



**Maine Coast
Heritage Trust**

2026 Maine Land Conservation Conference

Presented by Maine Coast Heritage Trust

WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

Breakfast and Land Fair in the Hammond Lumber Auditorium 7:30 – 8:30 am

Plenary Session in Augusta/Capitol/Pine 8:30 – 9:50 am

- This year our plenary session will feature **Forrest King-Cortes, Director of Community-Centered Conservation** at the Land Trust Alliance. Forrest and his co-presenters, Ciona Ulbrich of Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Matt Markot of Loon Echo Land Trust, will **discuss the evolution of conservation** and how land trusts around the country and in Maine continue to change to meet the needs of local communities – their people, plants, wildlife, and environment.
Facilitated by: Cathy Kidman, Organizational Development Specialist and Leadership Coach

- The winner of the **2026 Espy Land Heritage Award** will also be announced.

Break and Land Fair in the Hammond Lumber Auditorium 9:50 – 10:30 am

Workshop Session A 10:30 am – 12 pm

A1: Community Forests: A tool for strengthening community cohesion and civic engagement

This session will help land trust and local and tribal government professionals learn how community forest creation can be a tool to strengthen social cohesion and civic engagement, promote economic growth, and strengthen community health and wellbeing. For more than two decades, Trust for Public Land (TPL) has been a leader in the community forest movement, collaborating with local partners, communities, and tribes to establish enduring, protected open spaces that are managed by the community, for the community.

In this session, participants will learn and engage with TPL's Community Forest Training Program, which includes a seven-step process for creating and managing community forests. This process specifically highlights participatory planning and design tools and tools for building and maintaining community cohesion and empowerment.

Presenters: Betsy Cook and Anne Read, Trust for Public Land

A2: Crafting a Compelling Conservation Story

The conservation world is rich with storytelling opportunities! These stories want to be told, and people want to hear them. In this interactive workshop, we'll explore the elements that make for powerful storytelling, practice crafting stories together, and discover ways to create a culture of storytelling within your organization. You'll walk away with practical tips and templates that you and your team can put to work right away.

Presenter: Linda Lidov and Michelle Hennessey, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

A3: The Crisis of Public Funding and What It Means for Nonprofits

Public funding for conservation is becoming more competitive, more restrictive, and more unpredictable, especially for organizations working across rural and coastal regions. This workshop helps nonprofits navigate these pressures while protecting their mission and long-term goals. Participants explore how to identify opportunities that create a more diverse and sustainable funding model, reducing dependence on volatile funding sources and building greater confidence among donors. This session is ideal for organizations new to major gifts or those seeking to build a stronger, more intentional fundraising program from the ground up.

Presenter: Maribeth Canning, Maribeth Canning Consulting

A4: Funding Stewardship – Is It Time for Your Land Trust to Embrace Transfer Fees?

We'll focus on how to fund sustainable stewardship when acquiring land or a conservation easement. We'll go over the basics and what most Maine land trusts do. Then we'll turn to the transfer fee tool, which has been successfully implemented in certain states, but so far has not been used widely in Maine.

Presenters: Stacey Caulk, Drummond Woodsum, and Rob Levin, Rob Levin Legal and Consulting Services

A5: Re-examining Your Mission, Vision & Values as the Building Blocks to Strategic Planning

Strategic plan on the brain? Start here! In this interactive session, participants will explore the critical role that mission, vision, and values play in setting a strong foundation for strategic planning. Through practical frameworks, simple exercises, and guided discussion, attendees will learn how to develop a clear, inspiring vision, articulate a unifying statement of values, and assess and refine their organization's mission.

Presenters: Karen Grey, Wildlands Trust, and Jennifer Plowden, Land Trust Alliance

A6: 75,000 Hours of Trail Work in One Year: Lessons in Trail Maintenance and Construction from AMC's Professional Trail Crews and Volunteer Trails Programs

The trails of the northeast are rugged and can be challenging to maintain! In the 150 years of the Appalachian Mountain Club, trails and trail maintenance have always been central to the organization. This presentation will discuss how AMC leveraged 75,000 hours of trail work in 2025, using techniques new and old, with volunteers and staff, on a variety of trails throughout the region.. Nora Sackett will share how the AMC supports 1,100 volunteers contributing more than 25,000 trail volunteer hours annually, and Matt Moore will share projects that AMC's professional trail crew has worked on, from bridges to staircases to all persons' trails.

By the end of this workshop, participants will have lessons to bring back to their trails communities to engage volunteers and approach common trail issues. Participants will gain insight into what trail issues are best suited for volunteers and when you might hire professionals.

Presenters: Matt Moore and Nora Sackett, Appalachian Mountain Club

A7: From Landscape to Local: Web Tools for Conservation Planning in Maine

Effective conservation planning requires tools that can operate at multiple scales—from broad regional assessments to site-specific actions. This workshop introduces three web tools designed to support decision-making for conservation practitioners and partners.

