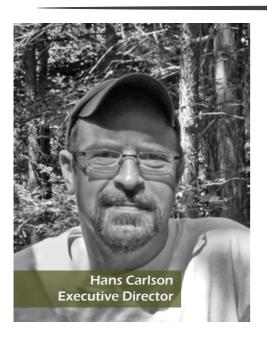
# BLUE HILL Heritage Trust

**2020 Annual Report** 35 Years of Land Conservation



# Focusing on the Good in 2020

2020 was a very different year than any of us expected when we were preparing last year's annual report. That was in February, just before Covid-19 redefined 2020 for us all. Being in a rural, out-of-the-way place protected us in many ways, and we weathered the lockdown and other challenges over the summer. Despite this relative safety, however, our communities have seen the impacts of the pandemic. Insecurity in food and fuel have grown for many, and I think that we have all felt a certain amount of anxiousness and vulnerability.

In this last year, we have also seen the great strength in local people and institutions. Neighbors and friends have been there for one another. Nonprofits on the peninsula have stepped up to help people, and have worked to create new collaborations with one another to amplify public benefit. All of this has showcased the power and vitality of local community. All of it too has demonstrated how important it is to keep community and local institutions strong.

The last year has been an educational experience here at the Trust, affirming many of our central beliefs and pushing us to innovate in some unforeseen ways. Land conservation is a long game, with many of the most important benefits out in the future where they can be difficult to define. This last year provided evidence for the near-term necessity of protecting land and open spaces. Our trails, which are usually at their quietest in March and April, saw high usage by a range of community members. The emails and Facebook messages we received from people expressing their gratitude told us clearly that our work was providing a lifeline. Decades of work were paying off, and it felt very good.

The same was true with our public outreach programming. Even though everything went virtual with the lockdown, participation increased because we were meeting people's need for engagement. We have talked internally for several years about needing to make programming more available over the internet, but not until 2020 did this shift become necessary. And when we did it, we found that we were opening doors for people in our community beyond Covid-19 and its limitations.

Organizationally I can point to this as one of the benefits of the pandemic. Now that we have gone online, we will not stop, and not just because this allows flexible participation for busy people, and widens our audience geographically. The pandemic has taught all of us lessons about being limited, something that many people live with all the time, and online programs meet their needs too.

We have been working on building more accessible trails to be more inclusive, but this was not something we had thought about in our outreach. Online programming will be part of this vision now going forward.

Challenges always offer learning and growth opportunities, and I feel that the Trust took advantage of 2020 to improve. In this report you will see some of the forms that growth has taken, and also how the core mission of land protection is still the foundation for all our growth.



## A Birdseye View of Conservation

One of the highlights in my time with BHHT is when I joined George Fields, our Associate Director, for his annual aerial monitoring of Trust properties. These fly-overs allow our stewardship team to observe our lands from above, providing a peek into the hard-to-reach interiors of large parcels, site changes on properties with easements, and the opportunity to document the landscape from a new perspective. This is also something we do as part of conservation best practices as an nationally accredited land trust.

I'd never flown so low over the peninsula before, and from my vantage in the back seat of the Cessna, I got a new take on a place I've known and loved for decades. For example, when I drive down Newbury Neck, it's not obvious that there is water so close to the west, yet from the air, the Neck is a long line between the dominant blue expanses of Morgan Bay and the Union River Bay. And from above, you can see how Blue Hill village proudly rises



up to meet the Mountain—the ascent begins when you turn up Pleasant Street or onto Mountain Road from Rt. 172. When walking the Post Office trail, I now realize how I'm climbing up the foot of the mountain as soon as I start on the steps behind Hammond Lumber. The magnificent extent of the Salt Pond, with it's tidal connections to Blue Hill Bay and Eggemoggin Reach, seems deeply grooved into the land, whereas the Bagaduce River winds a broad and serpentine route, making Brooksville nearly an island unto itself. These are textures in the land not apparent at ground level.

In conservation work, we reference and utilize maps all the time; they give helpful context through the political boundaries of municipalities and private property lines. They illustrate proximity and relationship between parcels and allow us to generally understand the lay of the land. They are a tool that serves a worthy purpose, but we also know, the map is not the territory.

