



COMING SOON: EAST WINDHAM CONSERVATION PROJECT

The Land Trust is embarking on its biggest conservation and trail access project to date in collaboration with the Town of Windham. The East Windham Conservation Project aims to forever protect 650 acres in east Windham off Falmouth Road. This is within the largest undeveloped forested block in Windham and one of the largest in the region.

Once protected, this area will create the largest forest and trail access corridor in Greater Portland, a 1,600-acre conservation and outdoor recreation area that connects Lowell Preserve, North Falmouth Community Forest, and Blackstrap Hill Preserve.

The Town of Windham's population has nearly tripled in size in the last 50 years. It now has the 13th largest population in the state and continues to be one of the fastest-growing towns in Maine. With concerns about the pace of development and lack of protected open space, the Town recently completed the Windham Open Space Plan, a first for Windham. It prioritizes permanently conserving more land. Currently, 8% of Greater Portland is permanently conserved, while only 4% of Windham is conserved. This conservation project is a direct result of the new Open Space Plan.

Barry Tibbetts, Town Manager, said: "For this to become a reality, \$3 million needs to be raised within the next year to pay for land acquisition costs, trail building, recreational amenities, and long-term stewardship of the land for wildlife and people. This significant project is possible because the town is committed to investing locally while also raising state, federal, and private funds in collaboration with the Land Trust. Like Lowell Preserve, we look forward to collaborating with the Land Trust to conserve the land and provide shared management of trails so they are welcoming for all."

While still early in the planning phases, the outdoor recreation experience on these 650 acres will boast miles of new trails, including family friendly accessible trails to Little Duck Pond for picnicking. There are also plans for an option to climb an observation tower for views of Mount Washington and Casco Bay creating an outdoor destination like no other in Greater Portland.

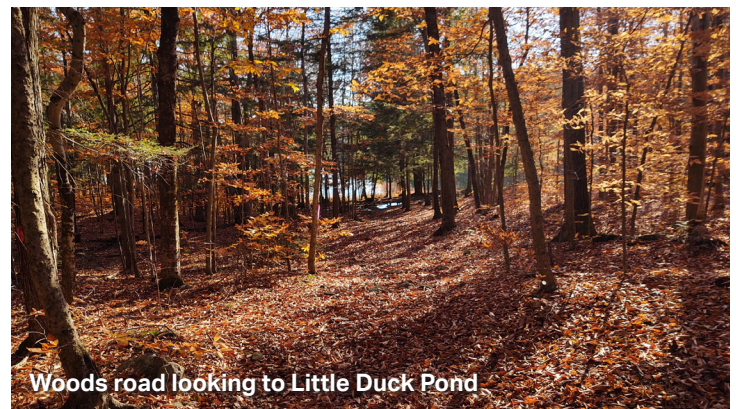
NEXT STEPS AND HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED:

A year long community engagement process has begun, co-led by the Land Trust and Town. This spring, we will be looking for your feedback through a regionwide survey, site walks, and a community meeting. We hope you will join us and help to build the vision for this project.

To fund this project, the Town is applying for Land for Maine's Future state funding and Land and Water Conservation federal funding. It will also introduce a bond (that will be paid for by Town open space impact fees) to the Windham Town Meeting. Our Land Trust will take on fundraising from foundations, businesses, and individuals. With \$3 million needed, this will be our largest conservation fundraising to date, and we will need widespread support. Thank you to Casco Bay Estuary Partnership for providing the first grant for this project. We will follow up soon with specific ways you can help support the project.



Little Duck Pond



Woods road looking to Little Duck Pond

HAVE YOU WALKED THROUGH A MEADOW RECENTLY?

The Land Trust's Preserves have historically been mostly forest, but that is changing with some recently completed projects. These new places include significant areas of meadow, which represents critical habitat.

Meadow habitat has declined since the mid-19th century with the conversion of farmland to development, making meadows one of the most threatened landscapes in Maine. This loss of habitat, along with challenges like pesticides, has led to an alarming decline in animal species that rely directly on meadows.

Meadows are home to many native animal species that are quickly declining, including ground nesting birds like bobolinks, songbirds, and a wide variety of pollinating insects, including moths, butterflies, and bees. Pollinators help the meadow plants to reproduce and are also essential for agriculture, as they pollinate the plants that give us fruits and vegetables.

The most important way the Land Trust helps meadows and pollinators is by conserving land with existing open habitat, which we allow to grow into meadow. Once these areas are protected, they also require management to remain as meadow and to minimize the spread of invasive plants. The Land Trust does this by mowing once every other year; the mowing is done in the late fall or early spring, to avoid impacting ground nesting birds.

