Head of Tide Park: A Long-Held Conservation Vision Realized

Join us in June for the grand opening of Topsham’s first waterfront park on the Cathance River!

By Angela Twitchell

After more than 12 years of planning, acquiring multiple parcels of land, and building the park, I think it is no exaggeration to say it took a village to create Topsham’s first waterfront park on the Cathance River. This impressive community project started with the generous act of one woman, Elizabeth Kelso, and its success is an affirmation of the committed partnership between the Town of Topsham and Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, to say nothing of the generosity, hard work, and determination of countless individuals and organizations, and funding from local, state, and federal sources.

Spanning 12 acres of land on both banks of the Cathance River, Head of Tide Park is situated above and below the waterfall that is the highest tidal reach of the river. The Park came together through a complicated series of land transactions that began with Elizabeth Kelso’s bequest leaving a 1/3 interest in her property to the Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA). Then CREA Executive Director, Rick Wilson, and the CREA Board decided to use this inheritance as a springboard for conserving the entire property. The BTLT Board agreed to act as the project’s fiscal agent and for Board and staff to coordinate the conservation and fundraising efforts.

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Cover photo: The waterfall at Head of Tide Park in Topsham

The mission of the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust is to conserve, protect, and steward the cherished landscapes and rich natural resources of our communities, to connect people to nature by providing recreational opportunities and other engaging community activities, and to support local agriculture and fisheries, now and for generations to come.
A Note from Our Leadership on Conservation and Wellness
By Lloyd Van Lunen, Vice President, Board of Directors

Recently Margaret Wilson and I hiked through soft old snow down to the Cathance River to enjoy the rush of water over the rocks during an early spring run-off. The day before we had hiked the Giant’s Steps in Harpswell to enjoy surf left from the previous day’s nor’easter. The magical sound of water crashing over rocks always leaves our spirits in a better place. The exercise to get there is pretty good for us as well. Both experiences left us better, truly healthier.

This winter, we have been dining on winter vegetables from local growers with all the extra flavor and goodness they contain. Many of the growers at the winter market are partners with BTLT in the summer market. One bite of a Crystal Spring carrot tells you how awesome it is. Local food and its promotion make us healthier.

Working with our friends on the BTLT Board and committees, or volunteering at the garden or on trails is deeply satisfying. The energy and satisfaction from this goes a long way to offset the often-discouraging news of the day. Optimism, companionship, and a sense of accomplishment contribute to our health.

This year BTLT would like to focus on how our work contributes to the health of our community in many, diverse ways. We will be telling that story in our communications. We are also actively pursuing partnerships with area health organizations to make more people aware of the benefits of our programs and to encourage their use.

Nourishing ourselves with local food, exercising on miles of trails, delighting in engaging with others in a good cause: the Land Trust offers much to make us well and whole.

2018 Annual Meeting – NOTE CHANGE IN TIMING!
Beginning this year, the BTLT annual meeting will be held in November rather than June. At last year’s annual meeting our membership approved a change in our bylaws to allow for our annual meeting to be later in the year. This change allows us to hold the meeting several months after the close of our fiscal year so end-of-year financial reports can be finalized before presentation to our members. A save-the-date will be distributed soon!

BTLT Welcomes Our Newest Board Members
Averil Fessenden has lived happily in Brunswick for just over 40 years and loves the natural beauty of our area. She appreciates the many ways BTLT has contributed to our community – both by preserving beautiful natural areas and supporting community activities and livelihoods through such programs as the Crystal Spring farmers’ market, educational events for adults and children, and the Community Garden.

Jamie Tatham joined the BTLT Board in the summer of 2017. He works at Bowdoin College and recently served on the Board of MCHPP, where he helped launch their backpack program. Jamie enjoys the outdoors and became a registered Maine guide in 1995. He lives in Brunswick Maine with his wife and two children.

Peter Simmons moved to Brunswick in the 1970’s and has been using properties under BTLT’s umbrella for recreational activities ever since. He joins the BTLT board following a varied career in arts management and now consults with nonprofits about governance, program development, communications, operations, and fundraising.

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Farewell and Welcome

There are fond farewells and sad goodbyes in life, and the Land Trust’s recent parting with Caroline Eliot was surely both. At the end of 2017, after seven years of service to BTLT, Caroline Eliot moved on to pursue new interests and challenges.

