



Early morning
at Union Farm
in Eliot.

Notes from Union Farm:

Multiple Habitats Beckon at a Historic Tidewater Farm

The love of and communion with landscapes is age-old. For some, like us, the sights and sounds of a spectacular landscape are evident every day, close to home.

When we bought a dilapidated farmstead in 2005, we soon realized why the original residents chose to build their house and barns on this site in 1852. The surrounding fields were perfect for agriculture – hay, crops, and apple trees as well as forage for their herds of cows and sheep. The nearby tidal Sturgeon Creek provided a source of fish and the woods edging the Creek were a valuable resource for building. Like many early settlers, they were clever in choosing their acres of land that yielded many uses in four seasons, creating a thriving tidewater homestead, which subsequent owners turned into a dairy farm.

We don't fish the creek, or keep herds or farm like they did, but the natural resources they harvested continue to yield many returns.

It started with the meadows. There's something in the way tall grasses wave in the breeze, the beauty of the saturated colors in the wildflowers and weeds, mixed in with the green-then-golden hay stalks. Some seasons, the meadow blazes with streaks of color: yellow buttercups and hawkweed, purple Ragged Robin, white daisy and asters in many hues.

It was impossible to ignore the abundance of birds. That first year, we saw eagles, herons, four kinds of hawks, bluebirds, killdeer, and owls. We calculated the coming and going of seasons according to their arrival, nesting, departure or wintering over. The interconnectedness and biodiversity of the three overlapping habitats around the farm was profound, especially given that a busy commuter corridor runs past our northern field, in plain view.


Springtime is especially active around the farm. Close to the house, trees in the orchard blossom; early flowers erupt in the gardens; the lawns turn emerald, chives sprout in the herb bed. Beyond this, acres of resurgent meadows sprawl on three sides of our place. Further to the southeast, the Great Heath joins the meadows and to the west, an extensive mixed hardwood forest nestles fields of intact cattails along the Creek.

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A Letter From the Executive Director



On Connection

Finding and celebrating connection is a part of the foundation of what makes us. Our sense of community and working together has allowed us to thrive as a species. In our rapidly changing world, we all need to take a moment to reflect on our connections—not only to nature and the bigger world around us but also connections to our past, present, and future. At the Maine Land Conservation Conference in Brunswick, there were discussions on Indigenous Peoples, BIPOC, low-income, and LGBTQIA+ access and how we can better serve these groups. It

is our responsibility and goal to maintain these conservation spaces we manage so that they can be enjoyed and available to everyone, forever. There is always more we can do, and we want to put policies in place that create real progress, but we need to start that conversation first, we hope these efforts addressed here will move that conversation forward.

Great Works Regional Land Trust is working with other land trusts in the southern Maine area to better educate ourselves on how to serve the full spectrum of our community better. We are currently participating in group discussions with guest speakers about topics ranging from land back to decolonization themes and promoting better cultural access. As the Executive Director, I'm on the lookout for how we can provide equitable justice and inclusion within our organization and how we engage with the larger community of southern Maine and beyond. There are smaller-scale efforts such as making a select number of complimentary tickets available through the six towns we operate in for our upcoming Wild & Scenic Film Festival in partnership with the Leavitt Theatre in Ogunquit on September 22nd, 2024. This event will raise funds for an ADA trail in Ogunquit in collaboration with the Recreational Trails Program grant in 2025.

At our Annual Meeting in 2023, we had guest speaker Enock Glidden, who spoke on trail accessibility, his own experience in navigating trails, and his user experience with wheelchair access. I also went to the training program led by Enock and have since brought those materials to our organization to have meetings with our staff and board on how we can achieve better accessibility, not only in the physical realm of trail construction but also in how we use wayfinding in our printed materials, our signage, and how we can better accommodate various users with vital information on trail conditions and information on our website.