We will soon be posting educational panels about meadow ecosystems and pollinators that will include engaging activities for families. Education panels are coming soon at Black Brook Preserve in Windham, Pride Preserve in Westbrook, Little River Preserve in Gorham, and Steep Falls Village Preserve in Standish.

This work to restore meadows is only possible due to ongoing member support.



Meadow at Black Brook Preserve, Windham

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Engaging with communities to conserve, steward, and provide access to local lands and clean water for current and future generations to enjoy.

We are a community-based nonprofit primarily serving Gorham, Gray, Standish, Westbrook, and Windham. We hold 2,170 acres of conserved lands with 18 free public access preserves that include trails and water access. We conduct water quality monitoring on the Presumpscot River watershed and we coordinate the Sebago to the Sea Trail, a 28-mile trail from Standish to Portland. Learn more at www.prlt.org.

Board of Directors

Gretchen Anderson	Tamara Lee Pinard
Sarah Andre	Tom Pitman
David Cole	Marla Stelk
James Hughes	Matt Streeter
Amanda Lessard	Sandy Truslow
Jim McBride	Mikki vanSummern

Advisory Council

Jim Boyle	Colleen Hilton
Cheryl Cameron	Rob Lavoie
Heather Chandler	Kate McDonald
Joanne Chessey	Michael Parker
Andrew Colvin	Priscilla Payne
Patrick Corey	Will Plumley
Matt Craig	Don Rich
Richard Curtis	Dale Rines
Valerie DeVuyst	Scott Roberts
Bill Diamond	John Tewhey
Fred Dillon	Bob Wake
Marylee Dodge	Don Wescott
Nate Dyer	Dan Willett

Staff

Rachelle Curran Apse,
Executive Director

Toby Jacobs,
Stewardship and Outreach Manager





Troubling Water Quality Trends And How You Can Help

The Presumpscot River is the backbone of the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust’s service area and Maine’s most urban river. It features over 20 water access points, swimming holes, and many great fishing spots. It runs through or along many of our conserved lands. It is also the largest freshwater input into Casco Bay, and as such, hosts the largest fish migration from Casco Bay. It is essential for people and wildlife that its waters be clean. This remains the focus of our water quality program. Through the program, volunteers collect data that identifies the general health of the Presumpscot River and its tributaries, for both wildlife and people.

We are seeing a concerning water quality trend: bacteria levels over the last decade have increased throughout the Presumpscot River watershed. As a result, nearly all tributary sites often fail to meet bacteria standards set by the State of Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In addition, sites on the Stroudwater River almost always fail the standards as well. High bacteria is dangerous to humans and wildlife. It’s caused by runoff from houses, farms, and pet waste, and tends to increase with development. For more detail, please see the annual and historical maps on the Land Trust website: www.prlt.org/water.

HERE’S HOW YOU CAN HELP

Dog waste is a serious contributor to bacteria in the rivers and streams in our region. If you have a dog, please:

- Keep dog poop bags with you.
- Always pick up your dog’s poop—otherwise it will eventually end up in the waterways.
- Bring the dog poop bag home with you and dispose of it in your own trash.

In addition, keep your dog on a leash or tight voice control. This is critical both to be respectful to other trail users and also to ensure that you are aware of where your dog relieves itself so that you can clean up the waste. Please consider cleaning up any additional dog waste you find along the trail. Every bit helps.

New this spring, we will be adding signs at every trailhead highlighting the importance of picking up dog waste, for

wildlife and clean water. Together we can work towards healthy rivers and streams.

You can also help by volunteering now for our 2022 Water Quality Monitoring season. If you would like to get involved, please go to www.prlt.org/get-involved.

Thank you to the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, the Town of Windham Watershed Protection Grant Program, the University of Southern Maine, IDEXX Laboratories, and to our ongoing members for supporting the Water Quality Monitoring program.



Water quality summer staff at Mill Brook Preserve, Westbrook



Water quality volunteers along the Presumpscot River

SPRINGTIME IS FISH MIGRATION AT MILL BROOK PRESERVE

With flowers and leaf buds appearing throughout our region, thousands of alewives are getting ready to start their journey from the ocean up the Presumpscot River and Mill Brook for their annual spawning in Highland Lake. Tens of thousands of fish make this 11-mile upstream swim, making this the largest migratory fish run from Casco Bay.

