

The York Land Trust Newsletter

LANDMARKS

86 ACRES PROTECTED ALONG JOSIAS BROOK

We're thrilled to announce our recent acquisition of 86 acres of ecologically-rich forest and wetlands along Josias Brook in Cape Neddick. The property abuts other conservation land, falls within our major focus area in the Mt. Agamenticus region, and fills an important gap in a much larger expanse of more than 5,500 acres of protected land in the region.

The 86 acres straddle two parcels — one 15 acres and the other 71 acres — on Johnny's Way (off of Clay Hill Road), where a developer has built a six-house subdivision next to the 15-acre parcel. A stipulation of this development was that the landowners preserve those 15 acres as open space. But, had YLT not purchased the additional 71 acres, it would have been developed as well.

The parcels contain an expanse of ecologically important wetlands, including 31 acres identified as high value for their uniqueness in the state and for the habitat they provide for rare and endangered wildlife. State-threatened chestnut oaks and a state-endangered Blanding's turtle have been found onsite, amongst other rare plants and animals. The thick understory contains abundant wildlife food sources, and vernal pools on the property provide important breeding habitat for reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. A run of brook trout has been found in Josias Brook which runs through the property. YLT will remove barriers to their passage in three locations to help them travel more freely.

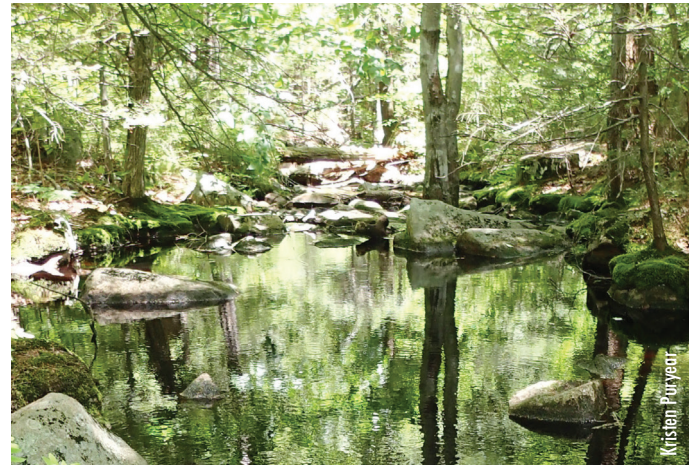
This project also helps our efforts to prepare for and fight the impacts of climate change. The wooded nature of the landscape makes it highly absorbent of heavy rains, helping to reduce flooding and erosion associated with the extreme storms that climate change can bring. Keeping the land forested also helps pull greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere, as trees absorb carbon dioxide and store it underground during photosynthesis.

The project notably marks the capstone of a goal set by the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) in 2014 to protect 1,500 acres within the MtA2C Focus Area over five years. Just one year after our target for completion, we're very proud to have met this ambitious goal with our partners.

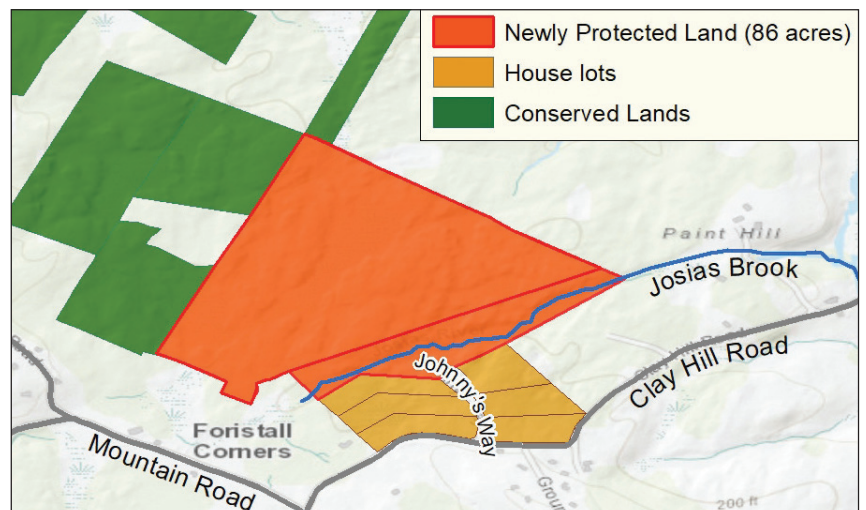
We extend our sincere gratitude to those who funded this important project, including the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program, the Davis Conservation Foundation, and a private donor.



