Downeast Lakes
LAND TRUST

Traditions

Downeast Lakes Land Trust Newsletter

Forests and Lakes—For People—Forever | November 2008 | Volume 2, Issue 2

WABASSUS LAKE PROJECT FULLY FUNDED!

Recreation & Access Improvements to Begin in 2009

A Guide and Grand Laker on Wabassus Lake, 2008

We have reached our $3.2 million Wabassus Lake Project capital campaign goal, thanks to generous contributions and pledges from DLLT's individual and business supporters and grants from foundations and government agencies. "By the time DLLT supporters read this newsletter," says Wabassus Lake Project Committee Chair Jay Petri, "we will have exercised our purchase option, setting the stage for closing the sale within three months. We will rely on some bridge financing until remaining grant and pledge commitments are fulfilled."

Rapid completion of the project's fund raising – at its half-way point when we published our last newsletter issue in June – was greatly aided by recent major grant awards by the Land for Maine's Future Board, the federal Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act), the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Bafflin Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund, and the Machias Savings Bank Community Foundation.

We will begin improving public recreation opportunities on the property in 2009. We will undertake necessary maintenance work on the existing road network, to ensure safer travel and reduced erosion and sedimentation . Our Trails Committee plans to build and provide signage for a short walking trail from the Wabassus Mountain Road to Dawn Marie Beach on Wabassus Lake. This will make a highly desirable beach picnic destination easier to find and reach. We plan to build the ninth primitive campsite on our Downeast Lakes Water Trail on Wabassus Lake or one of the Getchell Pugs, on the traditional Native American route between the St. Croix and Machias River watersheds. This will strengthen the recreational connections between the Farm Cove Community Forest and the Machias River system.

We will finish designing and flagging a route for a hiking trail to the summit of Wabassus Mountain that will offer a variety of views of undeveloped local lakes, nearby mountains, and, on clear days, Mount Katahdin, in anticipation of seeking grant funding for a trail-building crew in 2010. We will complete our exploration of other potential recreational projects on the Wabassus Lake Tract, including a hiking trail along Third Lake Ridge.

To everyone who helped us meet this project's capital campaign goal: *Thank you, one and all, for the part you have played in our second land acquisition project, which will add wonderful woods, waters, and wetlands to our Farm Cove Community Forest.*

ROADS AND FISH

Improving Aquatic Habitats

Brook trout

This summer we completed two major projects, installing bottomless arch culverts with natural stream channels while maintaining safe vehicle access. Brook trout and other fish can once again move freely in Scott Brook and Rolfe Brook. This project is yet another way we're demonstrating that public vehicle access and forest management can coexist with healthy watersheds and wildlife populations.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2008 has been a busy and successful year for DLLT. We are pleased to add the Wabassus Lake Tract to our Community Forest. This land is valuable to all of us for its pristine resources of water, forest and undeveloped landscape. Thank you to those who worked so hard to make this purchase happen.

Changes are coming to Grand Lake Stream. The Webber family and others who have owned the property surrounding the town since the closing of the tannery in the 1890s have decided to sell many leased lots and a large amount of additional acreage, including the eastern shore of West Grand Lake and some shoreline on Big Lake. Camp owners, some of whose families have had their camps for four or five generations, are now being given the opportunity to buy their land or sell their camps. What other changes this may lead to for the area and local residents remains uncertain. Our land trust is hoping to be part of the decision.

DLLT stands committed to our mission, to the people of this area and to conserving the natural resources of the area. We will do our best at all times to protect the viability of this community and its resources.

Thanks, Pete and Roger!

My fellow DLLT Directors join me in thanking departing colleagues Pete Borden and Roger Milligan for their years of dedication, commitment, and service to our organization.

Year-End Appeal Coming Soon

We will soon be mailing letters with a year-end appeal for operating support. Your support helps fund our forest management, education, and research activities, and our exploration of future land conservation opportunities. Thank you to everyone who shares our vision of a sustainable future for the woods, waters, and communities of the Downeast Lakes region.

We Welcome Your Thoughts and Questions

Please feel free to contact us with questions or thoughts. We welcome visits at our Grand Lake Stream office (open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday) and you can reach us by phone, mail, or email (contact information is in the box below).

Best wishes for the holiday season!

Lindsay Wheaton

Forests and Lakes For People Forever

Nonprofits, like businesses, use brief memorable slogans to capture the essence of their missions and activities. While working on the Wabassus Lake Project this year, we came up with a new phrase to summarize our goals. "*Forests and Lakes – For People – Forever,*" is a promise to our community from those of us fortunate enough to govern and work for DLLT.

