

OLT: A conservation and recreation legacy

This is the first in a series of articles introducing the Orono Land Trust and its lands to the folks in the Greater Bangor area. Our goal is to familiarize our readers with these lands, describe the many opportunities they offer, and provide directions on how to reach them. OLT formed 30 years ago to protect a key parcel of



Part One in an Occasional Series

land in Orono. It has grown from a few concerned families to more than 150 members and 10 supporting businesses. In 2015, OLT became nationally accredited, meaning that the organization achieves the highest standards in business and financial management as well as land stewardship. OLT is administered by 20 dedicated board members and is one of the few all-volunteer land trusts in the state.

OLT conserves land for the primary purposes of conserving habitats for their diverse vegetation, their wildlife, and



A winter 2015 Orono Land Trust outing.

GAIL WHITE

for recreational opportunities for the public. Habitats range from upland forests to diverse wetland areas. Some areas, such as pine-oak woodlands or sensitive wetland habitats are seasonally buffered to protect nesting birds. OLT has procured grants to purchase large blocks of forested and

wetland habitats; these lands were transferred to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for the Caribou Bog Wildlife Management Area or to the University of Maine Forest System for their management. These large blocks provide habitat for Maine's larger mammals,

such as black bears, as well as interior nesting birds like the wood thrush.

In total, OLT administers 29 different parcels of land. Eleven of these are owned outright, nine properties have conservation easements, and 9 have trail easements. A cadre of OLT stewards monitor almost 1,300

acres of land. In addition, OLT has raised the funds to acquire an additional 3,200 acres of primarily forestland that has been transferred to other conservation owners. To consider any land to purchase or to establish a conservation easement with a landowner, OLT goes through a rigorous evaluation of a land, including identifying conservation values, recreation potential, and location. After a decision is made to acquire the land, a management plan is developed. This plan may include trail development, timber harvesting, or retaining the land as open space. One or more stewards oversee each parcel and prepare annual reports outlining any work that needs to be done the following year. Of special importance is the marking and clearing of boundary lines.

All OLT lands are open to the public (except during temporary closures to reduce disturbance to wildlife breeding seasons) for recreation, including: hiking, birding, cross-country skiing, biking, and horseback riding. Some areas are also open to hunting, but hunters should check the OLT

web site for details. Motorized vehicular use is discouraged on most lands. OLT works closely with the Penobscot Valley Ski Club and the New England Mountain Biking Association to maintain and groom ski and bike trails. In total, more than 20 miles of trails are included on OLT lands and there are many connections to trails on adjoining properties, some of which are on private property and users are asked to respect those owners. Kiosks are present at the larger, heavily used sites.

Future articles will highlight individual OLT lands outlining their attributes and providing directions to their location.

The Orono Land Trust exists to protect, manage, and preserve portions of the natural environment in Orono and surrounding communities, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. We work to balance conservation and development, extend and maintain trail systems connecting natural areas, encourage appreciation of natural habitats and ensure perpetual access to public lands and waters. Reach us at oronolandtrust.org.

SPORTS & RECREATION

OLT: Hiking through history

Trail systems of Jeremiah Colburn Natural Area and Cota land

The Jeremiah Colburn Natural Area is the first property acquired by the Orono Land Trust. In fact, this property is what formed the OLT.

In 1986 this 44-acre piece of land went up for sale by out-of-state-owners. The land had an extensive trail system, which had been in use by locals for decades.

The Town of Orono did not have funds to purchase the property, so a group of local citizens began to raise funds via pie sales, soup sales,

yard sales, donations, and they even took out a mortgage. The group formed the Orono Land Trust in 1986 and applied for a grant to pay for the land. After the grant was approved, the Town accepted the grant money and purchased the land from the Orono Land Trust on July 28, 1988.