There are significant and challenging questions to ask ourselves i.e. finding ways to engage with and provide access to Indigenous Peoples, and it needs to start somewhere. We started a southern Maine group formed of the surrounding Land Trusts to do our own research before approaching First Light out of respect for their time and our own desire to learn. We created the Indigenous Relearning Conservation Collaborative, and we have pooled our resources to start a journey to be better prepared before we ask for feedback and further training. I encourage everyone to investigate the history of Maine and its colonization and how we can form better connections not only to our essential ecological resources but with our past, present, and future. It's impossible to put the importance of these topics to words. However, to begin a dialogue, we need to better understand how we all experience access and inclusion.

The first step in this journey is to seek a better understanding and there is no better way to learn than by engaging with each other.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jordan P. Kelley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jordan Kelley,
Executive Director, Great Works Regional Land Trust

Letter from the Board: Sue Pike, North Berwick

When I joined the Great Works Regional Land Trust Board of Directors my goal was, and still is, to play a role in the education and outreach arms of GWRLT. As a high school teacher, this role made the most sense. Teaching is a second career for me. I resisted the draw for a long time until realizing that my interest and passion in life is connecting to nature, to the wild side in all of us—and of equal importance—in sharing that passion with others. As a teacher, I felt I could connect these goals, I could make a difference by giving my high school students a chance to study and to play in nature. I work with teenagers, many of whom experience a nature desert. For one reason or another (interest, economics, accessibility) they are unable to ever be in nature. Those are the kids I want to reach. I want to plant some seeds, acquaint them with their wild cousins—the trees and fungi and mammals and birds that live in the woods around us.

Protecting land is central to every land trust, especially as land is increasingly developed and the open and wild places we enjoy shrink. An equally important function of any land trust is to connect people with nature so that they will fall in love with it and want to protect it. Landowners can protect their land for the future by putting their land into conservation through either direct donation of the land or an easement with their local land trusts. Landowners are naturally vested in this process and play a tremendous role in conserving our local landscape. But what about those who don't own land, or whose land isn't suitable for formal conservation? We all have a voice in our communities, we all have the ability to sway public opinion and make protecting our open and wild lands a priority in our towns. We need everyone (even schoolchildren) to be vested in the idea of putting land into conservation easements and then

supporting the work it takes to maintain that conserved land into the future.

In his famous 'Land Ethics' essay Aldo Leopold wrote "We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." The work of a land trust is to do just that, educate and build community around protected land. Conserved lands protect us from flooding and other extreme weather events, of growing concern in an era of rapid climate change. Conserved lands improve the quality of life and property values in the community. This is where the education and outreach committees come in. Every GWRLT parcel doesn't need to become a preserve with trails and parking lots. But developing outreach programs on our preserves, planning public events at Beach Plum Farm, working with schools to create meaningful research opportunities for classes at select preserves makes the most of our conservation efforts. Public engagement and education is vital to a sustainable future, not just for any Land Trust but for any community.

When I think about what North Berwick will look like to my grandchildren, conservation of wild places has become more important to me than it was even a few years ago. I am grateful to be able to use my particular skill set in an active role as a member of the board. As a long-time educator, being involved in the conservation work of GWRLT has allowed me to practice what I preach.

– By Sue Pike of North Berwick, Maine

Sue Pike is a science educator in the Dover, NH school system, an avid hiker and naturalist, as well as nature columnist for Foster's Daily Democrat and Seacoast Online, in addition to being a member of the Great Works Regional Land Trust Board of Directors.



The Heath trail at Grants Meadow.



Grants Meadow at Beaver Dam Heath Parking Area Kiosk.