The territory of conservation is a puzzle of social, economic, and environmental pieces which align to reflect the importance of land to our communities. In our discussions of the future of this work on the peninsula, we realize there are many ways to evaluate the landscape, and countless layers that coalesce to illustrate the reality of the environment. From climate change projections to migration corridors,



focus on watershed protection to scenic and recreational value, the skill of good conservation work is to see how and where these many factors work together, where they compete, and how our offer for a lifetime of stewardship will make the biggest impact.

Towards the end of our flight, we circled back around over Surry Forest, the boundaries of the parcel clearly identifiable from the intensive logging that took place just a few years before we purchased it. Down on the dirt road in the middle, we spotted the gray BHHT pickup truck and knew that Sandy, our Conservation Forester, was on the ground with other volunteers preparing for their afternoon's work. No matter what viewpoint you're looking from, 2,000 ft. in the air or on the ground with tools in hand, it's clear that our peninsula's land is precious and interconnected. This perspective remains at the heart of all our work. Our total 2020 operating budget was \$623,823. More than 75% of this went to mission-related work, including the staff hours and expenses in conserving new land. Another 15% funded management and administration. Less than 10% went to fundraising. In addition to our operating budget, we expended \$505,000 to purchase two new properties (see page 7).

In 2020, thanks to our generous supporters, total unrestricted donations to Blue Hill Heritage Trust were \$404,036. This funded 65% of our operating budget, and was the largest source of income for day-to-day work. Remaining operational income came from grant funding and restricted private donations for projects and programs. These included both community outreach and trails like the new Murphy Trail in Blue Hill.

The two land projects mentioned above were funded by \$400,000 in restricted donations, which were added to \$105,000 given in 2019. Additionally, we received significant donations to our long-term stewardship fund and the James W. Dow Intern Fund.

All of these restricted donations added to the net assets of the Trust, which stood at \$13 million at the end of 2019 and roughly \$14.5 million at the end of 2020. Included in this latter figure is the value of the donated communications tower on Blue Hill Mountain and pledges for 2021 land acquisitions.

Conserved land represents \$8,268,165 of our total assets. This land is held in perpetuity for all, so it is also a financial and community responsibility. All our other assets work to fund the long-term stewardship of our community land.

At the end of 2020, BHHT had just under \$4 million in investments for this purpose. In 2020, we moved these investments into ESG (Environmental, Sustainable and Governance) funds, better aligning investments with our mission. ESG integration aims to balance long-term financial need for a resilient and sustainable portfolio with organizational values.

2020 OPERATING EXPENSI	ES (not yet audited)
<b>Mission-related Operations</b>	\$474,105
Management & Administra	tion \$89,821
Fundraising	\$59,897
Total Operating Budget	\$623,823
Land Acquisition	\$505,000
Total	\$1,128,823

## 2020 INCOME (not yet audited)

Unrestricted for operations	\$404,036
Restricted for Acquisitions	\$400,000
Restricted for Outreach	\$78,500
Restricted for Stewardship	\$259,000
Restricted for Intern Fund	\$60,000
Grants for Projects	\$169,095
Leases, Merchandise, Other	\$1942
Interest & dividends	\$53,162
Total	\$1,425,735

Fulfilling our responsibility to the lands we protect, to the communities we serve, and to the financial resources we steward is only possible thanks to your consistent and generous donations. The contributions you have made and continue to make allow us to bring new lands under conservation, to complete and improve education and outreach projects, and to further our stewardship work. Thank you.

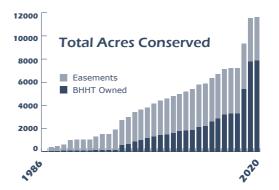
Each year the Trust has a financial audit conducted by an independent CPA. The Trust's fiscal year is the calendar year

2019 AUDITED FINANCIAL POSITION		
Liabilities & Net Assets (Including Land)		
Unrestricted Assets	\$6,749,008	
Assets with Donor Restrictions	\$6,056,101	
Current & Long-term Liabilities	\$200,864	
Liabilities and Net Assets	\$13,005,973	

Every land project has its own story. Sometimes it starts with a phone call or an email; sometimes people come into the office to talk in person, to find out about conservation and how it might work on their land. Sometimes it begins with a group of people who value a particular place on the peninsula, and who come with a question, or even a plan for conserving it. Projects are all unique.