In 1994 Virginia and Ronald Mallet deeded the Cota property (2.0 acres) to Orono Land Trust in memory of Virginia's parents, Lee and Sarah Cota. The south end of the Cota land is a certified wetland, with many ferns. The property builds up to slightly higher and drier land as it reaches the JCNA to the north. In 2015, OLT volunteers constructed a

gravel trail creating a smooth, hard, dry surface on the Cota land that provides access into the JCNA. Most trails on JCNA are dry and packed, but some places have roots to step over. The area consists of lower lands with Pine, Spruce, Hemlock and Larch. The upper land (heading up Teaberry Hill) has oak, beech, maple and evergreen trees. Many wildflowers can be found, including Lady Slipper, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Mayflower, Hawkweed, Bunch Berry, Blue Bead, Trillium and Sarsaparilla, to name a few. Birds are plentiful, including the Pileated Woodpecker and Barred Owl and Red Squirrels will scold you. JCNA contains a field called

“Sally’s Field” (named for Orono Land Trust founder, conservation and recreation stalwart Sally Jacobs), where fox and deer have been observed. This property is great for walking, bicycling, jogging, horseback riding, skiing, and snowshoeing. The land can be accessed at the end of Forest Hills Terrace (parking available), at a trail from Winterhaven Drive, and from Forest Avenue through the Cota Land (parking at side of the road).

Trail maps can be downloaded at: www.oronolandtrust.org OLT is an all volunteer organization. Membership dues help OLT maintain trails. Please become a member online.



COURTESY OF GAIL WHITE

A view of Sally's Field at The Jeremiah Colburn Natural Area.

OLT: Stillwater River Trail & Gould's Landing

A priority of the Orono Land Trust is to protect areas within minutes of people's homes. Connectivity between preserved spaces is constantly on the board's agenda. This article illustrates how our mission for water access is being met. The Stillwater River Trail is a wonder as the trail is only possible with the permission of many, many private landowners. One private landowner even allows access across their lawn! The public is asked to respect all these landowners and stay on the trail. The trail is a joint effort of the Town of Orono and OLT. The trail is about 2 miles long one way, stretching from Main Street, Orono to close to the bridge



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on Stillwater Avenue in Stillwater. "Busy as a beaver" is a catch phrase while walking this trail. The beaver has felled many trees and beaver houses and their "caches" can be seen. Water birds are abundant and watercraft can be seen from the trail. Much of the trail from Brownie's Park to Stillwater has poison ivy that walkers need to be aware of. Brownie's Park, named for former resident Carleton Brown, is located across from Noyes Avenue and a parking area is located off Bennoch Road beside the park. Canoes can be launched from Brownie's Park and canoe races are currently run from this park in the summer and are open to all. It is also a popular swimming area. A monument to the OLT founder and original president, Sally Jacobs is positioned in Brownie's Park.

The Gould's Landing Trail is at the end of Essex



COURTESY OF GAIL WHITE

A feature of the Gould's Landing trail is a bench good for bird watching.

Street on Pushaw Lake. Parking is in the nearby Nadeau-Savoy Park. This property is owned by the State of Maine and is being used for mitigation. OLT

will own the land once the value for mitigation is exhausted. Wetland mitigation involves protecting land at one site to compensate for the modification or

destruction of wetlands at another location. This property has a trail which makes a 1 mile loop. The Maine Conservation Corps constructed an excellent board-

walk and rock path at the beginning of the trail. From the trail there are a couple of lookouts onto Pushaw Lake where loons, herons, marsh hawks and other birds can be seen. A bench is present for your enjoyment. The forest includes oaks, beech, birch and maple and trilliums are abundant in the spring. Note the large boulder along the trail that has moss, ferns, and a variety of other plants growing on it. A hill on the trail is called "Pantyhorse Hill" due to the inordinate amount of pantyhose found in an old dump near that spot. This is a very nice quiet spot for walkers and birders.

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SPORTS & RECREATION

Orono High School Land and adjacent trails



COURTESY OF GAIL WHITE

The Frog Pond in the fall season.

A gem of a property is owned by the Town of Orono, cared for by the Orono Land Trust, and right in the center of town.

Behind the Orono High School football field is a wooded property with many trails and the school's ropes course. The trails are mostly high and dry on this property and have been greatly improved by volunteers and by students who use the trails for cross country and skiing. The trail system extends onto the adjacent privately owned property



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which has a conservation easement held by OLT as of December 2002.