This endangered Blanding's turtle was sighted feeding in a vernal pool on the protected property.



Biologists from Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife found the presence of brook trout in Josias Brook during a survey conducted in July 2019.





These days, we're constantly adjusting to new guidelines to stem the spread of COVID-19. But public health experts continue to encourage us to get outside for our physical and mental health. Sun, fresh air, exercise and the stress-reducing serenity of nature are essential elements to maintaining our overall health and supporting our immune systems.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

overuse and failure by some to respect posted guidelines. Please continue to do your part to ensure this vital resource remains open for us all by adhering to guidelines posted at each preserve.

In addition to health and safety guidelines, please also leash and pick up after your dogs, park only in designated spaces and stay on marked trails.

As a result, York Land Trust's preserves have experienced increased visitation in recent weeks – particularly as other outdoor areas have been closed to the public. This has both positive and negative ramifications for us and the community.

As we experience this global ordeal together, many lessons will arise. One that York Land Trust is already acutely aware of is the pressing need to protect additional open spaces so that we may provide more places for you to walk in safety and beauty.

We're glad that our preserves are a popular source of healing and comfort during this difficult time, but have also seen signs of

Our vital work will continue with your support.

Sincerely,
Cliff O'Connor

Comings and Goings

With the transition to spring, we have two staffing transitions as well that we'd like to share with you:



We recently hired our first Outreach and Programs Coordinator to develop new educational programs and increase our reach within the community through events and outings. **Laura Poppick**, who has worked as a communications contractor for YLT since 2017, is thrilled to take on this new role. She comes with a background in environmental communication and has taught environmental programming with a number of nonprofits in Maine, including Maine Audubon and The Ecology School in Saco. Stay tuned as Laura ramps up our public offerings!



We're also bidding a heartfelt farewell to YLT Stewardship Director, **Joe Anderson**, who has been with our organization since 2012. In his time with us, Joe has been an invaluable member of our team, bringing with him a remarkable range of skills, great sense of humor, and incredible work ethic. He joined the land trust during a period of tremendous growth in land holdings, with nearly 1,000 acres protected since he first got started. He expertly stepped up to the challenge of stewarding and managing these lands, and has developed a cadre of devoted stewardship volunteers along the way as well.

We can't thank Joe enough for all that he has brought to our conservation efforts, and wish him all the best as he transitions to his new role in the Planning and Acquisition Department at the Maine State Bureau of Parks and Lands. Thanks for everything, Joe!

The York Land Trust is a member-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving and protecting lands of ecological, historic, scenic, agricultural and cultural significance in the greater York, Maine area, for the benefit of all.

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



The Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C)

is an effort led by a coalition of ten 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: the US Fish and Wildlife Service/Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional Land Trust, Kittery Land Trust, York Land Trust and York Rivers Association.

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



A gravestone found in the historic Junkins Cemetery on Highland Farm Preserve.



This giant cairn built in 1892 by the Junkins and McIntire families is located along the Junkins Loop Trail at Highland Farm Preserve.

Joe Anderson

Bryce Waldrop

HIKE INTO HISTORY FOR MAINE'S 200TH

By Bryce Waldrop

York Land Trust properties encompass numerous historic sites significant to local and state history. In honor of Maine's bicentennial this year, we wanted to share a bit of history about our Highland Farm Preserve with you.