The video series we started this year, called *A Story of Place*, is meant to highlight these individual "biographies" of conservation projects, like Blue Hill Mountain, or Kingdom Woods, or Surry and Meadowbrook Forests. Our goal here is to preserve some organizational history, and share it with the public, but also to show how none of these places we love just happened. A lot of people, over thirty-five years, have spent a lot of time on behalf of the community to make them happen.

We know from feedback that many of you have been struck by the complexity of conservation projects. This is something that landowners often learn in the process too. Conserving land can take years, and involves fundraising, legal work, and a lot of staff time. This is especially true of places like Kingdom Woods which is made of many parcels put together over time. It also takes a lot of staff hours and committee time to document and quantify the



conservation value of a piece of land, and to prioritize it with other projects. All this happens before purchase.

Once we have conserved a place, there are other responsibilities we must follow through on as part of our job. If conservation involves an easement, then we must monitor the property going forward, and maintain a relationship with the landowner. If conservation involves our ownership, then there is planning and execution of any number of things to be carried out: natural resource inventories and management plans, trail building, and habitat restoration to name just a few. This work of acquiring and stewarding land involves a majority of our organizational capacity.

It's intuitive to think of this as conservation work, since it is directly tied to the land. Yet there is more to conservation than that, and this involves the outreach arm of the Trust.

(Continued Page 6)





The series, *A Story of Place*, is also meant to highlight how BHHT is often involved in conserving stories and memories that relate to the land as well as land itself. Sometimes we get those stories from the landowner, but sometimes, like with the big forests, we don't hear about people's memories until after we have conserved the land. The stories and memories belong to the whole community, and they are told in chapters by individual people as we get to know the land. This is the less intuitive connection between BHHT operations and conserving land.

In the land trust world, we talk about protecting land "in perpetuity," meaning that our goal is to conserve land forever. We are also quite aware that the only real working definition of forever in this context is, "as long as people care."

Conservation, then, is also concerned with making meaningful connections between people and the land so they will care for it over the long term. This is why outreach is vital.

Outreach programming can be for adults, but it is especially important for kids who will be the future of our work. Either way, a program is successful when it creates an intellectual or emotional bond with place, when it creates a memory that can be shared today and into the future. This aspect of programming targets the long-term viability of the conservation effort, but outreach is important for the day-to-day business of conserving land as well. Outreach is about building trust in the community and establishing a shared set of values around protecting land for the future. Nothing is more important than trust in determining whether people come to us with their land and ideas about conservation.

Trust can only be built through dialog, and outreach programs are the first and best place to start those conversations. There is no doubt that our outreach benefits community in a variety of ways, but it is essential to conserving land in perpetuity.

Blue Hill Heritage Trust is multifaceted these days, involving a lot of varied professional expertise on the part of our staff and our volunteers, but the central focus remains conserving land for community and for future generations.

This is the core mission and vision toward which all your operational support goes. There is a multiplier effect in this which means that every level of gift to operations adds to the overall increase in land protected.

## 2020 Land Projects

We made two important acquisitions in 2020. The first added key acreage to our largest conserved area at Meadowbrook forest, in Surry, and the other conserved an important piece of agricultural land in Blue Hill.