The town property has a vernal pool known as Lost Pond. This vernal pool completely dries out in summer and produces many salamanders and wood frogs in the spring. Another private landowner granted a conservation easement to OLT in November 2006. This adjacent land also has a vernal pool called "The Frog Pond." This pool does not usually dry out and produces even more yellow and blue spotted salamanders and wood frogs than Lost Pond.

In spring, the town property has many lady slippers along with trillium and other wildflowers. A beautiful beech grove is surround-



COURTESY OF GAIL WHITE

A student trail addition on the OHS trails.

ed by oaks, birches and pines. Signs of deer and bear can be found. This area welcomes walkers, joggers and bicyclists.

In snowy weather, The area is groomed for skiing by the Penobscot Valley Ski Club. Spur trails are available for snowshoers and a connector trail parallels I-95 all the way to Dirigo Pines on Kelly Road. This preserved area can be accessed behind the Orono High School football field (park in the school parking lot). There are two trailheads there. The property can also be accessed off Forest Avenue across from the Cota Land (near Shadbush Lane).

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Orono Land Trust and the Veazie lands

The Town of Veazie is situated on the Penobscot River between Bangor and Orono. Rich in history, the town has many green spaces, including access to most riverfront areas for fishing and paddling, and connects the Veazie Salmon Club with potential riverfront rambles north toward the Orono border. Inland, there are many trails with various forest types and meadows.

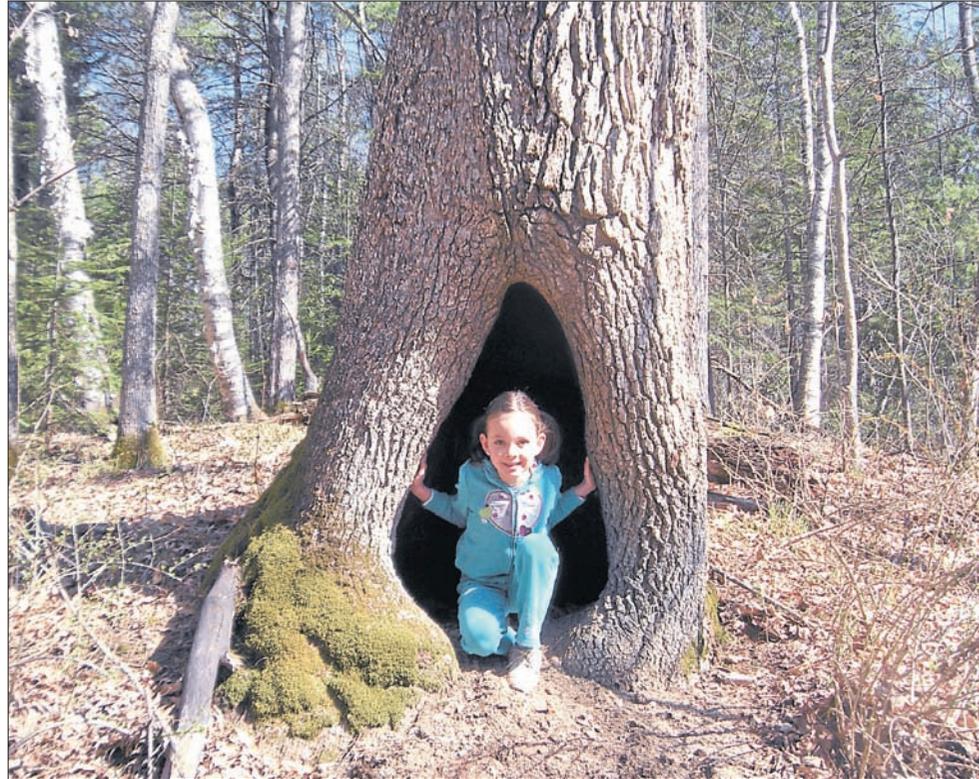
Among these assets is McPhetres Forest, which is Veazie-owned, and accessed from Veazie's Fairview Cemetery along State Street. This land is managed by the Town of Veazie, with volunteer contributions from the Veazie Lands Committee of the Orono Land Trust. It contains a large variety of trees, including white oaks and a 100+ year old white pine stand.



