

Frenchman Bay Conservancy
2022 Annual Report & Newsletter



Frenchman Bay
Conservancy

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On the Cover

A “drone’s-eye view” of The Whalesback, a region that refers to two of FBC’s newest conservation easements in the Upper Union River Watershed, during peak foliage. The photo features Beaver Brook, a tributary to the Union River. For more information, see page 3.

Photo by Mike Perlman.



President's Letter

December 2022

Dear FBC Members and Friends,

By a variety of measures, this year has been one of the organization's most successful. A few examples come to mind when I reflect back on our year celebrating FBC's 35th Anniversary together.

In early April, we closed on a 645-acre fee land acquisition in Gouldsboro as part of our Schoodic to Schoodic Corridor, and then in the Fall we conserved another 3,223 forever-wild acres in the Upper Union River Watershed. This year, we've brought the total amount of land under FBC protection to nearly 13,700 acres.

Under the direction of Kat Deely, FBC's Director of Conservation, rehabilitation of the beloved trail system at Baker Hill and Long Ledges in Sullivan has begun. Repairs include building new staircases in areas where thin soil and steep slopes were eroding the trail and creating an unsustainable pathway of roots and rocks. We also broke ground on the trail at the Frenchman Bay Community Forest in Hancock.

Over the summer, we released the 35th Anniversary Edition of FBC's Preserves & Trail Guide, produced by FBC's Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Ellerie Ezekiel. The guide provides directions to FBC's preserves along with invaluable information about the terrain, allowable activities, and guidance on how to keep these public access trails pristine. In Ellsworth we held a ribbon-cutting celebration for the Grand Opening of the Ellsworth Riverwalk Trail -- a testament to our collaboration with local partners.

And finally, we celebrated FBC's 35th Anniversary throughout the summer months. Many of our most loyal and generous members were recognized and acknowledged at receptions at the Crocker House in Hancock and Schoodic Institute in Winter Harbor for the tremendous amount of financial and sweat equity support they have provided over the years.

It has been a pleasure serving as FBC Board President this year, and I look forward to the progress that we can make together next year. Thank you for all of your generous support which makes our work possible. I hope you and your loved ones have a happy and healthy holiday season and a joyous 2023.

Best regards,



Paul Parshley, President of the Board

The Whalesback Project: FBC Conserves 3,223 Forever- Wild Acres in Aurora, Maine

Aaron DORITY, Executive Director

On an April day in 2018, conservationists from several organizations met at the Forest Society of Maine's office in Bangor with a real estate agent representing the owner of over 4,000 acres of land in Aurora referred to as The Whalesback. One-third of the acreage was wetlands - a mosaic of ponds, streams, and peatlands representing a sizable portion of the headwaters of the Union River's Middle Branch.

Everyone in the room was familiar with the iconic view from The Whalesback, a famous esker along the historic "Airline Road" from Bangor to Calais, known more commonly as Route 9. We knew

that this vast expanse of wetlands and young, recovering forest was a remarkable landscape, as well as a gateway to Maine's northwoods. But that day in April, it also became clear that this property may be sold for development, especially now that Maine's Department of Transportation was moving forward with plans to extend the Route 395 corridor to Route 9, making this region a reasonable commute from the Bangor/ Brewer metro area.

By November of that year, two of the conservation organizations, ourselves and New England Forestry Foundation, partnered to seek funding



for this opportunity. Our first attempt was to pitch it to state and federal resource agency officials who were exploring ways to mitigate the impact of the Route 395 extension -- ironically, the very project putting this region at risk for development. However, we soon learned that the funders had selected a worthy project in the Penobscot River watershed. Whalesback conservation would have to wait.

Over that winter, we regrouped with our partners at Maine Coast Heritage Trust to craft a proposal to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service NAWCA program to protect wading bird and waterfowl habitat. We knew we had a better chance of success if we worked together, as we had numerous times in the past. The concept was challenging but straightforward. FBC would secure \$800,000 in federal grant money, if we could match that amount at least two-fold with cash and in-kind gifts.

