



Summer 2023 Freeport Conservation Trust

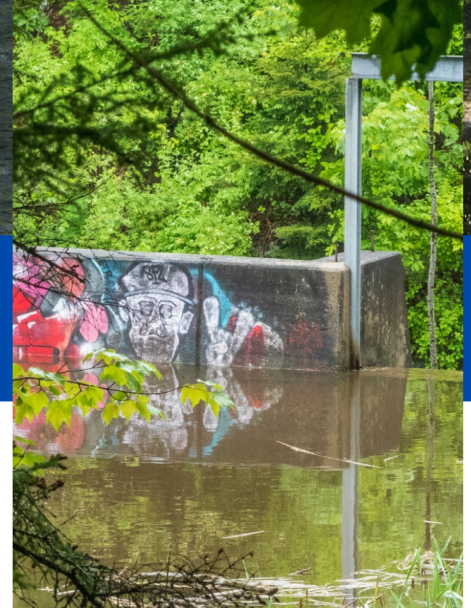
Frost Gully Dam Removal 3 Dams • 5 Days • 7 Years

The Frost Gully Brook Dam Removal project, which began on June 15th, "3 dams removed in 5 days after 7 years of planning", aimed to improve the watershed and ecosystem of Frost Gully Brook, a small tributary of the Harraseeket River and Casco Bay. A partnership of organizations and individuals, including Freeport Conservation Trust, Trout Unlimited, Maine Water Company, US Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, and stream restoration specialist Alex Abbott set out to restore

"It is this sort of cooperative, comprehensive and collaborative approach we need across Maine to reconnect streams"
~Alex Abbott, Freeport resident

the habitat and health of the area. This ambitious undertaking involved the removal of dams, extensive invasive species management and the reintroduction of native plants

The objective of the project was to enhance the health and interconnectedness of the brook, bolster the populations of indigenous fish species such as "sea run" and "resident" Wild Eastern Brook Trout, and promote biodiversity. The removal of the two dams situated along Frost Gully Brook on conserved FCT land, as well as an additional dam owned by the Maine Water Company, just upstream of Route 1, was a crucial step toward restoring the area's natural balance. Smaller dams were often overlooked in their impact on local habitats, with much of the attention directed towards larger dams. Through the removal of these barriers, the project expanded the interconnected habitat for native brook trout populations, opening up access to previously obstructed cold waters and creating miles of additional connected habitat. Although initially constructed to serve as sources of drinking water for Freeport, all th-



ree dams had been unused for several decades prior to the project. The sole purpose of the dams was to impede the movement of fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as disrupt the natural materials that played a vital role in maintaining the stream's ecological balance.

In conjunction with the agreed-upon enhancements by Maine DOT, which included the installation of weirs in one of the three culverts beneath Interstate 295,
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Trail Report

In April 2022, FCT welcomed Jonathan Dawson as our first Stewardship Coordinator. Under his guidance, with the assistance of college interns and dedicated volunteers, we successfully completed over 126 tasks encompassing invasive removal and trail construction across 21 properties in Freeport throughout the year. As we embrace the busy summer season, our accomplishments continue to grow. So far this year, we have already completed over 70 tasks across 15 properties, with more than 100 projects identified on our to-do list. Among the key priorities are the planning and development of accessible trails for all, enhancing signage, and addressing the items on our comprehensive list of tasks.

2022 Conserved Land: 80 acres

Acquired the summer of 2022 Wescott Woods is now 45 acres of protected forest. Located off Ringrose Road bordering Kelsey Brook, a tributary of the Harraseeket River, this habitat expands the protected area and trail system in the watershed. We will be including Gibby's Trail in this years Trail Challenge.



An additional conservation easement was acquired on 35 acres of land in the Freeport area.

Annual Meeting

For the first time since 2019, our FCT annual meeting on June 7th witnessed an impressive turnout with over 70 attendees. Kicking off the event, we started with a delightful social hour featuring refreshments and captivating wildlife videos showcasing various locations in Freeport, including FCT properties, all beautifully captured by Bob Olney. Once the event commenced, a report was delivered by our Board President, Ethel Wilkerson, which included updates on new staff, volunteers, and ongoing projects, our members enthusiastically participated in the election process. They cast their votes to select a slate of nominees for both new and renewing one-year terms on the FCT board. The Board of Trustees then voted to elect officers. FCT Treasurer Ginny Lee presented the 2022 Financial report. Our meeting ended with a wonderful presentation from Michael Boardman including art, sketches and



and stories of nature in Maine and the Artic Refuge. Thank you to Maine Beer Company, Royal River Natural Foods, Wilbur's of Maine and generous volunteers for helping provide the food and drinks.

2023

Freeport Trail Challenge



Hike four Freeport trails August through October & enjoy the outdoors with friends and family!