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A public trail through McPhetres Forest forms a loop with the privately-owned Manter Wood Conservation Easement. Manter Wood is protected under trail and conservation easements by the Orono Land Trust. Margaret C. Manter granted the conservation easement of 8.4 acres, along with trail easement, to OLT in 2006. Foot traffic is limited to designated trails during daylight hours. The Manter Trailhead is located on Route 2, across from Arbor Drive. This short trail through mostly pine forest highlights the Manter Pine, arguably the largest tree in Veazie with more than a 16-ft. circumference.

The loop trail continues into the newly-acquired Davis Forest, conveyed just this year by Davis Family LLC. This new area fits well as a puzzle-piece in the Veazie trails, and now allows hiking from State Street through to Davis Drive, off Chase Road. A recent trail work day brought OLT members, UMaine college students



Veazie resident Emma Wardrop at an old white oak in the McPhetres Forest in 2012.

CONTRIBUTED BY DAVE WARDROP

and neighbors together to improve the pathways. The day highlights how volunteers do so much to care for and protect our green spac-

es, for recreation and for wildlife conservation.

The 64-acre Buck Hill Conservation Area is owned and managed by the

Town of Veazie, with volunteer assistance from the Veazie Lands Committee. Access is through Mutton Lane, off State Street, by

the Stone Sparrow Cafe. At BHCA, the Maine Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation started a small orchard of chestnut trees in spring of 2005. TACF artificially subjected these trees to the blight fungus in 2015 and removed the least resistant. The remaining trees are providing seed for TACF's large seed orchards in central Maine and are key to producing Maine's first potentially first blight resistant American chestnuts in more than a century! The Buck Hill property has a variety of habitat types, including several open fields and streams.

Trail maps can be downloaded at: www.aronolandtrust.org. OLT is an All-Volunteer Accredited organization. Membership dues help OLT maintain trails. Please become a member online. \$10 of Veazie memberships go toward OLT operating expenses with the rest to the Veazie account for Veazie projects. Donations made online go 100% directly to conservation efforts.

Orono Land Trust: Caribou Bog Conservation Area

The Caribou Bog Conservation Area (CBCA) encompasses over 2500 acres of conserved lands owned and managed in part by the Orono Land Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

Town of Orono, and the University of Maine. The land straddles the old Veazie railroad bed and is a mixture of up-

land habitats consisting of mature softwood and hardwood forests, and areas harvested within the past 25 years. Ponds, beaver flowages, vernal pools, streams, and peatlands occur throughout the area. CBCA is a major segment of the Caribou Bog-Penjajawoc Corridor, providing important wildlife habitat, as well as offering a variety

of recreational opportunities. Parking, a kiosk, and maps are available just off the Taylor (Dump) Road in Orono.

The State's 2000+ acre Caribou Bog Wildlife Management Area (CBWMA), lying north of the railroad bed, is central to CBCA and is open to non-motorized recreation including cross-country skiing, hiking, biking, and hunting. Early successional forests make it ideal woodcock and grouse habitat. It also comprises much of the Caribou Bog, the state's third most significant peatland. Access to the CBWMA is from Taylor Road and, hopefully soon, from Kirkland Road in Old Town. To the south of, and along the railroad bed is a vast network of single- and double-track trails reaching to the top of Newman and Bangor Hills. The Penobscot Valley Ski Club grooms many of the trails for classic and skate skiing. The outer loop is about four miles long with consider-

able terrain variation. On a nice winter weekend, as many as 50 skiers enjoy this wonderful location. OLT closes some trails in summer to protect important bird nesting habitat. Detailed trail maps are available online, illustrating seasonal closures and types of use.

OLT restored two small ponds, Pine Pond, on the property and they offer excellent wildlife viewing. Adjacent to the railroad bed is a large beaver flowage with a small great blue heron rookery. In 2016 MDIFW and students from Old Town High School captured a great blue heron, nicknamed "Mellow", in Pine Pond and attached a satellite transmitter to her. During the summer, she raised three youngsters, visited numerous wetlands in and around CBCA. She is now basking in Cuba thanks to Obama eliminating travel restrictions. We are hoping she will be back this spring. You can follow her



COURTESY OF GAIL WHITE

Kris Sornberger of the Orono Land Trust building a bicycle bridge on CBCA trail system in 2016.

exploits at movebank.org, click on the browse map, then click on list for egrets and herons and locate "Mellow."