This preserve includes three historic sites of note: the Junkins and Kingsbury family cemeteries, and the (perhaps lesser-known) great stone cairn. The cemeteries, visible at either end of the field, offer a glimpse into early 19th-century funerary art forms. In these small family burial plots, we do not see the monumental forms of the late 19th century cemeteries. Rather, these thin steles and their epitaphs emphasize a strong sense of faith with insightful messages of the afterlife, rather than symbolic edifices. The decoration is very limited, with only minor organic florals and shallow lettering, in keeping with the restrained style of the early 1800s. The later stones from the mid-1800s display bold, raised lettering and decoration more akin to the romantic styles of the Victorian era.

The great stone cairn, a marker of a different kind, was built on July 4, 1892, by the Junkins and McIntire families. Evidence suggests the families supported the Populist Movement of the late 19th century, begun by American farmers in response to the effects of industrial capitalism. This date marked the founding of this new political party — as well as America's 116th birthday.

Like our fragile natural resources, historic sites require care to ensure they remain intact and visible for future generations. Please respect these structures and do not touch the headstones. But do take lots of pictures — and enjoy hiking into York's early history!

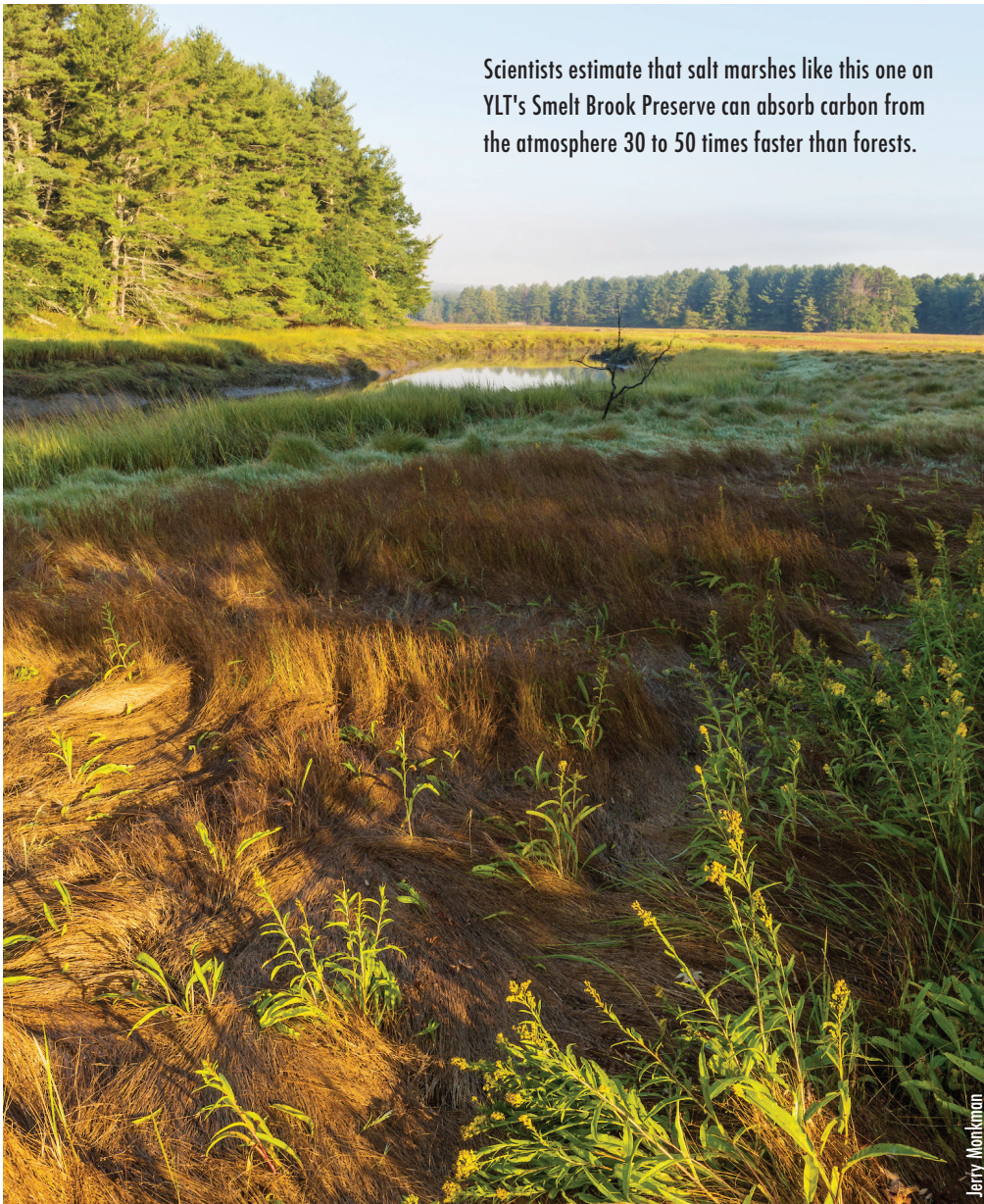
Stay tuned for more history tidbits in our Fall Newsletter about our McIntire Highlands Preserve.

