

LANDMARKS

YORK LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

389 ACRES IN THREE YEARS: MTA2C STILL GOING STRONG

The largest intact coastal forest between the New Jersey Pine Barrens and Acadia National Park, where wildlife roam and streams flow freely, spans the distance from the Tatic Hills of Wells to Brave Boat Harbor in Kittery. This is the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) focus area that includes the six southernmost towns in Maine, where nine groups have worked together for more than two decades to preserve this precious land. In fact, the MtA2C coalition members, which together have conserved over 5,600 acres of ecologically valuable land since 2002, have successfully added another 389 acres in the last three years. Today, there are 15,640 acres of protected land in the MtA2C region. The partner organizations, which include land trusts, other nonprofits, and national and state agencies and reserves, aim to ensure 19,000 protected acres by 2032. Partners prioritize connected acres of land with effective wildlife corridors in a range of landscape types, averaging about five completed projects per year since 2002.

The 389 newly protected acres fall within five of the six communities in the area and represent a diverse array of landscapes, including forests, uplands, wetlands, grasslands, salt marshes, fields, and a working farm. Some of the coalition's recent successful projects include York Land Trust's Lafcadio's Woods Preserve, Great Works Regional Land Trust's Old Boston Preserve, and the Blaisdell Brothers Family Farm. Maine Coast Heritage Trust coordinated and produced the newly updated map inside with input from the other eight partners. We are thrilled to have achieved this amount of conservation land in such a highly developed part of the state!

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York Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects and cares for significant natural lands and waterways in the greater York Maine area for the benefit of the community and the environment.

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For more information,
please visit our website:
www.yorklandtrust.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the vibrant colors of autumn surround us, we at York Land Trust are embracing the season of change and renewal with exciting developments ahead! As of late August, York Land Trust is now operating at full capacity with a team of six incredible staff members. I want to officially welcome our two newest staff members to the team: Evelyn Brown, Stewardship Coordinator, and Kara Siglin, Programs and Communications Manager.

Additionally, we are just finishing the first year of our current Five-Year Strategic Plan. Our top strategic priority continues to be the protection of ecologically significant lands that connect to other protected land, contain waterways and wetlands, and help address the increasing need for climate resiliency.

Our second strategic goal centers around the stewardship of the land we protect. When we agree to protect a piece of land, we are obligated to protect that land in perpetuity - that's quite a long time! As we

protect more land, the stewardship of it becomes a larger part of our focus, time, and resources.

We also continue to enhance our visibility, engagement, and impact across a broader and more diverse audience through our public nature-based education programs. We strive to remain one of the leading voices on conservation issues in our community.

Finally, as we grow, we must focus on fiscal sustainability that supports our overarching goals. Broadening and deepening our membership and diversifying our revenue sources are key elements in



this pursuit. That being said, thank you to all of you for your continued support as we work to protect and steward lands across York. We simply cannot do what we do without all of you.

Sincerely,
Jared Chase

CRUCIAL CONSERVATION IN THE MTA2C FOCUS AREA - *continued from page 1*

Most York Land Trust holdings – including both conservation easements and fee-owned lands – fall within the MtA2C focus area, which covers more than 48,000 acres of crucial habitat in Southern Maine. In fact, the region is home to the greatest variety of plants and animals in the state, including many rare species! It also provides pure drinking water for three towns, clean water that flows to nine swimming beaches, and spectacular views and trails for all to enjoy. Currently, seven out of the eleven projects underway at York Land Trust are in the MtA2C area, helping us add to contiguous blocks of forest and protect vital and ecologically sensitive lands in our region. MtA2C is critical to York Land Trust's mission to connect a broad range of permanently protected landscapes, waterways, wildlife, and natural resources. Continuing to connect land to land, land to people, and people to people will create healthier ecosystems and communities for all.

YORK PARKS AND RECREATION LAUNCHES PADDLING PARTNERSHIP

This autumn, York Parks and Recreation launched a series of free guided kayak paddles up the York River and into York Land Trust's Smelt Brook Preserve. Two paddles went out in sunny September with three more following amidst October's beautiful foliage. Guides from York Parks and Recreation and York Land Trust focused on the ecology, history, and native flora and fauna of the river, which was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River in December 2022. The area surrounding the York River and its Smelt Brook tributary has a long history of supporting traditional saltwater farms where families fished, pastured cattle, and harvested salt marsh hay. The river is home to 28 species of fish as well as many shorebirds, including the endangered saltmarsh sparrow. Just this year, York Land Trust helped conserve 73 acres on the upper reaches of the York River. The York River Stewardship Committee,

which was formed in 2023 following the National Wild and Scenic designation, funded York Parks and Recreation's purchase of kayaks and gear for the trips. One of the later trips was a special York Land Trust members-only paddle and hike, in which paddlers also explored Smelt Brook Preserve's Landing Trail by foot.