OLT members work with local bikers, skiers, and the Town of Orono to maintain this vast complex of trails and habi-

tats. Maintenance activities include marking boundary lines, clearing and mowing trails, regulating water levels in flowages and ponds, controlling invasive plants, and much, much more. We invite you to join OLT and help preserve

this very special area. Support to conserve these lands came from the Land for Maine's Future Program, the Outdoor Heritage Program, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program, the Town of Orono, MDIFW, and OLT.

To reach CBCA from downtown Orono, go northwest on Forest Ave., proceed half way around the new rotary on Stillwater Ave., and continue northwest for 2 miles to Taylor Rd. (at chip pile). Turn right (northeast) on Taylor Rd. for ½ mile then left into parking area. From Bangor or Old Town, take Stillwater Ave. to the rotary at Forest Ave. and head northwest.

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Ridge Trail at Piney Knoll, one of several multi-use trails used by hikers, bikers, skiers and dog walkers throughout the year.

OLT: Piney Knoll Conservation Area

Piney Knoll Conservation Area (PKCA) is located in the northeast corner of Orono on Marsh Island. It can be reached by taking Park Street towards Old Town and turning right onto Colburn Drive and going to the cul de sac at the end which is the main entrance to PKCA.

PKCA contains 76 acres made up of three parcels obtained over the years. It is composed of a mixture of forested upland, wetlands, a small stream (Vinal Stream) and a two acre field. The uplands range from mixed hardwood and softwood stands to a hemlock stand to a mature white pine/hemlock area. A light harvest of primarily big-tooth aspen was conducted several years ago to provide funds to upgrade the trail system. The harvest created several small openings to stimulate regeneration while other areas were lightly thinned to maintain the mature pine/hemlock stands.

A visitor to PKCA should start at the Colburn Drive cul-de-sac and follow the signs to the Sally Jacobs Memorial located on a small hummock to the right. Sally was the founder of the Orono Land Trust and its

first president. She was instrumental in putting together the real estate transfers and acquisitions that allowed the creation of the present PKCA. The trail entrance is thru the gate and up the hill.

A second entrance is located at the end of Penobscot Street. The trail soon divides with trails to the left leading to the Colburn entrance and another up the hill to "Piney Knoll", a popular destination on PKCA. A third entrance starts at Hillside Drive and across land owned by Orchard Trails and The Avenue to enter PKCA near Sally's Memorial. The last entrance is on the right side of Marsh Lane. It runs through the woods parallel to a student housing complex and enters PKCA at the ridge trail which leads to Piney Knoll. PKCA has a number of multi-use non-motorized trails. Three of them have color coded blazes on trees marking them. The blue trail runs from Hillside round to Piney Knoll and onto Peter's Field. There is a white trail that starts at Park Street and crosses Marsh Lane which serves as the trail entrance and has a small parking area. It ends at Penobscot Street. The last blazed trail is the yellow trail which connects to Trail Eleven on University of Maine Land. It is evident from the preceding description of the entrance trails that there are a number of excellent trails in PKCA

which the Steward continues to maintain and improve. They are used by hikers, bikers, skiers, dog walkers, etc. throughout the year. PKCA projects for this year include establishing a kiosk at each entrance and erecting several informational signs throughout the property.

On the east side near the Penobscot entrance is a cellar hole believed to be the location of one of Marsh Island's early residents. Much of the area around the cellar hole had been infested with invasive species – mainly honeysuckle (Japanese) and buckthorn. Several acres of these invasive plants have been removed by the steward and his volunteers.

In summary, PKCA is one example of trails for public use interspersed with areas of habitat for wildlife which was enhanced as a result of the recent harvest. The harvest provided openings for young trees and shrubs to become established which helps create an uneven aged forest of many plant species which provides good habitat. This in turn allows the recreation users to see and enjoy the many birds and animals that inhabit PKCA.

