so much happiness, time together, and invaluable discussions.” – Theresa Kelley***

This spring was a challenging time, with many unknowns and lots to worry about. Yet, while we all dealt with quarantining, working and learning from home, and checking supplies, something delightful happened. Many of you went outside and found comfort in nature and a deeper connection with your place and your families.

At BHHT, we put out a tote of free trail guides at our office in March, and community members from around the peninsula dusted off their hiking shoes and hit the trails. For some of you, this was your first experience on our trail systems, and we were delighted to hear about what you discovered.

BHHT’s social media feed and email was flooded with thank-you notes and pictures of families, couples, and your canine hiking friends. Our trails also hosted socially distanced hikes so grandparent could see their grandchildren, and all the photos and messages of gratitude made us very happy. They further cemented in us how important this work is not just for the environment, but for community.



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“HIKING HAS BEEN MY SALVATION!”  
ON THE TRAILS AND ON THE WEB DURING A SPRING OF SOCIAL DISTANCING  
2020 SUMMER NEWS  
BLUE HILL  
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You may have noticed that staff, volunteers, and contractors have been chipping away at the two main trail links in the heart of Blue Hill over this past winter and spring. The Parker Point – South Street Trail boardwalk construction phase is complete, having installed 274 frames for 1,127 feet of tiered boardwalk steps. The staff and volunteers have now transitioned into laying gravel on the trail to lessen the impacts of exposed tree roots and wet sections. The Age-Friendly Trail that starts at Tenney Hill and connects with the PP-SS Trail is also making some serious headway. Staff and contractor Jason Lepper, of Hart Farm Land Clearing, are spreading a Park Surface gravel mix to make a durable 6 foot-wide path leading into the lovely forested area behind the First Congregational Church on George Stevens Academy property. Blue Hill Heritage Trust will manage this trail segment under a 10-year trail license agreement with GSA. A socially distanced “grand opening” for the trail system will be held later this summer.







It has been a strange spring this year, full of the unexpected for all of us, and with more challenges to come I'm sure. BHHT weathered things well, despite having to work from home for about ten weeks. We discovered, like so many others, that while we missed the comradely of the office, working remotely is possible. It was possible to keep working outside on stewardship projects and trail maintenance, too, and all of this turned out to be very important for a lot of people dealing with quarantine and pandemic.

At a time of year when we usually see the lightest use of our trails, we found full parking areas, as people got a break from staying home. Spring is usually the time of year we start getting school kids out in the woods again, but this year we had to engage with them and their parents remotely, passing on ideas and plans for what they could do out in the woods as families. In both these areas of our work, it felt good to be able to support our communities during a time of uncertainty.

It's worth noting, too, that the support was reciprocal. I want to send out a special thank you to everyone who sent in a donation this spring in response to all the upheaval. Thank you for thinking of us when there was so much else to think about. BHHT also gets substantial support from foundations for specific projects, both in outreach and stewardship. Many of those foundations offered to remove restrictions from awards this year, if needed, so that the money could be used for any purpose. We are grateful that we did not need to accept these offers, but in both private and foundation support this spring, we felt highly valued. That was a good feeling. There's a lot of land and community conservation work to do going forward, and we are looking forward to being there for you like you all have been there for us.

In other news from the spring, I'm happy to tell you that we welcomed two summer interns into our program. After quarantining, they joined George and Sandy in the middle of June. Also, if you haven't seen it for yourself already, the structurally unsound buildings on Caterpillar Hill have been removed. This was the final step in completing Phase I of this project, which was a partnership between BHHT, Island Heritage Trust, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the Land for Maine's Future program. Many thanks to Jeff Gray, too, for doing such a great job opening the view for us and removing a hazard.

In the coming months, we will share our plans for Phase II of this project. This will include landscaping on the former building site and an age-friendly/accessible trail through part of the field, leading to a lookout. This trail will be a companion to the accessible trail in downtown Blue Hill, and we hope will allow even more people to get out and enjoy our lands. Stay tuned for details.

Enjoy reading all here within, and as always thank you for supporting our work and your community. I have no doubt that there are more unexpected events in our future and challenges to overcome. I'm also sure that we and our communities will meet those challenges.



The Expanded View at Caterpillar Hill

Despite the recent hot, dry weather, this spring started off stormy and wet, which kept the stewardship crew very busy. George and I, and our trail steward volunteers, spent many hours out in the woods in March and April cleaning up after spring storms. After one particularly bad windstorm, we had to clean up several massive blowdowns at Blue Hill Mountain, Peter's Brook, Hundred Acre Wood, and other trails. Clearing large blowdowns is dangerous work – the trees are often layered on top of each other, under immense weight and pressure. Trees must be carefully removed one at a time from the treacherous pile, and we always need to be aware of changes in pressure, movement of the tree, and other hazards overhead and underfoot. With patience, focus, and teamwork, however, George and I can usually get the mess cleaned up!

The wet spring also encouraged a problem of a very different nature – beavers. Beavers are highly attuned to take advantage of any constriction of water and often use culverts and bridges to create dams. Beavers are very active in the early spring when they are preparing their dens to pup, and for the past several years beaver have been damming the bridges at Surry Forest. This threatens to flood and erode the roads, so we have been continually pulling out the dam material over and over. Beaver are tenacious, however, and this becomes a never-ending battle. This year, instead of fighting the beaver we tried something different and installed “beaver deceivers” at each bridge.