A Closer Look at Conservation: The Projects Committee

Great Works Regional Land Trust has proudly conserved over 7,600 acres of land in the past 38 years. While every single conservation project is unique, they all have one common denominator, according to Daniel Maxton, Community Engagement Coordinator. "That denominator is an awesome committee of volunteers known as the Projects Committee. They are the heart of the organization." Jane Brekke is the current Chair of the Projects Committee. It is a role she enjoys because for her there is no greater sense of satisfaction than in conservation. Originally from West Virginia, she grew up going to York Beach and fell in love with the state of Maine. She and her husband became Maine residents in 2012 and live in South Berwick. "We live near many Great Works Regional Land Trust properties and have hiked almost all of their preserves," says Brekke. "I've always had so much respect for their work and joined the organization as its Land Protection Coordinator two years ago before I offered to chair the committee." While the Projects Committee has no formal charter, it is comprised entirely of volunteers that meet with staff members Jill Crosbie (Stewardship Director), and Dylan Hertzberg (Land Protection Coordinator). Currently there are nine members who meet monthly to offer their valuable experience and help evaluate conservation opportunities.



GWRLT board members, volunteers, and contributors celebrate the closing of GWRLT's 153rd and 154th completed conservation projects, the Wickwood South and North Conservation Easements.

The conservation opportunities at the center of this committee are brought to the table after Hertzberg's review to see if they honor the goals of GWRLT's strategic conservation plan. "Does it help preserve wildlife, wetlands, water quality, air quality, public access? Does it have historical significance? At the end of the day, will our involvement provide clean healthy living for all humans?" says Brekke. Projects are not taken on lightly and are not completed quickly. If the committee feels that the project is a fit for GWRLT, members meet with the landowners to get a firsthand perspective on what they hope to accomplish. They will also conduct site visits to walk the land. The committee uses a conservation matrix to ensure that projects are thoroughly and properly vetted before they are presented

to the Board of Directors for approval. "We ask a lot of questions in our due diligence and talk to surveyors and attorneys. There are obviously legal considerations to review such as deeds, appraisals, are there ordinances on the property, who abuts the land, and who needs to be informed once the land is acquired," says Brekke. In the projects committee, a detailed and comprehensive approach to land acquisition and creation of conservation easements is crucial.

While GWRLT will sometimes reach out to property owners in their priority areas, it is more common for property owners to reach out to GWRLT—to preserve, to maintain, to protect their land. For Brekke, one of the best things about being on the Projects Committee are the conversations that members have with landowners. "You learn so much from people who want to donate. Donating is a very benevolent act. People say you vote with your dollar and donating land has just as important of an impact. Land donors have put the environment over the dollar and that is so admirable. Their conservation spirit is shining through." The projects committee has a distinct role in the conservation process, but the generosity of landowners and their passion for their land within the broader landscape is what makes conservation possible.

In the complex world of conservation projects, financial considerations are integral to an effective conservation process. As a land trust, GWRLT can buy land, accept donations of land, buy conservation easements, or accept donations of easements. Moreover, the organization pays property taxes on the vast majority of its conservation holdings. The projects committee puts together a budget for each acquisition and writes grant proposals to funders, be they federal, state, municipal or private. "Our role doesn't end with acquisition," says Brekke. "We also have to ensure funding is there to steward the property and ensure its care in the future or in perpetuity as it's often called." Herein lies the critical intersection of "projects" with "stewardship." While a parcel of land slated for conservation, for example, requires a tremendous amount of due diligence and consideration before ownership may be transferred, GWRLT must also factor in their commitment to steward that land in perpetuity.

Considering GWRLT's work over the years, Brekke reflects, "It has been a real grassroots effort, a passionate project for nearly 40 years, and I thank my fellow committee members, the Board, and everyone that has built the land trust." The projects committee fulfills its responsibility to discretely engage with landowners and keep GWRLT's work on track with its long-term vision. But importantly, the committee also exemplifies the power of community organizing and how the fervent beliefs and hard work of volunteers at GWRLT can make a difference.

– By Susan Foote of South Berwick, Maine

Susan Foote is an avid writer whose prolific work has spanned the country from Chicago to the New England.