By mid-June of 2019, we learned that we had been accepted for funding! That's when the hard part began. We had two options on the table. We either needed to raise cash donations to purchase the land ourselves, or, we needed to find conservation buyers who would be willing to sell

or donate conservation easements to FBC. Either way, we needed a lot more money. Fortunately, it wasn't long before we heard from two private parties who expressed very strong interest in becoming Whalesback conservation buyers.

The first party was a couple who lives close to the Whalesback region, and has a long history of support for Frenchman Bay Conservancy and a particular passion for both protecting the Union River landscape and sustaining thriving local communities. The second interested party was an individual from Florida, but with strong Maine ties, who was looking to buy land that had both conservation and investment value. She wanted to invest her money in land, and specifically hoped to be able to sell credits on the voluntary carbon market.

One year after the Fish and Wildlife Service grant was awarded, and with both conservation buyers secure, we were finally in the position to negotiate a multi-million dollar fee purchase of the Whalesback property.

In October 2020, the landowner agreed to our offer, but only if we agreed to close by the end of that year, giving us just short months to act. This



The Whalesback easements protect significant shoreline along the Union River, featured here. Photo by Mike Perlman.

was a tall order for a multi-party purchase, but we all knew conserving The Whalesback was worth it. So, we scrambled over the next several weeks, navigated a lot of stressful ups and downs, and sat through countless group phone calls. And then, in the cold, waning days of December, 2020, the conservation buyers successfully took this land off the market. At FBC, we wanted to shout this conservation achievement from the rooftops - but we hadn't crossed the finish line yet. We still needed to draft and purchase the conservation easements that would permanently protect this land from future subdivision and development. And in comes the appraisal process.

Federally-funded conservation purchases require appraisals, and then reviews of those appraisals by another appraiser. Only a limited pool of professionals can conduct these appraisals. FBC steadily advanced the project through the appraisal process and worked with the landowners to draft conservation easements. In this case, the landowners chose to pursue 'forever-wild' conservation easements, and to then enroll their land in the Wild Carbon program run by Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT), a land conservation organization with a mission to "conserve forever-wild landscapes for nature and people." FBC and NEWT would co-hold the conservation easements, and NEWT would raise a significant portion of the money needed to close the deals. FBC then raised additional funds from private foundations, individuals, Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and The Nature Conservancy in Maine.

In a rare step for our organization, we never launched a broad-based public, capital campaign devoted specifically to this conservation project. However, every single dollar that FBC's members and supporters donated to this organization during this timeframe helped this project succeed. Our staff leveraged individual donations by securing government and foundation grants, conservation buyers and organizational partners -- ultimately raising over \$1.3 million in cash and in-kind support, on top of the annual donations received through our spring and fall membership appeals.

By 2022, we had finally reached the finish line. After four years and innumerable conversations, site visits, grant proposals, starts, stops, and only a modest amount of blood, sweat, and tears -- FBC and our partners succeeded in conserving this incredible natural treasure. 3,223 acres are now conserved under 'forever-wild' conservation easements, and it's finally time to shout this conservation achievement from the rooftops!

We hope you'll be inspired to join us, because the Whalesback is not just another parcel of land -- it's a remarkable landscape that will remain resilient as our climate changes, providing space for ecosystems to adapt and species to migrate in response to environmental shifts. It's a part of a vast area of undeveloped habitat - a mosaic of forests, fields, and open wetlands - that's now protected from fragmentation caused by roads and buildings.

Conserving this land means protecting the forested landscape that acts as a sponge to reduce downstream flooding, providing clean, clear water, and maintaining wetlands needed to nourish life. It means permanently protecting habitat for vulnerable species, such as wading birds and waterfowl, all of which face habitat destruction elsewhere along their migratory pathways. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it means allowing the current young trees to grow, establishing a forest ecosystem as they age. Old, mature forests offer the most effective approach to trap planet-warming carbon dioxide. All we have to do is let the trees grow! And, on this land, that is exactly what we plan to do.