Restoration efforts over the past 30 years have led to alewife being present in many rivers in Maine, but they are rarely clearly visible in their natural habitat. This natural phenomenon is what makes Mill Brook Preserve so special. The trails offer the unique chance to see the migration in a scenic natural setting. Several rapids along the Brook create traffic jams that can last from days to weeks. This results in thousands of fish on display in

two 'viewing pools' as they slowly circulate, waiting for their chance to test the rapids. A few times each minute, a fish jumps and splashes its way up the rapids before continuing its migration.

Viewing the fish migration through Mill Brook Preserve is one of the most incredible wildlife experiences in the region. This natural spectacle has become more popular each year, with thousands of visitors now seeking to catch a glimpse of the fish. We will be busy this spring fixing trails and posting educational signage to ensure the fish can successfully migrate undisturbed, while you and all our visitors can enjoy this awe-inspiring wildlife experience.

This work to steward the annual fish migration is only possible due to member support.



Fish migration at Mill Brook Preserve, Westbrook

WHAT'S YOUR LEGACY?

Consider making it the places that ensure our part of Maine remains a wonderful place to live, work, and play. Consider including Presumpscot Regional Land Trust in your will.

Through a planned gift to our Land Trust, you can leave a legacy of forested river corridors, sweeping views of working farms, and walking trails for the next generation to enjoy.

Planned gifts come in all sizes, and each is an expression of a person's desire to make a difference and leave a lasting legacy. A bequest is the most common way to make a planned gift. You can donate a specific amount or a percentage of your assets in your will, or make a donation of land to our Land Trust.

We would be honored to discuss planned giving options with you. Please contact our Executive Director, Rachele Curran Apse, at (207) 839-4633 or rachele@prlt.org, and learn more at www.prlt.org/planned-giving.



Members at Randall Orchards Trails, Standish

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Our service to the community as a local nonprofit is based on active and engaged volunteers. We want to say a big “thank you” to all of the volunteers who helped our Land Trust this past year, including water quality monitors, fish counters, fish migration ambassadors, preserve stewards, trail builders, event leaders, committee members, advisory council members, and board members. We have lots of volunteer opportunities this spring:

WATER QUALITY MONITORING VOLUNTEERS

Want to get outside on beautiful mornings this summer and help keep the waters of our region clean? This summer will be our sixth water quality sampling season (building on decades of work by the Presumpscot River Watch), and we are looking for at least 30 volunteers to help with the effort. Sampling happens every other Saturday morning from May to September. Volunteers are placed in teams so you don’t need to be available for all 10 dates. No prior experience is necessary, and all training is provided.

FISH COUNT VOLUNTEERS

2022 will be the second year the Land Trust will coordinate the Fish Count volunteer program. It is important to have accurate data on the number of alewives successfully completing their migration from Casco Bay through our Mill Brook Preserve. The University of Southern Maine and the Maine Department of Marine Resources use this data as part of their ongoing research. You can help by becoming a Fish Count volunteer. No prior skills are needed and we will provide training. Volunteers count fish, for 30 minutes at a time, throughout the weeks of the run from mid-May to mid-June. Volunteer shifts are short and hours are flexible.

FISH MIGRATION AMBASSADORS

There are now thousands of visitors who come to see the fish migration at our Mill Brook Preserve. Ambassadors engage with visitors at the two fish viewing pools, welcoming them, answering questions, and supporting a successful fish migration. No prior skills are needed and we will provide training. Volunteer shifts will be mid-May to mid-June (coinciding with the start and end of the fish run) and hours are flexible.

TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

Each field season brings trail maintenance projects at each of our 18 public access preserves. If you want to spend more time outside while doing challenging and meaningful work for the community, this is for you. No prior skills are needed, and we will provide all necessary tools and equipment. Hours are flexible.



Youth volunteers at Black Brook Preserve, Windham



Trailwork volunteers at Frazier Preserve, Gorham

LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP FOR ANY OF THESE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT

WWW.PRLT.ORG/GET-INVOLVED

OR CONTACT TOBY JACOBS AT TOBY@PRLT.ORG WITH QUESTIONS.

EXPLORING THE BIRDS AROUND US

Guest Article by Marion H. Sprague

In early spring months, our overwintering birds begin tuning up for the spring chorus. In my Westbrook yard it usually starts with the bright *tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle* of the Carolina Wren, followed swiftly by the Black-capped Chickadee's *hey-sweee-tie*, the Tufted Titmouse's *cheer-cheer-cheer*, and the laser-like song of the Northern Cardinal. The birds remind us that spring is coming, well before the weather does.