Caroline was hired in 2010 to help BTLT prepare our initial Land Trust Alliance accreditation application. Her hard work and invaluable direction made us realize that what we were accomplishing was exactly what the accreditation process was supposed to do for a land trust – build a more sustainable, community-focused organization.

With the valuable policies and procedures associated with accreditation in place, only then did Caroline turn her attention and skills to stewardship. Caroline was in her element in the field building infrastructure and recruiting volunteers, but also doing the necessary record-keeping and negotiation, and calmly and professionally explaining easement requirements to landowners.

Caroline’s contributions to the Land Trust, tangible and intangible, are far too great to enumerate. She brought a critical eye, creative problem-solving, impeccable research skills, unparalleled record-keeping, spot-on editing, unequaled desserts, firm but diplomatic trail signs, and crucial grounding for a staff and Board that aspires for the stars. These are just a few of the much-loved assets Caroline brought to our organization which will be sorely missed.

With endings come new beginnings, and we have gladly welcomed Kate Klibansky to the role of Communications and Outreach Assistant. Kate graduated from Wellesley College in 2013, majoring in Environmental Studies and Economics. Before putting down roots in Portland, she spent winters in Utah’s Wasatch Mountains and summers in Alaska, Maine, or Massachusetts. She has experience in communications and education, and she worked as a farm hand at Crystal Spring Farm in 2017. She brings creativity, a strong work ethic, and an outgoing and persistently positive nature to her role at BTLT. Welcome Kate!

Woodward Point Fundraising Efforts Seeing Early Success

A first glimpse of the Woodward Point property in Brunswick takes your breath away. The beauty and wide-open feeling of its meadows and woods – adorning 10,000 feet of shore frontage along the New Meadows River – are striking. Eighty-acre coastal properties are rare and inherently unique in our part of Maine. You know immediately that this place is special and worth conserving – for our enjoyment today and for future generations.

A strong partnership between BTLT and Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) is making acquisition of this remarkable property possible. We must raise the funds needed to purchase the property and provide for its future stewardship by spring 2019. BTLT and MCHT have received preliminary commitments of over $1.5 million towards our $3.5 million goal, including $400,000 from the Land for Maine’s Future Program, $250,000 in individual gifts, and a bargain sale contribution worth $278,000. This property will be a remarkable addition to publicly accessible conserved lands in our region with hiking, skiing, picnicking, tide pool exploration, swimming, and hand carry boat access opportunities!

A 1:1 match is currently available for individuals who want to contribute to acquisition of this spectacular piece of land. If you want to help conserve this special place, please contact Angela Twitchell at angela@btlt.org or 207-729-7694.

BTL Re-Accredited!

Since 1985, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust has been preserving, protecting, and stewarding cherished places in Brunswick, Topsham, and Bowdoin. In 2012, we were one of the first land trusts in the state to apply for and be accredited by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTAC). Now, five years later, following a rigorous renewal process, we are proud to announce that our accredited status has been renewed by LTAC. As part of a network of 398 accredited land trusts across the nation, we are proud of our commitment to professional excellence and maintaining the public’s trust in our conservation work.
Woodward Cove is a pristine salt marsh and inlet east of Gurnet Road in the Cook’s Corner neighborhood of Brunswick that has long been valuable to clam and worm harvesters. We are delighted to begin building trails on this 18-acre property with frontage on the cove, which BTLT purchased in 2016.

Thanks to funding from the Fields Pond Foundation, Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and Land for Maine’s Future fund, we will begin work on a water access trail from the parking area to the marsh this summer. An informal footpath on neighboring private property has been the traditional means of accessing Woodward Cove, used primarily by shellfish and bait worm harvesters. Relocating this trail onto the Land Trust’s property will ensure that local harvesters have permanent access to Woodward Cove – the third most productive clam flat in the area.

The water access trail will also allow the public to view the property’s 1,500 feet of tidal frontage and diverse bird life, such as breeding saltmarsh sparrows and nesting eagles and herons. When the water access trail is complete, work will begin on a loop trail that will invite visitors to explore the property’s woods, streams, and rock features, home to numerous wildlife species. The water access trail and associated loop trail will be carefully designed to minimize erosion and other impacts on Woodward Cove’s ecological values.
According to the EPA, Americans spend 93% of every week indoors, and it’s hurting our health. The good news is, simply spending time in nature has been linked to lower stress levels, improved memory and fitness, and even reduced rates of heart disease and increased longevity.