York Land Trust volunteer and stewardship committee member Clayton Smith worked to remove an obstruction

along Smelt Brook and clear the Landing Trail before the group went out; many thanks to Clayton for his time and effort! If you weren't able to join any of the trips this fall, don't worry: York Parks and Recreation expects to offer another series of guided paddles in the spring.

York Land Trust volunteer Clayton Smith works to clear an obstruction on Smelt Brook prior to the first paddling trip.



The Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) is an effort led by a coalition of national, regional and local partners to protect a network of connected conservation lands and natural resources within a 48,000-acre focus area in Southern Maine for the benefit of people and wildlife.

The MtA2C Partners include: US Fish and Wildlife Service/ Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional Land Trust, Kittery Land Trust, and York Land Trust.

For more information,
please visit www.mta2c.org.

CONTINUALLY IMPROVING PUBLIC ACCESS ON PRESERVES

Our stewardship team has been working tirelessly this season to improve public access and visitor experience at York Land Trust's seven public preserves. Long-term projects include the development and installation of large roadside signs for each preserve, as well as the creation of improved trail maps and other kiosk resources. Keep an eye out at Highland Farm Preserve this fall for the first rollout of brand-new preserve maps and guides! In recent months, with help from many dedicated volunteers, the stewardship team has also:

- Installed a new accessible picnic bench at Near Point Preserve
- Created a new bridge, boardwalks, and stream crossings at Hilton-Winn Preserve
- Planted three American chestnut trees at McIntire Highlands Preserve and created educational signage for existing American chestnut trees at Highland Farm Preserve
- Expanded the bridging and boardwalk systems at Smelt Brook Preserve
- Replaced the bridge at Highland Farm Preserve
- Rolled out a new hunting registration system and released pheasants at Smelt Brook Preserve
- Recovered the trail and planted several tree species at McIntire Highlands Preserve
- Pulled invasive plants from Highland Farm Preserve and Fuller Forest Preserve
- Planted climate-adaptive trees at Smelt Brook Preserve



We are constantly seeking to improve visitor safety and comfort within our preserves; these efforts also support our broader goals of enhanced public access and accessibility as defined in our Five-Year Strategic Plan. Public access preserves are a place for the community to connect with nature, recharge, and enjoy. We would like to extend a sincere thank-you to the volunteers that help us improve and maintain them! To join a volunteer workday, please visit yorklandtrust.org/events.

MCINTIRE HIGHLANDS PRESERVE REOPENS TO PUBLIC



McIntire Highlands Preserve has now reopened to visitors following two sustainable harvests done earlier this year. York Land Trust staff and volunteers have been working to rebuild the preserve's trail system and signage since the harvests in winter and spring of 2024; the first was a planned harvest of about 200 acres of struggling and stagnant trees, and the second was a salvage harvest of trees uprooted during severe April storms. "We conduct sustainable harvests to actively manage some of our properties in order to enhance habitat and promote a diversity of tree species, ages, and heights in the forest ecosystem," explains Executive Director Amelia Nadilo, "which is crucial to increase climate resiliency and address invasive pests and diseases." Since the cut, York Land Trust has planted American chestnuts, chestnut oaks, cherry trees, hawthorns, and shagbark hickories in areas that were formerly dominated by sickly and threatened beech, white pine, hemlock, and red

White pine saplings regrow in a recently harvested portion of the McIntire Highlands Preserve.

oak. Some current threats to the forests of Southern Maine include the woolly adelgid, the emerald ash borer, white pine needle cast, and beech leaf disease. Many of these potentially fatal long-term threats lead to bud, leaf, and branch loss in affected trees. York Land Trust relies on licensed foresters and other experts for guidance and support needed to actively manage its properties. Additionally, money generated from York Land Trust's sustainable harvests goes back into the nonprofit's land stewardship efforts; it funds trail building and maintenance, invasive species management, species monitoring, and efforts to restore degraded wetlands and forests.

To continue educating the community on the topic, York Land Trust hosted a sustainable forestry interpretive walk with licensed consulting forester Charlie Moreno on October 20th at Smelt Brook Preserve. For more information, visit yorklandtrust.org/news or contact Stewardship Director Liz Walworth at 207-363-7400 ext. 6.