In March, large flocks of mixed blackbirds return, including Common Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds with their iridescent feathers, Red-Winged Blackbirds with their striking red and yellow epaulets, and European Starlings sporting their shiny, white-speckled coats. These are joined shortly by our first few Turkey Vultures, and also the return of Ospreys to their nesting grounds.

By the time late April and May arrive, migration is in full swing. The dawn chorus is alive with bird song. This is when we see the largest influx of migrant birds including our colorful warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and a myriad of other songbirds.

Maine is a special place to enjoy birds. This is largely due to Maine's situation along the Atlantic Flyway—a major route for north-south migration. It starts in Greenland and continues along the Atlantic coast to neotropical wintering grounds for many long-distance migrants.

Closer to home, the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust trails provide access to important habitats for birds, including forests, fields, and wetlands. Migrating birds tend to use the same migration routes year after year, so trail-goers are treated to this spectacular phenomenon each spring and fall. I return each summer to the fields next to the Great Falls Elementary School entrance to Hawkes Preserve to watch Bobolinks with their R2D2 sounding song, and I search for Louisiana Waterthrush along the stream banks of the Mill Brook Preserve trail.

Discovering rare and uncommon birds is a true delight! No one will soon forget the Great Black Hawk in 2018 or, most recently, the Steller's Sea Eagle that has crowds flocking (pun intended) to Maine's mid-coast to see it. You never know where the next rarity is going to pop up, so keep your eyes and ears open and you could make the next discovery!

With over 200 species of breeding birds in Maine—this swells to over 460 when we include migrants and rarities—we can all agree that the opportunities for great birding in Maine are abundant. The best way to see them is to get out on those trails and start exploring! I'd love to see you for the Land Trust's Spring Birding Migration Event on Saturday May 21st.

BIO: *Marion is a naturalist and photographer who has loved birds for as long as she can remember. She shares this passion with others as a: coordinator for the Maine Young Birders Club, Maine Master Naturalist, board member of York County Audubon, and volunteer education leader for our Land Trust. All photos on this page were taken by Marion.*

Black-Capped Chickadee



Northern Cardinal



Osprey



Thank you to our
ADOPT-A-TRAIL SPONSORS



Thank you to our
BUSINESS PARTNERS

LEAD BUSINESS PARTNERS



PATRON BUSINESS PARTNERS



SUPPORTING BUSINESS PARTNERS

- Chalmers Insurance Group
- Douglas, McDaniel & Campo
- Gorham House of Pizza
- Norway Savings Bank
- Rogue Industries
- Shaw Earthworks

Thank you to our business
adopt-a-trail sponsors and partners.

Find out more by emailing
info@prlt.org or go to www.prlt.org



RIVER PARTNER INVITATION

We invite you to consider joining the 60 Land Trust members who are already River Partners.

Like a river, your donation to the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust will “flow” year-round, when you become a River Partner and make a recurring monthly gift. It’s a great way to spread your donation throughout the year, providing the Land Trust a steady stream of support.

The River Partner program is an easy way to give. You choose how much to donate, and you can increase, decrease, or stop your gift at any time. Your recurring gift can be made either through a credit card by going to www.prlt.org and clicking on Donate, or through bank-to-bank transfer (ACH) by filling out the information below.

I want to be a River Partner giving a monthly gift of:

- \$10 \$15 \$20 \$25 \$50
 \$100 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I want to be a River Partner and give through bank-to-bank transfer. I have enclosed a check for my first month’s gift. Please transfer my future monthly gifts from my checking account using the bank information on my check.

Signature (required for River Partner monthly giving through ACH) Date

Gifts are processed directly through Gorham Savings Bank. I understand that this is an automated monthly giving program billed each month.

Make check payable and mail to: Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, P.O. Box 33, Gorham, Maine 04038 or donate at www.prlt.org. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, all donations to PRLT are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Call us at 839-4633 or email info@prlt.org with questions or to make changes. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt for your contributions at the end of each year.





Presumpscot Regional Land Trust
PO Box 33, Gorham, Maine 04038 | info@prlt.org | www.prlt.org

Upcoming Events

Spring Birding Migration Event

May 21st

Steep Falls Village Preserve, Standish

Fish Migration in Greater Portland: Guided Walk

June 4th

Mill Brook Preserve, Westbrook

Exploring for Mushrooms: Guided Walk

July, date TBD

Mill Brook Preserve South, Westbrook

Intro to Paddling the Presumpscot

August, date TBD

Shaw Park, Gorham



Hawkes Preserve Storywalk along the Presumpscot River, Gorham

**All events are free, but space is limited, and RSVP is required.
To learn more about these events and to RSVP, go to our website
www.prlt.org/events or call 839-4633**