2nd Annual Summer Garden Party

July 26, 2024
4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Beach Plum Farm Offices & Community Gardens

We warmly invite you to join us at Beach Plum Farm for an evening of community and live music as we serve beer, wine, and grilled fare. Come, bring a side dish, and be a part of this special evening dedicated to celebrating our shared commitment to preserving the natural beauty and ecological health that make our region so resilient!

RSVP online at: gwrlt.org/summerparty2024



GWRLT 2024



Connect

This gathering is all about fostering relationships and appreciating our collective and individual impact. Meet like-minded individuals, GWRLT members, and the dedicated staff and board behind Great Works Regional Land Trust.



Celebrate our Community

Join us as we enjoy a summer evening with folks from across the region, make new connections, and celebrate all the work we've accomplished together in the last year at GWRLT.



Support our Mission

Learn how you can get more involved, whether through volunteering, conservation advocacy, or even learning about our education and recreation opportunities throughout the year.

PRESENTED BY GREAT WORKS REGIONAL LAND TRUST



WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

where activism gets inspired



Brianna French

Sept. 22, 2024
4:00pm - 8:00pm

Leavitt Theatre
Ogunquit, Maine

a benefit for



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SERVING THE THREE BERWICKS, ELIOT, WELLS, AND OGUNQUIT.

We Are Thrilled To Invite You To The Wild & Scenic Film Festival On-Tour!

Join us for an enthralling evening exploring twelve short films from across the globe centered upon the essential role of water. These stories inspire us to contextualize our own beloved watershed, protected in large part by local conservation land. We are aiming to raise \$24,000 from ticket sales, donations, and event sponsors to help us build an ADA Universal Access Trail at the Old Boston Preserve. Just five minutes away from the Leavitt Theatre, a universal access trail at the Old Boston Preserve can connect anyone from the entire community with the amazing land right here in our own backyard.



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6,000 Miles



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Forests Above & Forests Below



Coral Comeback



Chasing the Bono



Paddle Tribal Waters



PLACE



On, In, & Under the Sava



Study Aboard

We're seeking business sponsors for the Wild and Scenic Film Festival this September! For more information, please reach out to us at info@gwrlt.org or at (207) 646-3604.

For More Info And To Purchase Tickets
Visit GWRLT.ORG/WSFF2024
Or Scan The QR Code Here:



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Depending on the size of your estate, charitable bequests can have the added benefit of reducing or eliminating the amount of estate tax your heirs will pay.



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- Host a Fundraiser on Our Behalf
- Become a Business Sponsor



Reach out to a member of our development team at (207) 646-3604 or info@gwrlt.org to discuss your legacy.

Lobster Dinner Raffle: Enter to Win a Lobster Dinner for 10!

The dinner will be served at Beach Plum Farm, late afternoon on Sunday, September 29th, 2024

Tickets are \$10 each or three for \$25. Proceeds from ticket sales benefit our conservation efforts in the region.

The winning ticket will be drawn on August 30th!



For more info and to purchase tickets, visit gwrlt.org/event/lobster24

Notes From Union Farm... continued from page 1

The plaintive call of the woodcock and the chirping of peepers are early harbingers of the season. The burble-gurgle songs of the male bobolinks are distinct and especially thrilling. Easy to spot with their yellow caps, the diligent, male sentinels, each protect up to five nests, and with their mates, migrate all the way from Central and South America, arriving punctually in the fields each year in mid-May. Their numbers are in decline due to early hay mowing, but here, the hay is taken after July 4th, allowing them time to fledge their young. The late hay goes to a nearby horse farm.

The barn swallows jet in to occupy old nests built by earlier generations in the lofts of the barn, raising two groups of chicks. We spend many afternoons in late summer, watching these dedicated parents teach the young ones to fly as they do – at warp speed, and turning on a dime. Despite a healthy colony of European starlings, bluebirds sail in from the forest in pairs, staying to the north side of the farm, where they linger near the fence line, dropping to the ground to take insects.

