

There was an intricate set of do’s and don’ts this year with COVID-19, but Blue Hill Heritage Trust pushed through with hiring two interns under the James W. Dow Intern Program. This year was our third consecutive year having two fully funded summer interns, and we think it turned out to be a pretty typical summer, despite masks and social distance.

In early June Miranda Flora, a recent graduate from Colorado State University, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Management arrived in Blue Hill and quarantined at her donated housing in South Blue Hill. In mid-June, Andrew Czwakiel, a rising senior at University of Maine-Orono in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, joined the team thanks to funding from Maine Coast Heritage Trust’s Richard G. Rockefeller Intern Program.

Miranda and Andrew quickly became valued members of the “family,” and brought broad educational and practical experience to the organization. We had twenty-six applicants for these positions, which made us feel like BHHT has excelled in providing an experience coveted by many, providing experience in all aspects of land trust work.

Our interns learn trail maintenance and construction, outreach, forest management, communications and development, and land management, but our overall goal is to teach a stewardship ethic that goes beyond just how to take care of trails or the forest. We are helping develop the next generation of conservationists, from those that want a career in conservation and land management, to future philanthropists who wish to support important conservation work everywhere.

Funding for the intern program received a huge boost this year from the Anahata Foundation, and the endowment for interns is now close to the \$100,000 level. Our target for the endowment is \$400,000 to fund the program in perpetuity. We are greatly appreciative of this gift and are very happy to see our passion for this program being shared by our partners.

Planning for next year’s crew of interns is in the works, even as we miss this summer’s team. If you would like to learn more about our past interns, you can find a link to the program on our website. If you would like to donate to the James W. Dow Intern Fund, you can do that on our website too.



Miranda, George, and Andrew on the New John Murphy Trail



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Your 2020 donation means more to us than ever, and this year there are new tax rules that we want you to know about, as they benefit everyone.

You have made our work possible for the last 35 years, and this year more than ever we felt the need for, and urgency of, those efforts. Whether working to protect important land on the peninsula, creating fun and engaging educational programming, or building and maintaining a broad network of trails for our community, the Trust helped people through the “stay at home” spring and the summer of social distancing.

It would not have been possible without you, and we need your continued generous financial support, because 2021 no doubt holds new challenges for all. With your support we will be ready again to help in all the ways we can.

Everyone should be aware of the ways the 2020 CARES Act can benefit charitable giving, by making a new benefit available (up to \$300 per taxpayer or \$600 for a married couple) on charitable donations, even for those who take the standard deduction and do not itemize. For those who do itemize deductions, there are also changed rules that will benefit them and the organizations they support. We very much hope that you will take advantage of these one-year tax changes to support our work, and we also hope you will consider an increased donation. It would really make a difference this year.

Our work is your work, and we thank you for being our partner. With your help, we will stay strong and ready to serve our communities and environmental health of the peninsula.







This Spring, as the weather was getting warmer and we were all feeling some relief from staying at home, Beth, Landere, and I spent a morning planting seed potatoes on our Salt Pond property in Sedgwick. It was only six or seven rows, so not a big project for the three of us. The hard work of digging the trenches had been done the day before by Chrissy, a few current and former interns, and a group of volunteers. It was nice to be out in the sun and doing some good work.

The idea of planting potatoes there came together on the fly, in response to the shutdown and the economic aftermath of the pandemic. Deb Suran, owner of Maine Garlic, was donating seed potatoes to anyone who wanted to plant them for those anticipated to be in need later in the year. We had the field at the Salt Pond, which seemed like a promising location, and we were all concerned about food security at that point in the pandemic. In normal times, nearly a quarter of people on the peninsula experience food insecurity a few days a month, and this spring only made that a more pressing issue. We were in a good position to help, and the potatoes grew through the summer.

Harvest happened in September (cover photo), and delivery was made to the food pantry. Because of the drought, it wasn't a bumper crop, but for everyone involved it felt good to be acting toward meeting a need at a time when so much felt beyond anyone's control. It was a great way to build community, as well as help community, as number of volunteers noted afterward. Those who dug potatoes that day felt like a team.

That Salt Pond property came to us in 2017, a gift from the Next Generation Foundation of Maine, and I'm quite sure no one at the time thought about growing food there. The foundation gave BHHT the field and adjacent woodland, and they gave the town of Sedgwick an adjoining lot, so that people could recreate and have access to the Salt Pond. Recreation and access to open spaces proved a godsend for many people this spring, but this was another way that land was proving central to our lives.

In good times and challenging times, land is respite, land is learning, land is sanctuary. Land is also sustenance we were reminded, and in challenging times that may be most important. In the end, when people come together on the land like this, and put their hands to work with it for mutual benefit, land is also the heart of community. The same is true when we come together to protect land for the benefit of all.

The central mission of the Trust is just that, to protect land for the benefit of everyone, and there are always new facets of that mission to discover. I don't know if we will ever plant potatoes at the Salt Pond again, but we will be exploring this new facet of our work more fully I'm sure.

Thank you as always for being part of our community, and for supporting our work. With your help we will continue to protect land and explore all the possibilities in that work.

Please stay safe and well.



to work clearing trees and prepping the site for construction. Before the winter rain/snow/ice and resulting frozen ground, the initial course gravel base was laid down along with two construction bridges in place to allow access beyond each of the small streams crossing the proposed trail.