NEW BOARD MEMBER WELCOMED AT MEMBERS GATHERING

YLT supporters gathered on October 6th for our Annual Members Gathering to celebrate recent conservation successes, learn about our Five-Year Strategic Plan, and hear touching stories from two members who reminded us of the importance of partnerships and the healing powers of nature. This community of conservationists enjoyed delicious drinks and treats as old friends caught up and new friends were made in the late afternoon sun on a quintessential autumn day. The energy was palpable, with a buzz of excitement growing among the crowd with having the knowledge of where YLT is headed and pride of how much has been accomplished.

Especially exciting this year is the addition of a new Board Member, Nancy Nadler. Our treasured Board Members provide oversight, guidance, and governance for the Trust. Their commitment advances our mission in many ways, and Nancy has been an impactful ambassador for our organization for several

years. Nancy became a member in fall of 2018 and soon joined the Stewardship Committee and provided support in opening Fuller Forest as a public preserve. She has been involved with the Advancement Committee and events and consistently volunteers her time tabling for YLT in the community. No task is too small, like preparing appetizers for our BBQ fundraiser dinner, or too daunting, like mowing the grounds and trail at our Near Point Preserve – and all of it done with a warm smile on her face. Nancy and her husband Steve are often walking one of the many YLT preserves with her crew of canine friends including her two dogs, Penelope and Tali.

Interested in volunteering or deepening your involvement with YLT? Complete a volunteer application on our website or email Amelia at anadilo@yorklandtrust.org.

New Board Member Nancy Nadler preparing an appetizer at an event earlier this year.



DELICIOUSLY SUCCESSFUL: NEW FORAGING PROGRAM WITH CENTER FOR WILDLIFE

Have you ever wondered what's safe to eat in the woods? On September 23, York Land Trust and Center for Wildlife offered an Introduction to Foraging program at Highland Farm Preserve that was a resounding success. More than twenty eager program participants sampled seasonal delicacies along their hike, including autumn olive, white pine, and staghorn sumac. Many thanks to Quinn Santos, Center for Wildlife Nature Center Lead, for the wonderful tour. Please remember to be mindful and respectful when foraging on your own. Minimize your off-trail adventures, avoid land that may have contaminated soil, and think about whether you are munching on something rare, threatened, or that the plant can't live without. The program will be offered again on November 11 and is expected to fill up quickly. Register now at yorklandtrust.org/events or contact Programs & Communications Manager Kara Siglin at ksiglin@yorklandtrust.org to get on the waitlist.