Hummingbirds, like the bluebirds, also avoid the hubbub of avian activity on the south side, flying in from the western woods, making their rounds – from butterfly bush to the copious trumpet vines behind the barn, up to the honeysuckle trellis and over to the tall stems of white flowers in the yucca patch. Bats stir from their roosts in the barn to commence their acrobatic sweeps through dusk skies, joining the bluebirds, barn swallows and later, legions of dragonflies, taking mosquitoes.

Out of the Great Heath come the night hawks, who like the barn swallows, dip and soar taking their meals on the wing. Red-tailed hawks are frequent visitors, floating slowly over the fields, casting their shadows; herons fly overhead, Canada geese congregate, and buzzards barely flap their black wings as they swing over the grasses.

Deer and turkeys dot the edge of the field near the Heath. A stunning specimen male moose once stood in our orchard one Sunday afternoon in August, bringing traffic to a halt on Route 236. In fall, we hear coyotes as they pick the field for snakes and mice after the late haying, Sometimes, we hear owl calls, amplified by the ocean of meadowland.

For almost two decades, we've kept nature journals, marking down the dates of the first lawn mowing, first frost, rain and snowfall amounts, when the lilacs bloom, when the woodcock, killdeer, and other fauna arrive. We take note of new and occasional visitors such as the fox and the nesting osprey, and how flora and fauna interact during times of plenty and extreme weather, such as drought and flood.

When a remarkable collection of landscapes surrounds your home, such as those found in old tidewater farms, they instill a deeper appreciation of linked habitats, which are, without doubt, worthy of preservation.

- Laura Pope & John Schnitzler / Eliot, Maine

Author and historian Laura Pope lives with her husband, John Schnitzler, a master historic preservation carpenter, at Union Farm in Eliot, named for the Eliot Farmers Union that existed in the house ell during the early 1900s.

Seasonal scenes from Union Farm courtesy of Laura Pope below, and right.



Land Protection Update: SFTW News

After a phenomenal turnout which packed the 3rd floor of Town Hall in South Berwick on May 21st, voters made their support of the Salmon Falls Tidal Waters Project (SFTW) clear. The vote in question, Article 20 of the 2024/2025 town warrant to appropriate up to \$200,000 from South Berwick's discretionary fund to establish public access to the Salmon Falls Tidal Waters parcels and help steward the land in perpetuity.



A Commendably Full House at Town Hall for the Annual Town Meeting in South Berwick on May 21st.

Importantly, this vote replaced the 2022 decision by 78% of voters to appropriate \$250,000 for the sole purpose of land acquisition for the project. Public support helped secure state and federal funds for acquisition and even inspired a generous and unexpected donation of one of the parcels central to the project by the landowner. Subsequently, those town funds restricted to acquisition expenses were no longer needed. Meanwhile, stewardship startup costs significantly increased since the initial budget was created.

Not only did this vote reaffirm public opinion as decided in 2022 but it saves South Berwick \$50,000 which will remain in its undesignated fund, all while expediting and improving sustainable public access to this remarkable place. The \$200,000 or less will be used for various stewardship projects at the site, which include developing a management plan, engineer and construct a parking area, trails, viewing areas, signage, and informational and educational kiosks. We thank the South Berwick Town Council and Town Manager Tim Pellerin's efforts to bring the question of supporting SFTW back to the people.

Additionally, on May 14th the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) Board approved their \$620,000 disbursement of acquisition funds for SFTW. The Project on Oldfields Rd. will continue to move forward toward a closing later this Summer.

- Daniel Maxton, GWRLT Community Engagement Coordinator

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

We're extremely appreciative of all the effort our community and community partners have put into supporting stewardship at GWRLT. From organized groups to highly motivated stewardship workdays, you've made a terrific impact out on the land for all!



Liberty Mutual Insurance employees participating in their "Serve with Liberty" program at Beach Plum Farm in Ogunquit.