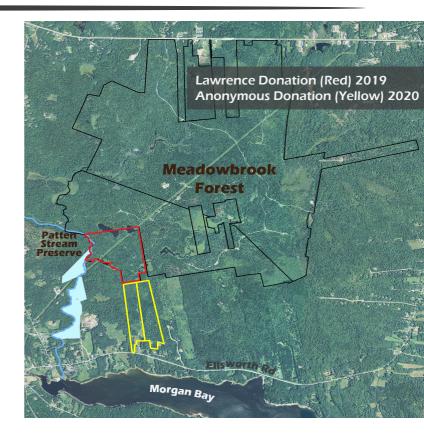
In 2019, we worked with the Lawrence Family Foundation to conserve 138 acres south of Meadowbrook Forest (in red on the map right) which protected important wetlands connecting with Patten Stream and our preserve there. The foundation donated a conservation easement to fulfill a permitting requirement for the new community health center in Blue Hill, and then donated the land in fee so that it could be added to Meadowbrook. They then put the southern lots (in yellow, right) on the market to help fund the facility.

In November, 2019, we were approached by a couple who wanted to know if we should own those southern lots too. New to the area, they wanted to be supportive of the health center and to conservation on the peninsula. We were very interested, not only to protect more forest near Meadowbrook, but especially because this would allow southern access along an old woods road. The transaction happened last January, and we will be putting in a public entrance off the Ellsworth Rd., in Surry, this summer.

The whole of the Meadowbrook trail system will then be accessible from Surry as well as Route 1 in Ellsworth. The donors wished to remain anonymous, but we thank them greatly for their generosity and their vision.

In 2020, we also conserved the last piece of open agricultural land in Blue Hill center. Across from the fairgrounds, it is only 11 acres, but it has a history of good agricultural use in the recent past. It was worked by Jean Hay and Dennis King in the 1990s, and then by Scott Howell and Sara Bushmann after that. It was Scott and Sara who approached us about conserving the property as farmland and who worked with us to make it happen.

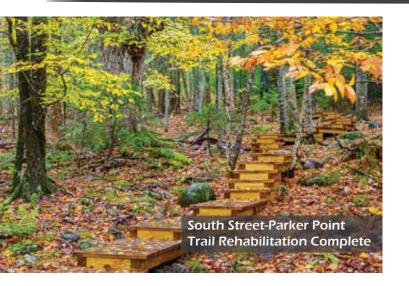
We are working on a plan for the property with a number of goals in mind. We envision a place



with vibrant activity that welcomes farmers, the press, community groups, and other partners. We want to do something innovative that provides real benefit to farmers, possibly through demonstrations, technical support, group purchasing, or on-site consultations.

We also envision activities that address climate change and agriculture, and which incorporate and uphold as many of our stewardship values as possible. We will have more to say on this in 2021.





The year began with getting the trails operational much earlier than usual because of Covid-19. With the help of trail stewards, our staff was able to accomplish this by the end of March, so that we could accommodate all those seeking some recreation and change of scenery in the woods. In response to the increased use of our trails at Penny's Preserve, we also had to expedite a new parking area off the East Blue Hill Rd. Thanks as always to Jason Lepper for making this happen so quickly.

In addition to this, as well as the usual round of stewardship activities that come with monitoring 3500 acres of easements and managing 7800 acres of our own land, the staff also completed some big tasks in 2020. Much of this was out in the woods, but important parts were in the office as well.

Managing forests like Meadowbrook and Surry demands understanding the land you're working with and planning accordingly. This last year, Sandy completed a number of ecological and timber inventories, and much of the groundwork in this was completed with the help of last year's interns (see following page). She also completed management plans for both forests.

As we think twenty, or even a hundred years in the future, these plans and inventories will guide us toward ecologically robust forestlands providing forest products sustainably. The most dramatic accomplishment of the 2020 stewardship season was George and crew completing the John Murphy Trail behind the Congregational Church in Blue Hill, and the upgrade to the South Street-Parker Point trail with which it connects. These were both multi-year projects involving many funding and work partners. The SS-PP trail in particular involved a lot of hard work by staff, interns, and a few truly dedicated volunteers who hauled timber and gravel where only brute strength could take them.

We especially want to thank The Clements Family Foundation, the Quimby Foundation, and the State of Maine for funding. The project was also made possible by the work of the Maine Conservation Corps. Special thanks too to volunteers Ken Burgess and Mari Arnaud.