Jason Lepper and Crew  
Starting the Trail

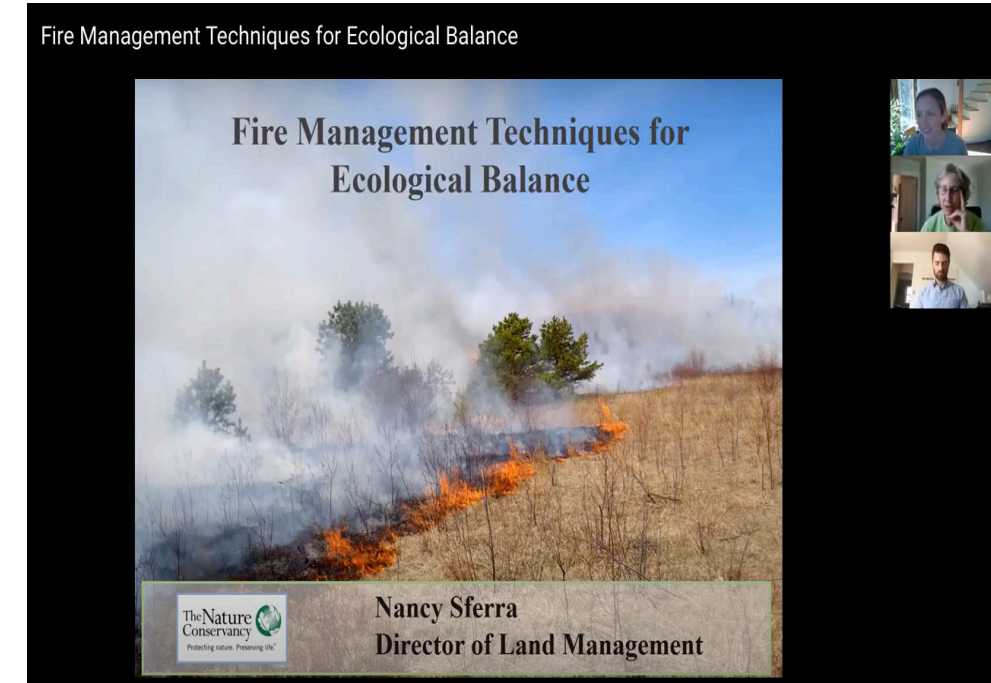


Installing a New Beaver Deceiver



Clearing a Dangerous Tangle of Trees

Beaver deceivers block the bridge itself with metal fencing, but the real key is installing a culvert out into the pond which draws water from a distance. The beaver may still try to dam the fencing around the bridge, but they will have a hard time figuring out how to block the water coming in from the culvert out in the pond. George and I installed the deceivers in early May and so far, so good – the roads at Surry Forest have remained dry.



priorities and values in our work and how to take action steps in achieving what is most important for our organization and our community.

Our **Friends from the Field** webinar series has been a success from the beginning. Co-hosted by Island Heritage Trust, we meet over zoom every Thursday at 4pm to learn from a member of our community about everything from lady slippers, to fire ecology, to turtles, to smelt, to seaweed, and more! Over 500 people have registered for these online events and just shy of 400 have actually attended. The recordings are available on our website and our YouTube channel.

*“I have attended the first two webinars and want to tell you I think they are terrific; so well done and engaging. At this time particularly, it's great to learn about where we live because getting into nature is one of the things we can actually do. I thought both speakers were just great. They explained their subjects in such clear and engaging ways, I enjoyed learning so much. I look forward every week now to these sessions. A big thank you to you and all responsible.” - S. M.*

We have received wonderful feedback from participants, like the one above. One participant, who generally summers on Deer Isle, tuned in from the UK to be a part of the community she loves even while stuck overseas in lock-down. The webinars have allowed people to gather from all over the country - and overseas - to learn something new about the land, which we all love. We have groupies who attend every webinar, and it is so nice to see them again each week in this little online community we have created. The webinars will continue through the summer, so stay tuned!

The creation of free resources has been another big project this spring. This includes a collaboration with the Blue Hill Public Library making our Wild Sun Catcher program virtual by producing videos about local plants twice a month and hosting special guests from the community, such as Merrie Eley and Way of the Earth School. We have a new page on our website dedicated to free resources produced by BHHT, volunteers, and collaborators, so if you need new ideas for outdoor engagement, check it out! There are scavenger hunts, stories, nature journaling tips, and more. Our weekly enews also includes more of a variety these days with wild recipes, plant of the week, race and land resources, and a volunteer spotlight. All of this is an attempt to show that we have much to be grateful for even during this hard time. The land is steady in offering gifts and comfort to us all.

What does Outreach look like during a pandemic? It's storytrails, weekly naturalist webinars, production of a myriad of free resources for teachers and parents, and an increase in enews letters from once a month to once a week. We have shifted and adapted to the times. Though we really miss being outside with our friends at Forest Days, and were sad to cancel most of our traditional summer programs, we are using the time to build new and deeper collaborations, to create archives of resources for now and future use, and to spend more time reflecting on