- Conservation Dashboard
- Maine Aquatic Barrier Prioritization Tool
- Biodiversity Early-Detection Tool: Specific Monitoring via Citizen Science

Presenters: Dan Coker, TNC in Maine; Hadley Couraud, TNC in Maine; Kyle Lima, Schoodic Institute; and Erik Martin, TNC Center for Resilient Conservation Science

A8: Wabanaki and Salt Marsh Restoration

Salt marsh restoration is rapidly expanding as a coastal resiliency strategy in Maine, yet most projects have developed without meaningful Wabanaki leadership or engagement. Although marshes hold deep cultural, ecological, and historical significance for Wabanaki communities, restoration often proceeds within conservation frameworks shaped by legacies of exclusion that limit safe Wabanaki access and shared decision-making.

This session will examine the structural and relational barriers that contribute to this gap. Presenters will share reflections from recent efforts to form a collaborative team focused on strengthening Wabanaki engagement in salt marsh restoration, highlighting challenges, lessons learned, and emerging pathways toward more authentic co-stewardship.

The second half of the session will shift to facilitated discussion. Participants will reflect on how Wabanaki engagement and co-management currently occur — or do not occur — within their own organizations. Together, we will explore obstacles across land trusts and conservation institutions and explore opportunities and strategies to consider co-stewardship in land management and restoration.

Presenters: Tatia Bauer, Maine Coast Heritage Trust; Genevieve Doughty, Passamaquoddy, Sipayik Resilience Committee; Suzanne Greenlaw, Houlton Band of Maliseets, Schoodic Institute; Kiwenik “Kyle” Lolar, Penobscot, Kiwenik & Kasq Indigenous Knowledge Institute; and Helena Tatgenhorst, The Nature Conservancy

Lunch in the Hammond Lumber Auditorium, Explore the Land Fair 12 – 1:30 pm

Workshop Session B 1:30 – 3 pm

B1: Cultivating Connection: The Power of Gathering Spaces & The Impact of Belonging

Connection driven spaces have been in rapid decline as far back as the 1950s. National trends for social connection show loneliness is increasing and social engagement is decreasing. Our mental health, physical health, and society are directly and significantly impacted. Learn about the decline of community spaces, the public health epidemic of loneliness and isolation, and how we can collectively revitalize opportunities for affirming, inclusive social connection to improve societal well-being. Due to the scope of Queerly ME’s work, this training will in part focus on the LGBTQIA+ community and outdoor equity.

Presenters: Lydia Coburn, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, and Kyle Warnock, Queerly ME

B2: Digging Deeper into Your Land

Workshop participants will learn about two stories focusing on the land:

MCHT's Danielle Arroyo will share the story of MCHT's stewardship of Malaga Island, the 42-acre island at the mouth of the New Meadows River that has played a significant role in Maine's history. The island was home to a mixed-race fishing community from the mid-1800s to 1912, when the state of Maine evicted 47 residents from their homes and exhumed and relocated their buried dead.

The 244 acres of Viles Arboretum was once part of the working farm for what was called the Maine Insane Hospital. Between 1840 and sometime in the 1960s, the property was an active farm growing fruits and vegetables, grains, and raising chickens, cows and pigs. The history of the farm is an unsettling one as the patients from the Insane Hospital (later the Maine State Hospital and eventually the Augusta Mental Health Institute) were required to provide the labor for the farm. A research grant from the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission is being used to uncover stories of the workers on the farm and their families which be included in signage on the trail. New trail-based programs are being developed in conjunction with area health care agencies to support people with mental illness and the kinds of conditions that might have resulted in institutionalization in the 19th century.

Presenters: Danielle Arroyo, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and David Greenham, Viles Arboretum

B3: Bridging the Gap: Exploring Financing for Rapid Response Land Conservation

This session offers a practical, accessible introduction to how conservation organizations can leverage financing tools to move quickly when critical properties come on the market. Participants will learn what bridge financing is, how it works, and the various types of financing commonly used in conservation deals. We'll discuss how to assess whether a financing opportunity is viable, what to consider when choosing a lender, and how to evaluate alternatives when borrowing isn't the right fit. The session will also highlight steps land trusts can take to be "deal-ready," including strengthening internal policies, building board fluency around financing, and cultivating relationships with funders and community partners. We'll wrap up with guidance on where to start: essential questions to ask, partners and advisors who can help, and relationships worth fostering so your organization is poised to act swiftly and confidently when the next opportunity arises. The session will include an overview presentation by TCF and MCHT, an interactive small group case study, and a panel that will share first-hand experience of working with financing.