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MISSION

The Downeast Lakes Land Trust will contribute to the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the Downeast Lakes region through the conservation and exemplary management of its forests and waters.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Community Forestry

The most exciting news about our management of the Community Forest this fall is the upcoming addition of 6,644 acres through the purchase of the Wabassus Lake Tract. Even as we continue our work to improve access, habitats, and timber on the existing forest, we'll be expanding onto the new acreage. We mentioned some of the first priorities in our cover story, including maintenance of the road network and improving access to selected recreation assets - like the beautiful Dawn Marie Beach. We've heard from local businesses that the hiking trails we completed on the original Community Forest are already proving to be valuable: one lodge said their guests hiked on the trails every week through the summer. We're glad to be able to help visitors appreciate this truly remarkable area in new ways, and glad to give local businesses new assets they can highlight to attract guests.

We will be incorporating the new acreage into our management plan for forestry and wildlife habitats. Just this year, we adopted a major addendum to our forest management plan that integrates wildlife habitat and timber management objectives. A focus species approach will help us ensure that habitat needs for a wide range of wildlife are maintained across the landscape over time. We also look forward to coordinating our harvest and habitat management work with major abutting landowners, to achieve even greater wildlife habitat value than we could on our own ownership.

Board members discuss the harvest with our forester

We also continue to learn and innovate with each timber harvest we conduct — this past year, at the suggestion of a Forestry Committee member, we decided to try placing small brush piles in our harvest areas, rather than leaving brush uniformly spread across harvest trails. This may provide benefits for small wildlife that are important prey species, while making trails easier to walk for wildlife and people alike, and allowing new trees to sprout in the trails more quickly. Board members were pleased with the initial results, and we'll continue to evaluate this approach over time, along with all of our management decisions.

In our spring newsletter, I told you about two case studies that highlighted our Community Forest conservation work. These studies were successful in spreading the word, and this fall we hosted a visit from a group that traveled cross-country from Washington State to learn how a small community in a rural, natural resource-dependent area could successfully secure local control of management decisions and guarantee permanent conservation of critical resources. While our true focus will always remain local, we're happy to inspire others who can learn from our experiences, and we find that often we're also able to learn from those interested in our work. So, if you have ideas or suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Sincerely,

Mark Berry

Mark Berry

8th Year of Loon Monitoring Completed

Jessie Tompkins returned for a second season as the DLLT Loon Monitoring Intern, and she completed our eighth year of loon monitoring work. At least 12 loon chicks fledged from our study area this summer, slightly more than in 2006 or 2007. This was our 4th year of working in partnership with Biodiversity Research Institute, and this year we also captured some loons to place leg bands and take blood samples. The bands will allow researchers to track future movements of individual birds, while the blood samples will be tested for mercury contamination.

DOWNEAST LAKES CALENDAR

Winter Events

History & Heritage Series

"Tipping" Field Trip
Sunday, November 30, 3 pm

Learn how to harvest balsam fir "tips" for wreath-making on this trip into the Farm Cove Community Forest, led by DLLT Directors David Tobey and Lee Whitely. Tips will be used at the wreath making workshop on December 2.

Wreath-making Workshop
Tuesday, December 2, 6 pm

Join local wreath-makers for a workshop where you'll learn how to make your own Christmas wreath — cocoa and cookies provided. Please sign up in advance, and consider joining us to gather "tips" on November 30.

Additional Winter Events May Be Scheduled

2009 Summer Events

Tuesdays, July – August (schedule for 2009 pending) Nature Brigade Explorations and Adventures, 9:30-12 noon. DLLT sponsors weekly educational activities for children ages 6-12, with all ages welcome to participate. Rain or shine, dress appropriately for the activity and the weather, bring water bottle, sun screen and bug spray. Snacks will be provided.

Saturday, July 4 Grand Lake Stream 4th of July Festivities

For more information call Dave at 796-2286 or email dmccull1@maine.rr.com

Friday & Saturday, July 24 & 25 Grand Lake Stream Guides Association Dinners Purchase tickets in advance**,** east side of the dam.

Saturday-Sunday, July 25 & 26 Grand Lake Stream Folk Art Festival. 10 am – 5 pm, Across from the James Brite Schoolhouse. See www.thecclc.org/glsfaf .