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Orono Land Trust: The Corridor Project

This is the final piece of an eight-part series of articles about lands stewarded by the Orono Land Trust. Fifteen years ago, folks from the Bangor and Orono Land Trusts gathered to discuss the possibility of developing a landscape scale conservation initiative in the Bangor area. What evolved was the Penjajawoc Marsh - Caribou Bog Corridor Project, an 18,000-acre focus area extending from Essex Street in Bangor along the eastern shore of Pushaw Lake to the inlet of Pushaw Lake in Hudson. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's "Beginning with Habitat" program was the impetus for selecting this area as it contained numerous ecological features of state significance. In addition, we were interested in an area large enough to accommodate the movement of large mammals and an area within which plants and animals could adapt in response to the potential ef-



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fects of climate change.

The two most significant ecological features in the Corridor are Penjajawoc Marsh, arguably the most important freshwater marsh for wading birds and waterfowl in Maine, and the Caribou Bog, the third most significant domed peatland in the state. Distributed throughout the area are streams, ponds, lakes, swamps, vernal pools, beaver flowages, as well as hardwood and softwood forests, some under active management, others left to develop into old growth. Throughout the area, residence homes and small developments exist, but about 8,500 acres are conserved in one form or another.

Many partners are involved in this endeavor, ranging from several municipalities including Bangor, Orono, Old Town, Alton, and Hudson, to the University of Maine, MDIFW, the two land trusts, and Hirundo Wildlife Refuge. Initial funding for the project came from the Land for Maine's Future program. Additional support was provided by the partners as well as grants from the Maine Community Foundation, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Program, The Maine Natu-



PHOTO BY JERRY LONGCORE

Jen Lund leads a class at the Orono Bog Boardwalk last year. The area is part of the Caribou Bog Corridor Project, an 18,000-acre focus area extending from Essex Street in Bangor along the eastern shore of Pushaw Lake to the inlet of Pushaw Lake in Hudson.

ral Resources Conservation Program, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

In the southern and central portions of the Corridor, the old Veazie Railroad bed is a thread connecting numerous protected parcels between Bangor to Old Town. The RR bed provides access to more than 50 miles of connecting trail systems, but

care should be taken, as some of the RR bed is privately owned and not open to the public. The Bangor Land Trust has conserved numerous parcels in the southern portion of the Corridor, while the city of Bangor manages Essex Woods and the Roland Perry Bangor City Forest. The University of Maine maintains the Orono Bog, Smith Farm, and the large Perch Pond Woodlot north of

Poplar Street in Old Town. The Town of Orono provides access to the Caribou Bog Conservation Area and manages land around its landfill. The Caribou Bog Wildlife Management Area, administered by MDIFW, encompasses more than 2,000 acres north of the Taylor Road in Orono and east of Kirkland Road in Old Town. The OLT maintains several properties abutting the RR bed, while HWR, with their 2,100 acres, anchors the northern part of the Corridor along Rte. 43 and abutting Pushaw Stream.

All of these areas are open to the public for recreation, although one should check web sites of the two land trusts or the municipalities involved for any restrictions. In most cases, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and hunting are permitted. The Penobscot Valley Ski Club grooms the trails in Orono at the CBCA where as many as 60 skiers can be found on a nice day. Local biking groups have worked with landowners to provide trails ranging from beginner level skills to expert. The Bangor Forest, CBCA, and the Perch Pond Woodlot are excellent biking areas and canoeing is highlighted at HWR.

Environmental education is an important objective of several of the partners. The Bangor Land Trust conducts nature walks and indoor programs throughout the year. More than 30,000 visitors a year flock to the one-mile long Orono Bog Boardwalk with its excellent dioramic displays of a Maine peatland. Hirundo offers environmental programs, has several self-guided interpretive trails, and, this year, will open a new "Trail of the Senses" for the physically and visually handicapped.

The Corridor is truly of state significance; where other Maine towns have a state park nearby, we have our Corridor! Whether it is for recreation, education, or just some peace and quiet, come out and enjoy this wonderful resource. And, please consider supporting the great organizations dedicated to providing these quality experiences.

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