With BTLT’s 20 miles of public trails and 30 public-access properties, we are uniquely positioned to promote health and wellness through access to nature. This year, with support from the Quimby Family Foundation, we are pursuing this goal through multiple initiatives and partnerships with other community organizations.

Trails give community members and visitors of all ages the opportunity to walk, run, ski, or snowshoe for their health, and to find the stress relief that natural settings provide. Scenic vistas, clean water, and access to swimming, fishing, and paddling are a few more ways that conservation supports community wellness.

In addition, our Farmers’ Market, Community Garden, and the Merrymeeting Gleaners provide access to fresh, local food, as well as the joy of visiting with neighbors. Our Labyrinth in the Woods offers a place to slow down in a centering and peaceful space. In 2017, we were proud to collaborate on establishing an interim perimeter bike route across Brunswick Landing (the former Navy base). Creating this route was part of our ongoing effort to enhance recreational opportunities at Brunswick Landing, and we look forward to many more recreational amenities there.

In the spring and fall, Brunswick’s first grade students will again visit our community garden to plant seedlings and harvest food, learning about plants, food, and community. Over the summer we will bring low-income children and at-risk teens to the Garden to get their hands dirty, try new foods, and experience a beautiful, green community space. Research shows myriad benefits to the mental and physical health of children who spend time in natural spaces, and children who engage with growing and harvesting food are more likely to eat diverse, healthy diets as adults.

We are planning several new wellness initiatives this year too. A monthly trail run will offer a way to get out on the trails with neighbors. ‘Forest bathing’ (no, it doesn’t involve water!) is in the works with local wellness facility Jade Integrated Health. Forest bathing is a guided practice of getting outside, slowing down, and taking a break from the stress of daily life. Lastly, we are working with the Access Health Coalition and Merrymeeting Food Council to establish a “Wellness Rx,” where healthcare providers “prescribe” specific outdoor activities, resources for accessing fresh, healthy food, and cooking classes.

If you are interested in volunteering on any of these programs or efforts, please contact Lee Cataldo at lee@btlt.org or 207-729-7694.
When I think about how this extraordinary project came together, I am both grateful for and in awe of the foresight, vision, and commitment of those whose leaps of faith made this waterfront park a reality: Rick Wilson, former executive director of CREA; and CREA’s Board of Directors; Liz Armstrong, former chair of TDI, and TDI’s Board members; the Town of Topsham’s Pam Leduc, Rich Roedner, John Shattuck, Rod Melanson, and Board of Selectmen; Jack Erler, lawyer for the estate of Elizabeth Kelso; the Head of Tide Park Committee (Carla Rensenbrink, John Cullen, David Selleck, Bill Boyd, Steve Chandler, Chris

“Head of Tide Park is a wonderful example of a highly effective public-private collaboration that fulfilled community goals articulated in Topsham’s Comprehensive and Natural Areas plans. Working together allowed both entities to accomplish so much more than was possible working alone — to the great benefit of the public.”
You are Invited!

Join us Saturday, June 2, 2018 for the Grand Opening of Head of Tide Park.

History and ecology walks, hikes, paddles, and more! Visit www.btlt.org/events for more information.

Learn much more about Head of Tide Park’s history, ecology, and recreational opportunities at www.btlt.org/head-of-tide
The 121-acre Tardiff Property offers significant frontage on both the Muddy and Cathance Rivers in Topsham. This property is home to important wetlands and wildlife habitat and will soon have a trail system. Many thanks to the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program and Merrymeeting Bay Trust for funding this exciting new acquisition.

The 125-acre Bunganuc Woods Property on Highland Road in Brunswick consists of beautiful farm and forest land that was conserved through acquisition of an easement over a period of six years. Located in the agricultural corridor encompassing Pleasant Hill and Highland Roads, we are working with farmers and landowners to ensure that agriculture continues to thrive on these historic farms with high-value agricultural soils.

Our 86-acre Coleman Farm easement in Pennellville grew by 34 acres through a donated easement. The new acreage consists of farm and forest land along Middle Bay and exemplifies how active agriculture and protection of sensitive natural areas can go hand and hand.

The 3.2-acre Smart Property runs along the Androscoggin River behind Riverview Cemetery on Elm Street in Topsham. This small property has a big impact on the recently built Topsham River Trail, which provides great views of the Androscoggin River. Conservation of the Smart property ensures this popular downtown trail will remain open to the public into the future.