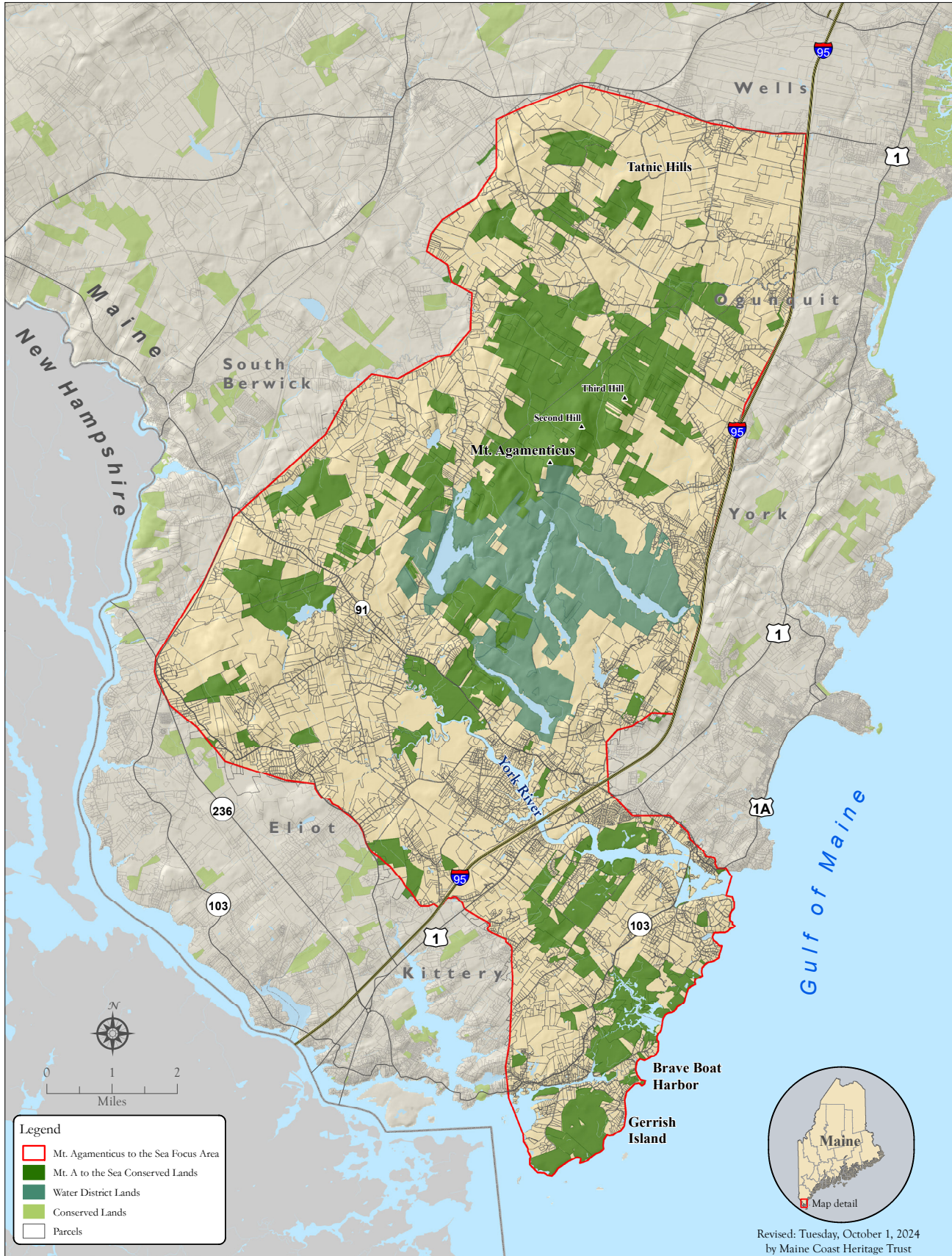
REMINDER: HUNTING SEASON HAS BEGUN ACTIVE THROUGH DECEMBER 31ST

Please note that hunting season has begun and York Land Trust welcomes hunting on all of its preserves unless posted otherwise. We recommend that preserve visitors and their pets wear blaze orange on all trails for the duration of the hunting season. YLT has provided vests and pet bandannas at the trailheads of our public access preserves for visitors to use while out on their hike. Please be sure to return them for the next visitor. Hunters must comply with all state and local hunting regulations and possess a valid hunting license. They must register to hunt and record their harvests through yorklandtrust.org/explore/hunting. For further questions, please contact Stewardship Director Liz Walworth at 207-363-7400 ext. 6.

RENT OUR COMMUNITY ROOM

York Land Trust's Community Room is a spacious private venue now available for rent for private functions. The room has windows and French doors that overlook scenic vistas of Near Point Preserve. This is a perfect venue for a birthday, celebration of life, work retreat, or graduation party. Renters can enjoy the amenities of a room venue and kitchen area in a historic replica Cape and have quick and easy access to outdoor event space. Please visit <https://www.yorklandtrust.org/about/rental/> for more information.





MtA2C protected lands since 2002: 5,600 acres
Total Open Space in MtA2C Focus Area: 15,640 acres

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2024 Annual Appeal or visit
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make your gift at any time.

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online: yorklandtrust.org

facebook.com/YLT.York.ME

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FSC
(RAM to add logo)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

- November 11 | 2-3:30pm: **Intro to Foraging: A Wild Edibles Tour**
 - November 14 | 10:30-11:30am: **Storytime with York Public Library**
 - November 17 | 9am-2pm: **Mt A to Highland Farm Preserve Guided Hike**
 - November 20 | 9-10:30am: **Bird Walk Wednesday**
 - November 23 | 10:30am-12:30pm: **Zentangle Workshop**
 - November 24 | 10-11am: **Gratitude Yoga with Amelia**
 - December 7 | 10am-12pm: **Solar 101 with ReVision Energy**
 - December 9 | 4-5:30pm: **Bittersweet Wreath Making Workshop**
- Visit www.yorklandtrust.org/events to learn more and sign up for free!



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION

December 12 | 4:00-6:00pm

York Land Trust
1 Long Neck Marsh Road
York, ME



YLT SELECTED FOR NOVEMBER!

Shop and donate this month at Fabulous Find
to benefit YLT and support local nonprofits.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