The next big project, starting in the fall of 2021, will be another accessible trail, this one at Caterpillar Hill. Funding is now in place to begin this work, which will put down a packed gravel trail, with some viewing stations along the way. This will be done so as not to detract from the view, and will offer some quieter places to enjoy this treasured place.



We had two fantastic interns again last summer, Andrew Czwakiel from Vermont and Miranda Flora from Colorado. Miranda had just graduated from Colorado State when she drove to Maine and quarantined. Andrew had just finished his junior year at UMaine. In early April, we did not know if we could safely have interns with us, but summer weather and conscientious behavior by all made it possible. This went a long way toward making the summer feel normal at the Trust, even in strange times.

As usual, the interns got a wide variety of experiences, from muscling bags of gravel uphill on the South Street-Parker Point Trail, to timber inventories, to helping with outreach programs. If you have been on our website trails page and seen the interactive Google Map© for locating trailheads, you can thank Andrew. He worked on that through the summer and finished after he returned to UMaine last fall. In all these ways the Trust benefited greatly from intern work last summer.

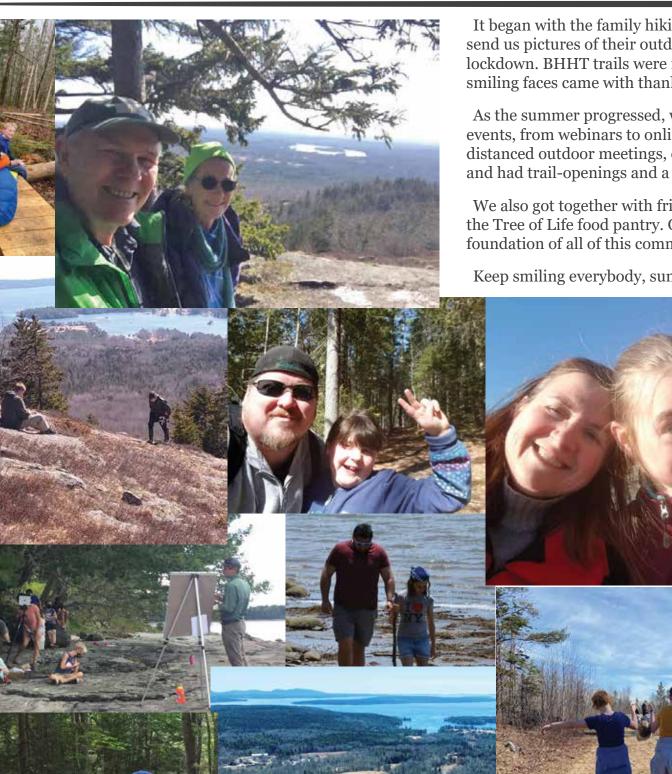
Our goal with the intern program is to engage the next generation of conservationists in all the layers of land trust work. They may choose to join another local land trust like ours, or work at a larger scale, and our goal is to give them the tools they will need. Miranda is now working as Rangeland Fire Outreach Coordinator for The Nature Conservancy, and Andrew will be interning for the Kennebec Land Trust this summer. One of our interns from two summers ago, Morgan Zenter, has taken a job with the Land Trust Alliance out of Washington, DC, and so is involved in conservation at a national level. Past interns are now working for the Vermont Park Service and also in New Hampshire lakes conservation, among other things.

We are doing important and innovative work in conservation here on the Blue Hill peninsula, and it is one of our strategic goals to influence the conservation community with our ideas and methods. Our interns are some of our best ambassadors in doing that, and this is every bit as important for the health of the Trust as the work they do while they are here.

We cannot wait to work with this year's crew, and we also want to thank those supporting partners who have helped build the James W. Dow Intern Fund to \$100,000. Our goal is to quadruple that in the next ten years, so that this program will continue in the long term.



# **Covid and Community Conservation**



It began with the family hiking challenge, when we asked people to send us pictures of their outdoor excursions during the spring lockdown. BHHT trails were never more important, and all the smiling faces came with thanks for the Trust's work.

As the summer progressed, we became more adept at both virtual events, from webinars to online art lessons, and also socially distanced outdoor meetings, events, and activities. We masked up and had trail-openings and a few small outdoor classes.