Roundup of Recent Conservation Successes

Plots Available at the Tom Settlemire Community Garden!
Annual plot fees are $50 for BTLT members, and $60 for non-members

Apply For Your Plot Today!

Plotsholder Benefits:
• 10’ x 16’ garden plot
• Two wheelbarrows of compost per year
• Fencing around entire garden and three-foot, wood chipped paths between plots
• Access to garden-related information
• Potential for participation in bulk orders of row cover and other gardening supplies
• Access to the communal garden shed, wheelbarrows, tools, and water tanks
• Composting area for disposal of garden waste

Scholarships are available if this fee is financially challenging for you.
Volunteer Spotlight: 
Emily Anderson

Emily is an enthusiastic and dedicated volunteer who has been an incredible asset to us periodically over the past two years. She will be sorely missed as she heads to Vermont Law School this fall to pursue her goals in community sustainability and conservation.

“I graduated from the University of Maine with a degree in Ecosystem Ecology in May of 2016. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the many projects found in environmental non-profits so I chose to volunteer with the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust because of their dedicated work as stewards of many local properties, and their mission to work closely within the community on conservation issues. From community outreach events to the behind-the-scenes of land conservation, my time as a volunteer at BTLT has not only given me many tools to apply in future non-profit work but also a greater appreciation for how local organizations can make an impact on the communities that surround them. My hope is to ultimately work in a non-profit or university creating programs that enhance community sustainability and biodiversity protection in many areas of the world.”

Thank you, Emily, for your hard work and dedication in support of BTLT!

General BTLT Volunteer Needs:
- Database management, specifically skills with Microsoft Access for our stewardship and lands database
- Identifying and remediating invasive terrestrial plants
- Repairing minor wear and tear (benches, garden cart, etc)
- Building a shade structure
- Gardening
- Painting and roofing a “Little Free Library” for installation at our community garden
- Refinishing farmers’ market benches
- Painting farmers’ market shed
- Monitoring trails
If you can help with any of these, please contact info@btlt.org. Thank you!

Plant Sale Volunteer Needs:
- Digging and potting plants during the month of May (variety of times to be announced)
- Plant Sale set up at Masonic Hall on May 23rd, 24th and 25th
- Helping at the Plant Sale on May 26th: Cashiers, parking attendants, assisting customers with purchases, and cleanup.

If you’d like to help or want more information, please email plantsale@btlt.org or call Mary at (207)729-8631

2018 Farmers’ Market: 
May 5 through November 3
This year, our 19th, we welcome four new vendors to our lineup.
- Copper Tail Farm – goat milk products including cheeses, yoghurt, kefir, & fudge
- East of Eden Flower Farm – cut flowers, bedding plants, succulents & wreaths
- Mere Point Oyster Company – American oysters
- Turtle Rock Farm – canned specialty foods, specialty organic vegetables & broth

Join us as we once again celebrate the incredible diversity of local farmers and producers in the beautiful setting of the Land Trust’s Crystal Spring Farm.

The Taking Root Plant Sale is the biggest fundraiser of the year for our Tom Settlemire Community Garden.

Each year the Garden provides space for over 80 families to grow their own food, volunteer opportunities for hundreds of community members, educational and research opportunities for elementary and college students, and thousands of pounds of fresh produce for our partner Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program.

The sale is a great place to get perennial and annual flowers and vegetable seedlings. Visit www.btlt.org/plant-sale for more information.

Plant Donations Needed
Legacy gifts can extend your commitment to conservation. Your bequest to Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust helps secure our long-term sustainability and ensure that your commitment to protecting natural habitat, watershed areas, and scenic landscapes is upheld well into the future. It can support our goal of making certain that the places we save today will remain protected and stewarded for generations that follow.

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust has created the Legacy Circle to recognize and thank individuals and families who have included us in their estate plans. Legacy gifts, made in a will or other estate planning vehicle, are the cornerstone of the Land Trust’s long-term sustainability. We are deeply grateful to each Legacy Circle member for this very special expression of loyalty, confidence, and support.

For more information on planned giving opportunities, please contact nancy@btlt.org to request a brochure, or visit www.btlt.org/planned-giving.

“I have included a planned gift for BTLT in my will because this organization has provided me with important ways to build a rewarding life that feels solid and connected. As I move into my Grandpa days, I become more focused on those things in my life that I value. Spending time with my family is very special and the time I spend with nature is special. Fishing in a local river, standing beside the waterfall at Head of Tide in Topsham, hiking a new trail, making cider from old trees on a conserved property—all put me in contact with nature in ways that make me feel connected to a life that is just right. Every time I think about it, my commitment to a planned gift feels good!