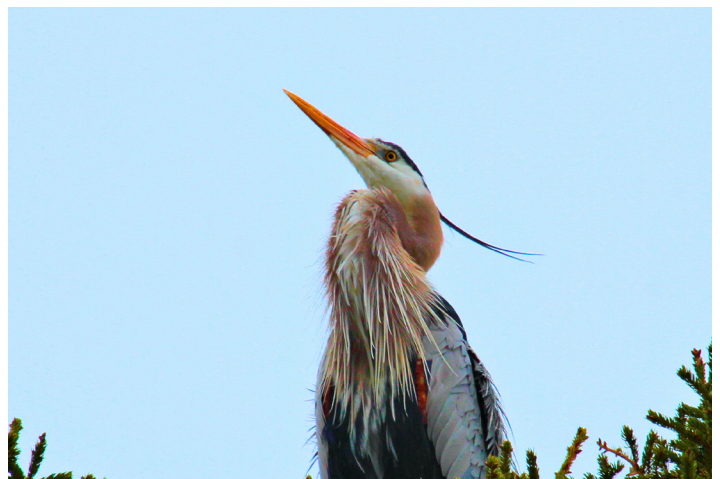


Photo by Debbie Stahre



Regional Conservation Highlights

Frenchman Bay Watershed

Frenchman Bay is a vast, iconic body of water off of Maine's coast. The health of the Bay, and the industries that rely on it, depend upon the health of the tributaries that feed into it. In 2021 we conserved the Frenchman Bay Community Forest, which protects two critical tributaries: Kilkenny Stream & Egypt Brook. This year, FBC started on the next big challenge at the Community Forest: building trails! There is extensive bog-bridging required, and our trail crew has been hard at work. We are on schedule to open the first section of trail in Fall 2023. For updates on advocacy for Frenchman Bay, see page 13.

Lower Union River Watershed

The Lower Union River watershed refers to the land surrounding Ellsworth, one of Maine's fastest growing cities. As the City grows, FBC has the opportunity to establish trails that connect residents and visitors to current and future greenspaces, expanding opportunities for all to get outdoors and contributing to the qualities that make Ellsworth a desirable city to live and work. An example of a potential future green space is the 370-acre Whitney Forest in Ellsworth, which surrounds the Ellsworth High School. In April 2022, FBC was awarded \$235k toward the purchase of Whitney Forest through the Land for Maine's Future program, and we are excited to permanently conserve this land for community benefit. In addition to our land protection efforts, we also expanded our community conservation work, opening the Ellsworth Riverwalk and planting the first 80 trees at the Jordan Homestead Preserve Urban Tree Nursery. To learn more about the community partnerships that made this progress possible, see page 9.

Schoodic to Schoodic Corridor

FBC continues to pursue land protection opportunities around Lower & Upper West Bay Pond, creating a link between the Schoodic Peninsula and Donnell Pond Public Reserved Land. By conserving connected landscapes, we can protect a critical pathway that allows species to move in response to the changing environmental conditions expected as a result of climate change. This year, we closed on a 645-acre parcel in the region, expanding core protection areas for terrestrial wildlife as well as wading bird and waterfowl seeking nesting habitat. Our Day Ridges Preserve, which opened in October 2021, provides public access to a portion of the Schoodic to Schoodic Corridor and has been a popular addition to our trail network for both hikers and paddlers alike. Hikers haven't been the only frequent visitor, however. To meet Day Ridges' wetland architects, see page 11.

Giving By The Numbers

*A look at FBC's growth in Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)
compared to Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021).*

129 people gave for the first time -- **WELCOME TO FBC!**

825 people gave to FBC between July 1, 2021 & June 30, 2022,
increasing individual contributions by **12%**.

The **FBC SUSTAINER'S CIRCLE**, online monthly donors, grew by **56%**.

The **BLUE HERON SOCIETY**, members who contribute \$1000 or more
annually, grew by **23%**.