OUR CLIMATE IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored just how important it is for our community to have ample access to open space. But this is not a wakeup call for us — we have long known the value of protecting open space for the health and safety of our community. As this crisis subsides in the coming months, another crisis remains that also calls for increased protection of open space — climate change.

The role that land trusts play in addressing climate change is vast and, at times, complex. To help explain some of the tangible ways our work prepares our town for a healthier and more sustainable future, we've created a new section on our website titled Our Climate Impact (located within the “Conserve Our Community” section). We describe how protecting natural environments like tidal salt marshes not only helps buffer rising sea levels and prevent erosion, but also helps to actually slow climate warming as vegetation absorbs greenhouse gases and stores them underground.

We recognize we can't beat climate change simply by protecting land, however, and that's why we've partnered with groups like York Ready for 100% on other ways to help our community fight climate change.



Scientists estimate that salt marshes like this one on YLT's Smelt Brook Preserve can absorb carbon from the atmosphere 30 to 50 times faster than forests.

One action we can all take this summer is to vote in the upcoming July 14th election (rescheduled from May 16th due to COVID-19 precautions) in support of three ballot initiatives that bolster climate action. Those initiatives include a request to support a town Climate Action Plan (Article 23), a request to support a Sustainability Director position for York (Article 22), and a request to lease the Witchtrot Road landfill to a developer for a municipal solar array (Article 80). If passed, all three of these initiatives would lay crucial groundwork for York to move forward in proactively addressing climate change. To obtain an absentee ballot application, visit the Town of York webpage at www.yorkmaine.org.

Resolving any crisis — whether brought on by a virus or fossil fuels — requires strong teamwork and collaboration. We'll continue to add to Our Climate Impact to help you better understand how your support of our work helps prepare York for a brighter future.



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FSC

Social Distancing Outdoors: Suggested Activities

As you practice social distancing, we know you may be looking for outdoor activities to keep you engaged. Here are a few ideas of ways to safely explore nature at this time:

Backyard Birding: With spring migration underway, now's a great time to grab a bird guidebook or download an app to help you learn which birds are singing out your window.

Tree ID: As you walk through our preserves or sit in your yard, try your hand at identifying the trees around you! The Maine Forest Service has a free, user-friendly Forest Trees of Maine guidebook available to download online at www.maine.gov.

Nature Scavenger Hunt: The possibilities are endless, but below are a few examples of things to look for while out on a walk: a feather; a nest of some kind; an animal burrow; a pile of acorns (who may have made the pile?); a tree growing from an old stump; signs of a past storm. Don't limit yourself just to what you see — challenge yourself to smell and hear signs of plants and wildlife as well.

Check out our website for more ideas of ways to explore outdoors at this time!



Examples of animal signs to look out for on trails or near your home. From left to right: Woodpecker holes; underground burrows; scat; chew marks; wildlife food stashes.