Presenters: Aaron Dority, Frenchman Bay Conservancy; George Fields, Blue Hill Heritage Trust; Liz Petruska, The Conservation Fund; Heather Rogers, Coastal Mountains Land Trust; and Ciona Ulbrich, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

B4: Climate Adaptation Planning for Land Conservation: A Tool for Building Resilience

As the impacts of climate change become increasingly visible, climate adaptation planning, a focused framework for addressing climate impacts, can be a useful tool to help maintain protected lands, spur conversations with landowners, and align organizational decision making.

Maine Farmland Trust and American Farmland Trust invite non-agricultural land trusts to learn about how these organizations have used adaptation planning to improve farm resilience and viability in a changing climate. During this workshop, we will:

- Discuss the fundamentals of climate adaptation planning
- Present the frameworks and tools we use to advise on climate adaptation planning in a process of risk assessment, identifying potential adaptation strategies, and evaluating practices for implementation.
- Learn about climate adaptation plans developed for farm operations to address hydrology, soil health, ecosystem concerns
- Invite conversation and dialogue – how might this process work for other land trusts in stewarding land? How are non-agricultural land trusts currently thinking about climate impacts, risk, and future changes to the land so both the land and the land trust can be more resilient?

Presenters: Sean Hagan, Maine Farmland Trust, and Sara Keleman, American Farmland Trust

B5: Organization Charting: Mapping Relationships for Positive Change

This interactive workshop explores two questions: 1) How do we draw org charts that better demonstrate the complexity of power and collaborations within organizations? and 2) Are there collaborative staffing models that can be thoughtfully integrated to improve conservation outcomes (and employee/board/stakeholder satisfaction)? The workshop will begin with a short presentation and then move to breakout group exercises and full group discussion.

Presenter: Sam Deeran, Shoebox Collaborations

B6: A Systems Thinking Approach to Invasive Plants

This workshop is geared towards land trusts with at least some forested properties which are not yet experiencing a severe and widespread invasive plant issue. Invasive plant management can seem like a daunting task, especially when considered along with invasive pests/pathogens and climate change. This session will ground the problem in a systems thinking framework while also providing practical, actionable management recommendations. Systems thinking allows land managers to apply the concepts of resistance, resilience, and tipping points to the ecosystems under their care. After presentations from a disturbance ecologist and a licensed forester, break-out groups will work through what steps they would follow, and what questions they would need answered, in order to guard against their conserved Maine forests morphing into Eurasian-shrublands-in-Maine over time.

Presenters: Dr. Mila Plavsic, Falmouth Land Trust, and Paul Larrivee, 207 Forestry

B7: Everyone Can Play a Role in Planning for and Mitigating Wildfire Risk

Wildfire risk is an emerging and growing concern across Maine, and landowners (private, municipal, and conservation) play a critical role in reducing that risk. While responsibility for wildfire mitigation is shared across many entities, landowners often ask the same questions: *What can I do on my land? Where do I start? And who can help?* This interactive workshop will focus on practical, actionable steps landowners can take to reduce wildfire risk, and how those actions

are supported by planning, partnerships, and funding at the local and state level. Presenters from consulting, local government, land conservation, municipal, and state forestry perspectives will share real-world examples from Maine and the Northeast that translate wildfire planning concepts into on-the-ground actions.

The session will combine a short presentation with facilitated discussion and Q&A, emphasizing clear takeaways landowners can act on and resources participants can bring back to their organizations and communities.

Presenters: Addison Davis, Town of Chebeague Island; Alex Drenga, Island Heritage Trust; Allen Kratz, Blue Hill Peninsula Community Wildfire Protection Plan; Kent Nelson, Maine Forest Service; and Arianna Porter, SWCA Environmental Consultants

B8 Co-stewardship of Wabanaki Cultural Sites on Conservation Lands

Wabanaki have been in relationship with the lands and waters of what is now called Maine since time immemorial, leaving connections to their lifeways through archaeological materials. Because many of these archaeological sites are on conservation land, there is a necessity to take care for these cultural places in the best way possible using a Western lens; but this isn't the only way forward. You will learn about purposes and approaches to collaboration and co-stewardship with Wabanaki Nations, as well as current and evolving concerns around archaeological and cultural sites on conserved lands.

Presenters: Deirdre McGrath, PhD Student UMaine; Isaac St. John, Maliseet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer; Deirdre Whitehead, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Afternoon Break 3 – 3:30 pm

Closing Session in Augusta/Capital/Pine 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Closing Session *with graphic notetaker Karyn Knight Detering*

We will come back together for a collaborative work session expressed through graphic notetaking with inputs from throughout the two days of the conference. As a group, we will consider answers to key questions raised during the presentations and identify steps we can take to move this work forward.

Facilitated by: Cathy Kidman, Organizational Development Specialist and Leadership Coach

Adjourn 4:30 pm