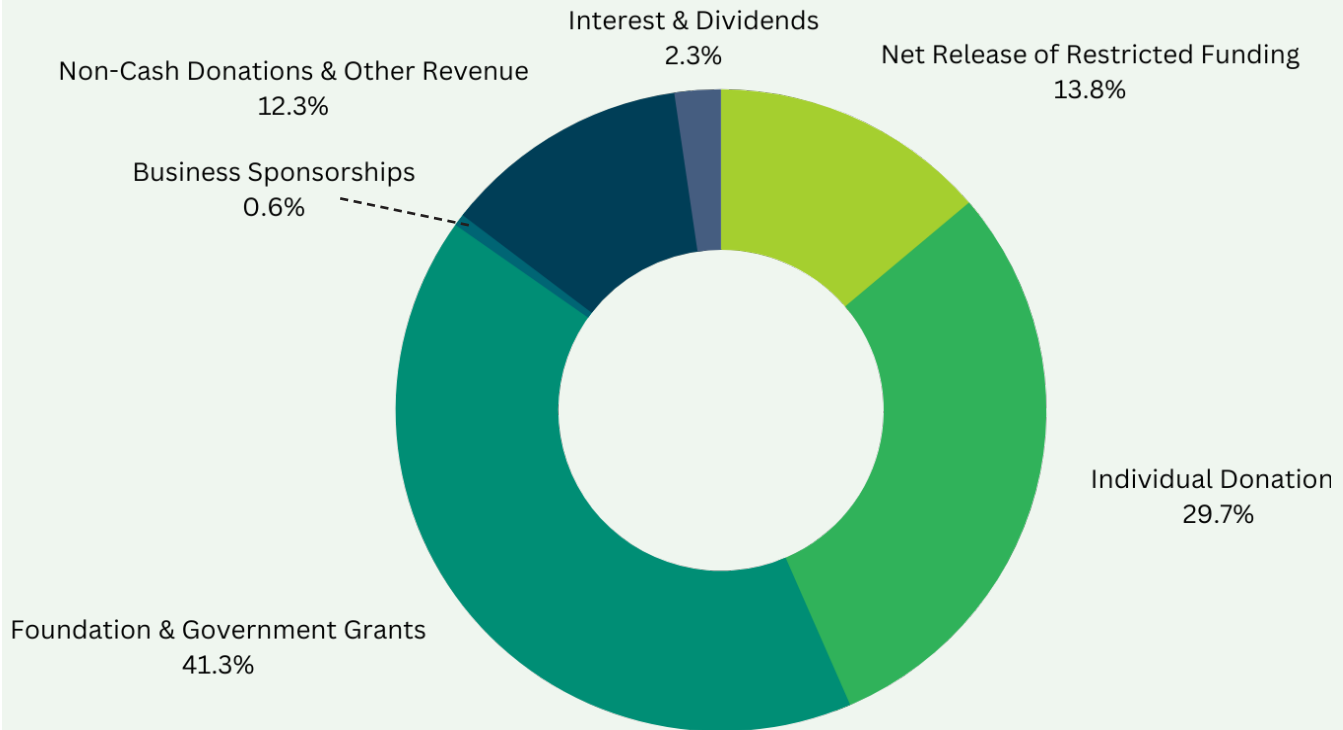
Total annual **UNRESTRICTED GIVING** grew by **56%**.

FBC welcomed **3 NEW BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP PARTNERS** and
increased business giving by over **\$10,000**.