Freeport Conservation Trust challenges you to find your way on four local trails. Everyone who completes the Challenge and submits a Passport is in for a treat sponsored by Ben & Jerry's of Freeport and Pet Pantry. Passports can be found at the Freeport Community Library, Casco Bay YMCA and the Town Hall. Like years past, keep track of your adventure on a passport using the rubber stamp kept in the container along each trail. You can mail, drop off or email us once completed. This year, we have some exciting changes planned, so be sure to check the FCT Website as we approach the kickoff in August. Get ready for a fun-filled experience!

Frost Gully Continued

as well as improvements to fish passage downstream at Route 1, brook trout would soon enjoy the freedom to migrate at their own will, unrestricted by barriers. "It was this sort of cooperative, comprehensive, and collaborative approach we needed across Maine to reconnect streams," said Alex Abbott, Stream Restoration Specialist and Freeport resident.

The process of deconstructing these dams was a sight to see. To start the show, a cofferdam was created on either side of the dams. Volunteers from Merrymeeting Bay Trout Unlimited carefully collected the fish trapped within the cofferdam area. The fish were gently scooped out, placed in buckets, and transported to a higher point in the river. This thoughtful action aimed to safeguard the fish from potential harm caused by equipment or being drawn into pumps. Following that,

contractors utilized machinery to excavate the accumulated mud, effectively clearing the area, and proceeded with the systematic deconstruction of the dam.

Local members of TU had identified a population of "sea run" brook trout situated at the base of the brook. These improvements were expected to significantly benefit this particular group of fish. As a result of wide-spread development, the populations of Wild Eastern Brook Trout have suffered severe declines in many regions. However, Maine stands out as a haven for these trout, as it remains one of the few places where their numbers have been comparatively preserved and protected. We should have expected to see fish found in the brook increase in size, number, and distribution. Restoration efforts would help regulate stream temperatures, enabling the reproduction of



Look who peered into the Maine Water Company building wondering what was going on!

To check it out for yourself go to: freeportconservationtrust.com

brook trout and facilitating the return of other invertebrate and vertebrate species associated with cold water streams.

Thank you to our partners and local funders Patagonia, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, and a gift in memory of Victoria Calabro Zavasnick for helping to restore this wonderfully forested ecosystem in the heart of Freeport.



Photo Credit: Karen Kurkjian

New Board Members



Ginny Lee is a Freeport resident looking to join the FCT board. She is a corporate attorney with Cisco working in cyber security. Ginny has served on several nonprofit boards. She and her husband Dean live on land conserved through an FCT conservation easement, known as the Miskell property.



Kristan Vermeulen recently joined Maine Beer Company as Public Relations & Community Liaison Manager. She is also a publicist and founder of the Makers of the USA podcast highlighting small businesses in Maine and thought-out the country.



Jennifer Gunn, Freeport resident, and retired Psychiatrist, moved to Freeport from Ithaca, New York. She has been volunteering weekly at the FCT office. Jennifer also volunteers with the Hangar Theatre and the Freeport Community Center.

Freeport Conservation Trust protects, connects and shares 1847 acres of woods,, farmland, scenic vistas, and shoreland in town. As a membership organization, FCT welcomes your support and inquiries.



Board of Trustees

- Tom Boutureira
- Jennifer Gunn
- Toby Jacobs
- Virginia "Ginny" Lee
- Ally McDougal
- Mason Morfit
- Benjamin L. Niles
- Kelly Sink
- John Slavin
- Robert "Buck" Stevens
- Kristan Vermeulen
- Ethel Wilkerson

To learn about trail walks and events
join our email list through:
freeportconservationtrust.org
info@freeportconservationtrust.org
865-3985 x212

2023 FCT Summer Interns



Carter Frank

Freeport Conservation Trust is pleased to welcome Carter Frank as this year's Cadot Summer Intern. Carter is a senior at the University of Southern Maine studying Environmental Planning and Policy and a recent recipient of the Outstanding Environmental Planning and Policy Student Award. Carter is familiar with coastal Maine as a resident of Portland and is excited to continue exploring the Freeport area. He enjoys baking, playing basketball, and gardening. Carter is looking forward to interning with FCT as well as meeting the members and volunteers.



Abby Marriott

Freeport Conservation Trust is pleased to welcome Abby Marriott as a Maine Land Trust Intern. Abby is a junior at Bates College majoring in Environmental Studies with a minor in Music. Abby grew up in Brooklyn, New York but has an affinity for coastal Maine after spending time in Blue Hill Maine with family growing up. She enjoys spending time outdoors and especially loves skiing in the winter, and hiking and canoeing in the summer. When not spending time outdoors, Abby likes cooking and playing pickup basketball and piano. She is excited to work on FCT properties and spending the summer in Maine.