Volunteers establish a pocket pollinator garden in downtown South Berwick. This opportunity was made possible by the Strawberry Festival Grant Program and assistance from Lee Frank's.



Haley Ward volunteers atop Bauneg Beg Mountain in North Berwick.



Stewardship workday clipping at Desrochers Memorial Forest in South Berwick.

You can help by joining Great Works Regional Land Trust today.



Yes, I/we wish to join/renew.

Membership Levels:

- Student/Senior \$25
- Individual \$35
- Family \$50
- Visionary \$1000
- Supporter \$100
- Sustainer \$250
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I'd like to receive emails about Great Works Regional Land Trust news and events

Great Works Regional Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Want to volunteer?

Office help:

- Mailings
- Research

Committee Work:

- Development
- Membership
- Stewardship

Stewardship:

- Property maintenance
- Invasives removal
- Trail work
- Building maintenance

Special Events:

- Spring Auction (held in March)
- Cooking/baking for an event
- Volunteer Appreciation
- Annual Meeting
- Special Events

Outreach:

- Booth help at local festivals
- Lead a hike
- Distribute newsletters, posters
- Photography
- Give a talk to an organization
- Write an article

- I'd like to receive emails about volunteer opportunities.
- Please call me to discuss volunteering with Great Works.

Check enclosed (payable to GWRLT) for \$ _____

Credit/Debit Card: MasterCard VISA Discover
 Credit Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ 3-digit code _____

Signature _____

*Does your employer have a matching gift program?
 Please enclose forms.*

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Limited supply of seasoned hemlock or poplar good for campfires and fire pits.
 \$200 per cord cut, split and delivered.
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 Delivered in our service area.
 Call Bob Eger at (207) 475-6730 or email info@gwrlt.org.



Participants in our Science Saturday: Lichens & Ledges program learn the lay of the land of the Kenyon Hill Preserve from geologist and hike leader Don Wason.



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- *Notes from a tidewater farm*
- *Major Events Announcements*
- *And More!*

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2024 Summer & Early Fall Events & Outings

gwrlt.org

View of the Keay Brook Estuary at the far point of the River Loop Trail at the Keay Brook Preserve in Berwick.

- June 29** Join us at the **Strawberry Festival** | South Berwick
- July 10** **Wednesday Wandering** | Keay Brook Preserve | Berwick
- July 13** **Walk into History with Brad Fletcher** | Desrochers Memorial Forest | South Berwick
- July 26** **2nd Annual Summer Garden Party** | Beach Plum Farm | Ogunquit
- July 27** **Walk into History with Brad Fletcher** | Orris Falls Conservation Area | South Berwick
- Aug 3** Join us at **"Bring Your Lawn Chairs to Sullivan Square"** | Berwick
- Aug 14** **Wednesday Wandering** | Kenyon Hill | South Berwick
- Aug 24** **Science Saturdays: Lichens & Ledges** | Kenyon Hill | South Berwick
- Sept 7** Join us at the **Mill Field Festival** | North Berwick
- Sept 11** **Wednesday Wandering** | Perkinstown Wildlife Commons | Wells
- Sept 14** **Science Saturday: Tatnic Geology**
- Sept 18** **Full Moon Hike** | Bauneg Beg Conservation Area | North Berwick
- Sept 22** **GWRLT Presents the Wild and Scenic Film Festival at the Leavitt Theater** | Ogunquit
- Sept 28** Join us at the **Eliot Festival Days** | Eliot
- Sept 29** **Annual Lobster Dinner for Raffle Winner at Beach Plum Farm... See inside for more details.**
- Oct 9** **Wednesday Wandering** | Bauneg Beg Conservation Area | North Berwick

All outdoor, hikes, events, and adventures are open and free to members of GWRLT.

However, we suggest a \$5 donation per person or \$10 donation per family for non-members.

Reservations required.

Scan the QR code to register for our upcoming hikes!