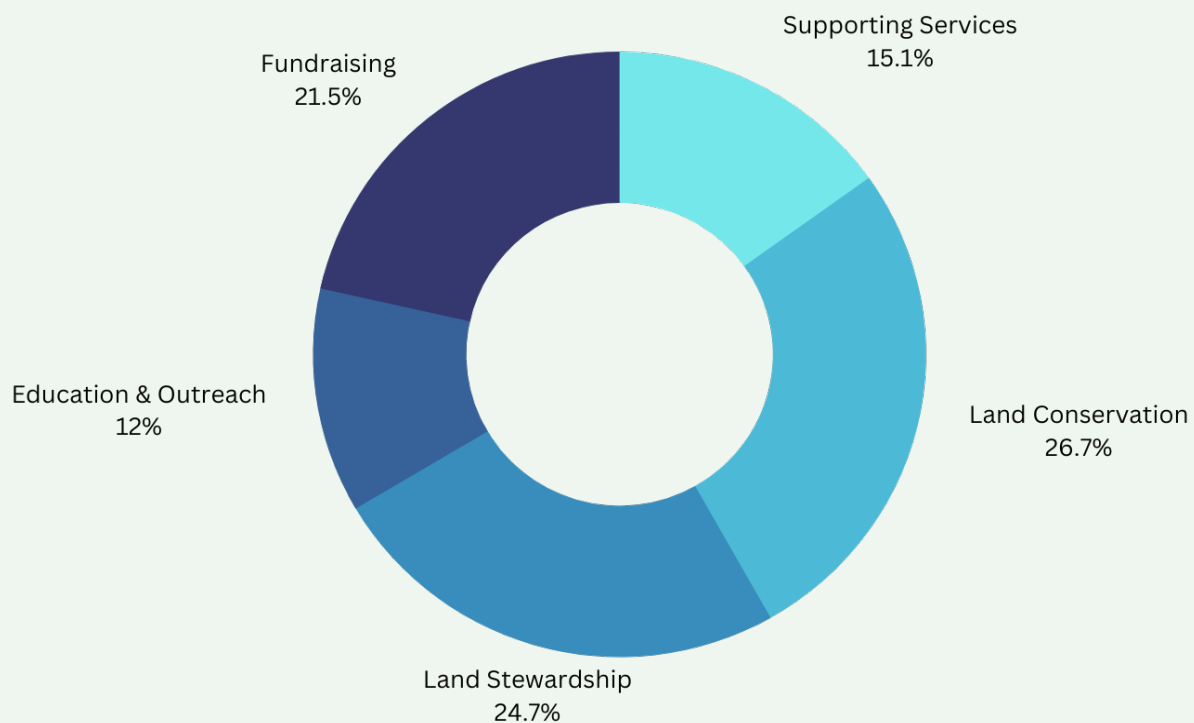


Photo by Jessica Smith

Sources of Funds



Uses of Funds



Frenchman Bay Conservancy follows a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. The above information has been prepared based on audited financial statements for Fiscal Year 2022. The financial statements and related notes are available from Frenchman Bay Conservancy upon request.

FBC & Ellsworth Partners Make Strides in Community Conservation

Our community-based conservation in Ellsworth and the Lower Union River watershed relies on the strength of our partnerships. In a growing downtown, we work with other local organizations, such as the Ellsworth Garden Club and Heart of Ellsworth, to ensure that we are responding to the community's needs and approaching each project as a collaborative process.

Below are a few updates on our current projects:



Grand Opening: Ellsworth Riverwalk

In early October, FBC held a Grand Opening Celebration for the Ellsworth Riverwalk, which is located behind the Ellsworth Public Library on State Street. The tree-lined riverwalk replaces the original path, which had fallen into disrepair since it was built in the 1960s. The new, accessible Ellsworth Riverwalk welcomes residents and visitors to connect with the Union River again as a part of their Main Street experience. Community partners include: Ellsworth Garden Club, Heart of Ellsworth, Green Ellsworth, & City of Ellsworth.



Whitney Forest Conservation

We are fundraising to conserve the Whitney Forest in Ellsworth, a 370-acre greenspace surrounding the Ellsworth High School frequently used by area students and people who live and work in Ellsworth. It is within walking distance from the center of downtown Ellsworth, and currently has a trail network that connects to the Ellsworth Rail Trail. Earlier this year, FBC was awarded \$235K toward the purchase of the Whitney Forest through the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program, but there is still more to go! To support this project visit: secure.donationpay.org/frenchmanbay/.