It’s our chance to do good things together! I hope you will consider adding a planned gift as part of your legacy to Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust.”

– Tom Settlemire, long-time BTLT Board Member and past Board President.

Business Partner Spotlight:

Flight Deck Brewing, located at Brunswick Landing, is walking the walk—not only do they support local conservation by partnering with Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, they also produce their beer with 100% renewable energy.

“Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust represents the best of what greater Brunswick has to offer: incredible outdoor recreation, a robust community of caring people, and a strong sense of fun that includes fresh beer! The Flight Deck team couldn’t be more excited to have BTLT as a partner and community collaborator.” – Nate Wildes, owner of Flight Deck Brewing

We are equally excited to partner with you, Flight Deck! Thank you for your support!
Annual Fund Update

Two and a half years after the close of our successful comprehensive campaign, our Annual Fund is stronger than ever. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, combined with the strength and dedication of our staff and board, we’re earning a reputation as one of the most solid and progressive land trusts in the state.

When the campaign ended in 2015, the Annual Fund raised $182,000. Since then we initiated our Community and Business Partners giving programs (annual gifts of $1,000 or more) and the response has been terrific! We currently have 28 Business Partners and 52 Community Partners. In addition, our general membership has remained committed and strong with 1,000 members supporting our work. By the end of our last fiscal year (June 2017), the Annual Fund had grown to nearly $240,000.

From July 1, 2017 through the middle of April 2018, nine and a half months into our fiscal year, the Land Trust has raised $204,587 in Annual Fund donations and has 837 members (including 52 Community Partners and 28 Business Partners). While these results are promising and we’re excited by our progress, we need to maintain focus to meet our FY 2018 goals by the end of June. We’re working hard to attract a total of over 1,000 members by the end of our fiscal year (June 2018), and striving to raise an additional $50,093 to reach our Annual Fund goal of $254,680.

You can help reach our goals. If you know someone who loves to learn at our Gardening Workshops over the winter, shops for their weekly groceries at our Farmers’ Market over the summer, or uses the outdoor recreation opportunities we offer year-round, encourage them to join you as a member! The support of all of our members makes our conservation work, stewardship efforts, and diverse community programs possible.

Please renew your membership by June 30 if you haven’t given since July 1, 2017! Visit www.btlt.org/membership to renew or join today!

Thank you to the diverse business community that supports our work

We are fortunate to have strong support from our vibrant local business community, helping us improve the quality of life and economic vitality in our region. Together, we are forging a path to a sustainable future where the Brunswick-Topsham region will always be a special place to live, work, and visit.

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust Business Partners play a key role in advancing our mission by contributing $1,000 or more of unrestricted support to the Land Trust annually. To find out more about becoming a Business Partner, please visit www.btlt.org/business-partners.

Please help us thank our Business Partners by supporting their businesses:

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust Business Members contribute up to $999 of unrestricted support to the Land Trust annually.

Albert Putnam Associates
Anevay Solutions, LLC.
Applew ald Farm
Atayne
Bar Harbor Bank & Trust
Bowdoin Baking Company
Boreal Breads
BRP Inc.
Carrot Signs
Center Street Cycles
Chad Little Power Equipment
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Country Fare
Crystal Spring Community Farm
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www.btlt.org
Thank You for Your Support!

After the long Maine winter, we’re finally able to embrace the warmer temperatures of spring and summer and the outdoor joys that come with these greener seasons. The rivers are flowing rapidly, trees are budding, and flowers are starting to bloom. There are trails to walk, gardens to plant, rivers to kayak, clams to gather, and so much more. We do not take the beauty, abundance, and delight of these natural resources for granted.

We want to thank you for what you have done, as members of Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, to make all of this possible. Our conservation and stewardship goals are achievable largely because of support from a broad membership base – more than 1,000 families, individuals, and businesses. Working together, we are making a greener and more sustainable future possible, not just for our generation but for our children and our grandchildren.

We are your land trust, and we are grateful for your membership.

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust At-A-Glance

- 2,685+ Acres of Conserved Land
- 4,500+ Pounds of fresh produce for the food insecure
- 35+ Educational Events in 2017
- 56 Properties Managed
- 300+ Volunteers