

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Success in Mid Coast's Middle Bay*

## **Dramatic loss of wetlands prompts vital \$16.5m in federal funding**

Strong memberships and a \$1m grant from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program key to success in protecting cherished waterfowl habitat, coastline, and island.

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Media kit with images available for use at: [www.btlit.org/news](http://www.btlit.org/news)

*Harpswell and Brunswick, Maine - January 24, 2014* - A new study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identifies a net annual loss of 80,160 acres of coastal wetlands across the country. Earlier today U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Jewell announced \$16.5 million in grants to conserve these magnificent habitats, including \$1 million in funding for Mid Coast Maine's Middle Bay.

The Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, and Maine Coast Heritage Land Trust have joined in collaboration under a their Middle Bay Wetlands Partnership to protect some of the region's most valuable coastal wetlands.

The \$1 million grant comes from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additional funding comes from the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Fund and from the local membership support within the three land trusts.

Middle Bay, located between Harpswell Neck and Mere Point, is a focus area because of its productive wildlife habitat for birds, shellfish, and other plants and animals. Land conservation projects protect water quality, which benefits fishing, clamming, and other marine industries.

The grants ensure that cherished open spaces in Brunswick and Harpswell will forever remain undeveloped, a goal that the owners of the property in Harpswell have had for generations.

*"My grandfather spoke often of never wanting to see Liberty Farm developed, and our family feels very fortunate that we are able to honor his wishes and preserve access to this special place for future generations."* said Eini Lowell, a member of the family who preserved their land with the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

Harpswell Heritage Land Trust will buy almost 14 acres from the Lowell family off Harpswell Neck Road near the Harpswell-Brunswick town line. The property is largely forested and it includes more than 1,600 feet of shoreline, which conserves 26.5 acres of marine wetlands. It will be open to the public.

The Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust will acquire a conservation easement on approximately 19 acres of fields that offer an expansive view of the upper reaches of Middle Bay Cove.

*"Our members, along with the foresight of the Skolfield family, are making a tremendous contribution to our community in Brunswick. The property that will be protected has a rich history that will be told for many generations."*

*Angela Twitchell, Executive Director of Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust*

Both conservation projects protect the water quality, coastal marshes, mud flats, and eel grass beds of Middle Bay. These properties contain valuable habitat for a variety of plants and animals, including shorebirds, bald eagles, blue mussels, quahogs, soft shell clams, and horseshoe crabs.

This is the second project undertaken by the Middle Bay Wetlands Partnership. In 2013, funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program allowed Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, with help from the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, to purchase part of White Island in Middle Bay. Though just 16 acres in size, the property conserves 47 acres of mudflats and eel grass beds.

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