Jordan Homestead Tree Nursery

The Jordan Homestead Tree Nursery is a collaborative project with the Ellsworth Garden Club, which received a grant to plant street trees around the City. We are now using a portion of the field at Jordan Homestead Preserve as a nursery to grow and naturalize small trees, which will then be replanted across the City when large enough! This year, we planted the first 80 trees at the nursery with the help of a local Ellsworth first grade class. This project is part of what helped Ellsworth achieve a Tree City USA designation.



Honorary Giving

FBC would like to recognize honorary gifts given in memoriam or in honor of with our sincerest thanks.

In Memoriam

Jane Davis
Richard "Dick" Davis
Jeremy Strater
Carolyn Humphrey Brown
Paul Haertel
Ralph Miller

Mary Schley
Dotty Agnew
Mike & Carol Huber
Peggy Ashmall
Henry "Hank" Sharpe

In Honor Of

Garry Levin
Jonathan Waldner & Olivia Ciardi

Lisa Heyward
Heather & Shane Kamasa



Beavers are Making Themselves Feel at Home at Day Ridges Preserve in Gouldsboro

If you've visited our Day Ridges Preserve in Gouldsboro, you may have noticed something peculiar about a few sections of the trail. The bog-bridging, which is ordinarily elevated over particularly wet portions of the landscape to allow for safe (and dry) passage, is floating in some places, and flooded in others! Hikers with waterproof boots might not have been phased, but others were forced to turn around in order to avoid finishing a hike in wet socks. It likely won't come as any surprise that the original trail design did not include floating bog-bridging, so what's going on? Well, the Day Ridges trail is getting a bit of an unsolicited re-design from nature's wetland architect: the North American beaver!

Beavers -- the adorable, paddle-tailed dam builders -- are abundant in Maine. They are commonly referred to as "ecosystem engineers" because of how their dam-building impacts the surrounding landscape. The dams raise the water table, flooding the surrounding area and creating a beaver pond. The pond creates a safe location for beavers to build a lodge, which is great for them, but not always so great for our trails. We decided to put up motion-activated trail cameras to see if we could catch our web-footed engineers in the act. As it turns out, the Day Ridges beavers were ready for the limelight! The camera took over a thousand photos of their dam-building efforts. (See below.)



80 F 29.67 inHg

TRAILCAM02

07/29/2022 09:01:03PM



Trail building is no easy feat, and to some that makes beavers a bit of a nuisance. But rather than consider beavers as a problem to fix, we welcome their help in building climate resilient landscapes that foster biodiversity. Beavers are a keystone species, and our preserves benefit from their hard work.

For example, when beavers create a pond, also referred to as a beaver flowage, they are doing more than providing a safe location for their lodge. The cascading effects of the dam create ideal habitat for an array of other species. The deeper water allows for the growth of highly nutritious aquatic vegetation for moose, and trees that are killed due to rising water become habitat for insects, and food for insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers. Wading birds and inland waterfowl rely on beaver flowage for foraging, nesting, and raising their young, while deer benefit from the shrub vegetation that grows where the beavers have felled trees.

The positive benefits continue from there, not only for wildlife but for the changing climate. The increased water table can help mitigate expected drought conditions, providing critical refuge for plant and animals species that rely on wetlands for survival. Productive wetlands also sequester carbon, provide a buffer that can slow down the spread and mitigate the damage of wildfires, and absorb stormwater to prevent flooding.

While beavers aren't the sole solution to climate change, it's clear they play an important role in maintaining the health of our ecosystems. We are thankful for the beavers that help maintain healthy wetland habitats, and endlessly thankful for the hardworking trail crew that continues to refresh and rehab the trail the beavers are determined to flood. Dealing with beavers is an illustration of how trail stewardship is about more than just trails. It's about balancing the relationship between conservation, accessibility, and safety.