Sunday, July 26 DLLT 6th Annual Meeting and Picnic, 12-2 pm, Lunch will be served from 12-12:45. By reservation; look for the RSVP form in our summer newsletter or call DLLT at 207-796-2100.

Sunday, August 2 4th Annual West Grand Lake Race

Register before 10:30 am

For more information on DLLT events, including additional events to be scheduled, check our web site at www.downeastlakes.org

All events held at the James Brite Schoolhouse on Water Street in Grand Lake Stream unless noted *

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

Al & Bob, moving a picnic table to a campsite; Sue, Tara, Linda, Julia, Sally, & Jenna setting up for the annual picnic.

Downeast Lakes Land Trust began as an all-volunteer effort just a few short years ago, and although we now have a professional staff, the fulfillment of our mission still depends on tremendous efforts contributed by many volunteers, including our Board of Directors. Throughout the year, volunteers help us manage the Community Forest; improve wildlife habitats; plan, create, and maintain trails and campsites; hold fun and educational events for the community; and they contribute their time and energy in many other ways. We simply can't thank our volunteers often enough!

ROADS AND FISH

Improving Aquatic Habitat

Continued from Page 1

When we acquired the Community Forest, many roads crossed streams with culverts that were too small or placed improperly, creating barriers to the natural movement of fish. These structures also posed a risk of failure in high stream flow events, leading to large-scale erosion and deposition of sediment downstream.

With the help of many partners, we set out to remedy these problems. First, we inventoried our road network and established priorities for aquatic habitat and watershed restoration work. Then, we began to seek funding and partners to implement restoration projects.

Our first restoration project was a snowmobile trail crossing on Belden Brook in the Machias River watershed. In 2007 we worked with Project SHARE and the Grand Lake Snowmobile Club to re-route the trail crossing onto a nearby road crossing, and completely remove a fish passage barrier, reconstructing a natural stream channel on the site.

This year we completed our first two stream crossing replacements. Scott Brook and Rolfe Brook are tributaries to Grand Lake Brook. They provide brook trout habitat, and each is crossed by a major forest management and public recreational access road for the Community Forest. At both sites, the existing culverts were undersized and elevated, presenting a passage barrier to fish.

Scott Brook arch culvert, installed August 2008

Scott Brook arch. Inset: culvert inlets before installation

Installing the Rolfe Brook arch with stream diverted, 2008.

Rolfe Brook arch. Inset: clogged culverts at site in 2006.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provided partial funding and developed engineering designs for each site, and DLLT contracted with Hanscom Construction, a Washington County contractor experienced with arch culvert installation, to perform the work. We coordinated carefully with neighbors and camp owners, because each installation required a brief road closure.

To install a bottomless arch in a fish-bearing stream, fish are relocated downstream, then the stream flow is temporarily diverted around the work site. The old culverts are removed, and crushed rock footings are prepared for the arch. Rocks are placed along the center line, the arch is installed, and the stream channel is constructed within the arch. Backfill is compacted to rebuild the roadway, and riprap is placed around the inlet and outlet. Loam is spread on side slopes, which are then seeded with a conservation mix before erosion control fabric and mulch is installed. The stream is restored to its new channel, and fish may be swimming through the project area within minutes.

These are "win-win" projects - they will provide lasting benefits for brook trout and other aquatic wildlife while making the Community Forest's roads more secure and less likely to fail when we receive heavy rains.

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Our Mission

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Explorations and Adventures

This was DLLT's seventh year of offering our Nature Brigade series of seven half-day outdoor education programs. Programs this year included a forestry walk, a map and compass session, Dutch oven cooking, kayaking, spin fishing, fly fishing, and a special program on trees. Our thanks go out to all the wonderful volunteer instructors and guides that lead these programs. Participants reported learning a lot, and always having a good time!

A good catch

Our "History & Heritage" series of events also continued this summer, with a great presentation by Bob Duchesne on "Birding by Ear" and identifying common local birds by their songs and calls.

DLLT's education programs seek to build knowledge, appreciation, and respect for the natural environment, local cultural heritage, and natural resources and their traditional uses on the Downeast Lakes Land Trust Farm Cove Community Forest and surrounding areas.

We have two great events coming up soon, for community members to learn how to make their own Christmas wreaths (see the calendar on Page 4), and are planning ahead for summer 2009.

Reviewing the map on a lunch break.

Kayakers on the shore of Wabassus Lake.