We also got together with friends and supporters to grow food for the Tree of Life food pantry. Our conserved lands were the foundation of all of this community activity.

Keep smiling everybody, summer is coming again soon!

Warm up









We were off to a great start in 2020, hosting a Winter Club at Blue Hill Consolidated School, leading winter hikes, running weekly Forest Days programming at Surry School through mid-March.

After that, the rest of 2020 required many creative adaptations in BHHT programs and events. Covid-19 may have limited our ability to interact with the community in person, but we made up for it in many ways, and it was a full year despite its challenges.

The *Friends from the Field* webinar series, a collaboration with Island Heritage Trust, was and is a huge success. *Wild Sun Catchers*, a partnership with Blue Hill Public Library, has been offering recorded programs and nature kits for families, encouraging them to explore on their own with online guidance. Science zoom meetings for homeschoolers, seasonal hiking challenges, exploration kits, and outdoor learning workshops for teacher are other ways we have connected with the community, though unable to be together on the land. Many of these programs were recorded and can be viewed online.

Along with reimagining what programming looks like during a pandemic, there was also time to reflect on BHHT outreach and how to "teach and practice a stewardship ethic," a key component of our mission. Over last summer and fall we developed a new program called *A Steward's Almanac: A Year of Caring for the Land.* This 2021 series is offering monthly workshops teaching stewardship skills relevant to backyards and beyond. The Trust has lined up experts from around the region who are sharing their knowledge to help us all become better caretakers of the place we call home. A grant from the Anahata Foundation has helped make this series possible as we support local businesses, farmers, artists, and more.

Workshops cover a wide assortment of topics throughout the seasons: backyard forest management; winter smelt fishing; caring for wild blueberries; composting for community; strategies for improving your soil; sustainable foraging & DIY herbal remedies; intertidal creatures as food and habitat; creating an edible forest; seed saving basics; ethical hunting practices; bringing back a constructed cranberry bog for productivity and ecological function; and pollarding and coppicing.



For now, these workshops are a combination of video and online zoom with Q & A, but we are anticipating that soon we will be able to be together again. As soon as possible, the series will be outdoors and hands-on, though it will continue to be on our website going forward.

We hope this series will convey that caring for land happens all year round and that everyone can be a good steward on a tiny patch of yard or in a community forest. We hope the practices in this series will inspire us all to think more deeply about what stewardship means in a changing climate, in building relationships with all beings, in big and small ways in our everyday lives.

Aaron Glazer Adam Chittenden Alex Drenga Alex Witham Andrew Czwakiel Ann Humphrey Ann Margaret Ann Pollard Ranco Anna Wind Avy Claire **Bailey Bowden** Barabara Putnam Barbara Kourajian Bert Yankielun Birdsacre - Grayson Richmond Blaise deSibour Bob Erickson Bob Slaven Bob Sullivan Brandon Reav Brett Ciccotelli Bridgit Dorrity **Brook Minner** Brooke Parish Brvan McLellan Bud Fisher Calvin Nelson Candace & Adam Gray Carol Dana Carol Leonards Cathy Rees Cheryl Laz Chris DeVore Christopher Austin Ciona Ulbrich Claire Malina Cynthia Winings Danielle D'Auria David McDonald David Porter DJ Case Donald King **Donnie Sinderson** Douglas Cowan **Edouard Beardsley** Eliza Minucchi Ellen Best Friends of Morgan Bay Galen Peracca Goshia Parker Grace M. Bartlett Hannah and Colby -Way of the Earth School Hannah Cyrus Hannah Webber Hayley King Hugh & Susan Curran Jake McCarty Jane Clifton Jim Kannry Jo Barrett Joe Hermans John Merrifield

Johnny Robinson

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Annual unrestricted giving is the financial cornerstone of all our work, and those individuals, families, and private foundations who contribute \$1000 and over to our operating budget annually make up our Heritage Society.

> Visionary \$50,000 and up

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We also rely on supporters who fund individual projects, whether those be land purchases, trail development, or outreach programs.

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