5 FAST FACTS ABOUT BEAVERS!

1. BEAVERS HAVE ORANGE TEETH DUE TO THE IRON IN THEIR ENAMEL.

2. ADULTS CAN STAY UNDERWATER FOR 15 MINUTES WITHOUT SURFACING.

3. BEAVERS ARE THE LARGEST RODENT IN NORTH AMERICA.

4. BEAVER FAMILIES BUILD LODGES WITH UNDERWATER ENTRANCES.

5. ADULTS SLAP THEIR TAIL ON THE WATER TO SIGNAL DANGER.

Do you want to learn more about beavers? We recommend reading, "Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter" by Ben Goldfarb.

American Aquafarms' Proposal Terminated by DMR & DEP

In October 2020, American Aquafarms', a Norwegian-backed, corporate firm, submitted a proposal to Maine's Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to lease 120 acres in Frenchman Bay for 30 salmon pens. The project faced immediate backlash from the community due to the unprecedented scale and unproven technology of the proposal, and concerns over how the project might jeopardize the Bay's water quality.

In April 2022, DMR stopped consideration of the company's request to lease 120 acres in the Bay.

The decision was primarily based on American Aquafarms' failure to identify a proper source for their fish eggs by an established deadline. The DEP ended its review of American Aquafarms' discharge permit application, noting the company

no longer has a lease application before DMR. All state level regulatory review of the project ended with these two decisions.

While this was a promising development, it does not mean the project is now gone for good. American Aquafarms has shown every intent to push through its plans – without community support. They have purchased a processing facility in Gouldsboro, and upon addressing the initial permit failure, we anticipate they will re-file their application.

FBC remains vigilant for any new developments on the project. The risks – environmental, economic, and cultural – are simply too great. We are committed to standing up for the value of the Bay as a community resource and important ecological system.

Release Radar

**FBC RELEASED A NEW
VERSION OF OUR PRESERVES
& TRAIL GUIDE, WHICH IS NOW
AVAILABLE FOR FREE
TO OUR MEMBERS!**

**CLAIM YOUR FREE GUIDE BOOK
TODAY BY EMAILING
INFO@FRENCHMANBAY.ORG.**



Support Our Work

Our organization relies on donations from supporters like you to ensure that our beautiful Maine wilderness remains accessible to everyone.

ONLINE GIVING

Visit secure.donationpay.org/frenchmanbay/ to give online. You can also become a part of the FBC Sustainer's Circle by setting up a monthly recurring donation that ensures FBC receives your support throughout the year.



GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give the gift of an FBC membership to your favorite environmental enthusiast. Recipients will receive a welcome letter, FBC trail guide, and window decal.

GIVE BY MAIL

Gifts can be sent by mail to Frenchman Bay Conservancy, PO Box 150, Hancock, ME 04640.

SECURITIES

Speak with your tax advisor about donating appreciated securities to Frenchman Bay Conservancy.

If you wish to donate stock, please contact Director of Development Thomasina DiBiase at thomasina@frenchmanbay.org; (207) 422-2328 for transfer instructions.

PLANNED GIVING

Communicating with FBC about your plans to remember the organization in your estate can help us plan for the future. Those interested should contact Director of Development Thomasina DiBiase at thomasina@frenchmanbay.org; (207) 422-2328.

CONSERVE YOUR LAND

We protect open space through acquisition or conservation easements. If you are a landowner, you may be interested in protecting your land through conservation easement, donation, sale, or other means. For more information, contact Director of Conservation Kat Deely at kat@frenchmanbay.org.

Partners in Conservation

The land we love is protected through the generosity of our donors. Your support is critical to conserving the lands, ecosystems, and waters that make our region of Maine so special. The following contributors donated through unrestricted gifts, land protection projects, in-kind gifts, planned gifts, land value and easements between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. Thank you for your support!

EIDER

\$5,000 & Higher

Inge Chafee
Jessica & Bill Christ
Jace Cohen
Barbara O. David
Gill Ehrich
Stephanie Gonthier
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BLUE HERON

\$1,000-\$4,999

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The Greater Kansas City
Community Foundation
The John C. & Elisabeth B.
Cochran Family Fund

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\$500-\$999

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\$251-\$499

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Sally Wise

SANDPIPER

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 Major & Mrs. Henry Chary
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