About the same time that we were buttoning up the age-friendly trail for the winter, BHHT received a grant award from the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (ME BP&L) for the revitalization of the PP-SS trail. The grant was through the Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) which BP&L manages. Planning, purchasing, and excitement ensued! In June, BHHT contracted with the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) to construct and install, over 3 weeks, approximately 60% of the framework for the tiered boardwalk steps that now grace the trail. Staff, interns, and volunteers staged lumber and fasteners continuously along the trail, keeping the MCC 6-person field team stocked with framing supplies.

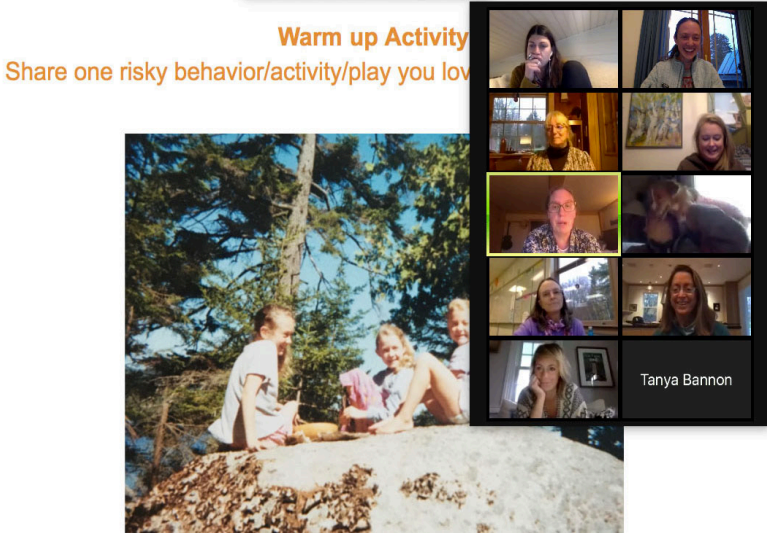
Much of the 2019 trail building season was impacted by wet weather and as a result the age-friendly trail experienced massive delays in construction. The PP-SS trail rehabilitation, without the need for heavy equipment progressed into late November, before any frozen ground conditions impacted construction.

In April of this year, construction activities restarted on both trails. We were pleased to open the age-friendly trail in mid-August and christened it in memory of the late John H. Murphy, a supporter of many organizations on the Peninsula, and a former BHHT board member. We finished the PP-SS trail rehabilitation in late October, sixteen months after our initial groundwork.

Much of our trail work could not happen without our dedicated volunteers, and two summer's intern cohorts have played an enormous role in the PP-SS trail construction. Projects like these provide a lasting educational impact for those interns who are just starting their careers in conservation and provides a profound legacy for the organization as we teach a stewardship ethic to our future conservationists, supporters, and stakeholders.

We hope that you enjoy these two trail gems and reflect on how lucky we all are for the support and dedication of so many. It is also our great pleasure to play this role larger community vision for walking access throughout town. We look forward to fine tuning the connection at the top the PP-SS trail to the new sidewalks when they are built.

The year is 2018, August actually, and BHHT was awarded a challenge grant to build an age-friendly trail behind the First Congregational Church in Blue Hill that would offer a connection between Tenney Hill Road and the Parker Point-South Street (PP-SS) trail on a Conservation Easement that we held. This trail would be the first foray into the proposed vision of the Blue Hill Community Development group to create safe walking paths and sidewalks from the heart of Blue Hill to the blossoming business district along South Street. In September, after contracting with an engineering firm for a rough design and layout of the trail, Sandy and George got



themselves. This entails a series of zoom and in-person monthly outdoor workshops from September-June 2020-2021, a mini-grant for supplies, professional development contact hours, guest speakers, and creation of a resource handbook. Workshop topics include everything from risk management to tarp shelters, to maple tree tapping, to emergent curriculum, and land stewardship. We are excited to work with a core group of educators to help bring more outdoor learning to the Blue Hill Peninsula, not only to help during Covid times, but to help make this kind of education a lasting part of peninsula curriculum.

For those families who are remote learning or homeschooling we have also established a monthly zoom gathering to share resources. Need ideas for learning at home this year? Want to know more about what you can do on our local trails? Do you need download-able activities for your kids to do in the backyard? Martha Bell from Island Heritage Trust and I co-host the sessions along with a special guest from the community. We share activities, games, stories, answer questions about trails, hiking, weather, and offer space for participants to network and cross-pollinate ideas amongst themselves as well.

Finally, looking forward to 2021, we are thrilled to announce a new year long program series called The Steward's Almanac: A Year of Caring for the Land! This will be a series of educational workshops focused on learning skills of land stewardship relevant to everyone's backyards and beyond. Each month of the year, January-December, there will be a 2-3-hour workshop on a topic that pertains to the season and the needs of the land at that time. The workshops will be a combination of experts sharing their knowledge through demonstration and discussion, as well as activities that encourage hands-on learning experiences for participants. Stay tuned for more information as the new year approaches. Look out for workshops on edible landscapes, blueberry cultivation, ethical hunting, cranberry bogs, forest management, and more!

