

## ***Remembering Dale C. Wheaton, Registered Maine Guide & Conservationist***

**By Art Wheaton**

The outdoors was Dale's playground from an early age, his heaven on earth. As a guide, his active mind cataloged every shoreline for potential conservation and preservation opportunities, looking for one more tree to save and one more pristine view to maintain. He liked things to be orderly, as witnessed by the tidiness of his workshop, a well-organized office, and his bike trips out of town to collect roadside waste. Dale took a deep interest in the area and community. It was his idea and energy that resulted in re-beautifying the roadway leading into Forest City. Residents, directors and members of the land trust pitched in to plant 44 maple saplings, replacing those 120-year-old sentinels that had fulfilled their duty. It was his plan and efforts that built the picnic table and fireplace at Jake's Landing

(adjacent to the gurgling outlet stream of East Grand Lake) for guides and sports to enjoy. He forged a trail to the old tannery site, gave a lecture on its history, organized a trek to Monument 1, helped clean up the Dri-Ki Point site, and spearheaded the drive to build the WWLT Center in the midst of adverse economic times.

For 60 years this Registered Maine Guide warmed the stern seat of a Grand Laker Canoe, 27 of them in his own meticulous build.

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## A NOTE FROM WWLT'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### *Welcoming Back a Familiar Face*

Before my first trip to Maine, New England was uncharted territory to me. Its landscapes, pace, and way of life all a far cry from the kind of rural I knew growing up just outside Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. So when I arrived in Forest City for a summer internship with the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust nearly 12 years ago, I wasn't quite sure what to expect.

As I drove into the region, I remember wondering, "Is this truly the middle of nowhere?" The quiet was so complete, it was almost unsettling. But not for long.

About a week into that first summer, a white Chevy pickup pulled into the Trust. Out stepped the late—and truly great—"Uncle" Bud Brooks. He asked, "How do you like it here?" I paused, still adjusting to the stillness. "It's very quiet," I replied. He smiled knowingly and said, "I know. Isn't it something? The silence is deafening."

That moment stayed with me. It marked a shift in perspective—from focusing on what wasn't here, to discovering all that was.

That summer, and the five that followed, I found myself falling in love with Maine. I grew to appreciate the quiet, the sense of space, and the vastness of a landscape that feels remarkably untouched. I paddled along remote, canoe-friendly waterways where you might go hours without seeing another person.

I learned about the legacy of Maine Guides—how their impact lives on not just in stories and fishing trips, but in the generations of visitors who keep coming back. I swam in the crystal-clear waters of East Grand and Spednic Lakes, home to landlocked salmon, trout, and smallmouth bass.

But what truly captured my heart were the people. Grounded, proud, and deeply connected to the land, the communities here are vibrant in their love for this place.

Now, after spending several years away, life has brought me back to Maine, with my connection to the region stronger than ever. I feel deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as Executive Director and to work alongside others who share a passion for conservation and community. Every day, I'm inspired by the dedication of our staff, board, and supporters.

This is an exciting time for the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust. We're finalizing a new strategic plan with a focus on expanding public access to Trust lands, strengthening our

education and outreach efforts, and identifying ecologically sensitive areas that need our protection.

It's my hope to honor the legacy of Dale Wheaton and all those who've given so much to preserve this remarkable place. I'm proud to be part of the next chapter, working to ensure that the landscapes of the Chiputneticook Lakes region remain wild, whole, and healthy for generations to come.

If you love this region as much as I do, I'd love to hear from you. Whether you're a longtime supporter or someone I haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting, your stories and connection to the land are what make this work matter. Please feel free to reach out, visit us at the office, or say hello at one of our upcoming events. I look forward to reconnecting with familiar faces and meeting new friends along the way.

**Anna Levitsky**  
Executive Director

# Remembering Dale C. Wheaton

(Continued from page 1)

Paddling along shorelines, investigating every nook and cranny on area lakes, Dale amassed a vast and intimate knowledge of our pristine wilderness; he developed a fond appreciation for the unspoiled. Driven by simple details that make for a guide's excellence—be it a well prepared and orchestrated shore lunch, the use of a seasoned “cold-hand” fry pan or a thinly tied streamer fly—he held himself and his colleagues to the highest standards.

Above all, we will remember Dale's monumental conservation legacy. This journey began during a pivotal moment at Wheaton's Lodge where, at a meeting with representatives from the New England Forest Foundation (NEFF), Land for Maine's Future Board (LMF), Wagner Forest Management (Typhoon LLC), Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW), the Maine Audubon Society, Woodie Wheaton Land Trust (WWLT), et.al., Maine's Audubon attorney urged him to “think big.” Well, think big he did! Dale conceived a conservation easement that would protect Spednic Lake's unique, largely untouched, natural landscape and its rocky shores. He understood that preserving this pristine environment was crucial for the region's outdoor economy, supporting fishing lodges, guides, and the many canoeists who paddle the St. Croix headwaters. To garner broader support, Dale drove to Boston to be interviewed by New England Cable News, passionately articulating the importance of this ambitious conservation project. He then took a steadfast position that WWLT would withdraw unless kept in the line of title. Finally, the state acquiesced. These efforts led to the

establishment of a 500-foot corridor in 2004, encompassing 51 miles of unspoiled waterfront, 16 miles along Spednic Lake's Maine shoreline and 35 miles down the St. Croix River. This project totaled 2,773 acres, secured public rights of way at Castle Road and the St. Croix River at Loon Bay, and preserved traditional guide lunch grounds along Spednic. These were designated as overnight campsites or day use sites that respected a century of reliance upon

them by the local sporting economy. It was the first of a long list of Dale-inspired conservation efforts.

In May of 1995, shortly after the formation of WWLT, a float plane landed on Spednic and taxied up to Birch Island carrying a “For Sale” sign. It was a loud alarm bell! Directors of the land trust immediately reacted, “We have to buy Birch Island.” Engaging IF&W and anteing up \$16,000 of land trust money, Dale was able to get the Maine Coast Heritage Trust to lend the balance to be secured by real estate only. He and Jana mortgaged property of their own to secure the loan. Complex negotiations led to the conveyance of Birch Island to the

State of Maine with deed covenants to keep it natural and with limited primitive outdoor recreation. Little Birch Island nearby was quitclaimed to WWLT soon after.

In 2008, Dale led the effort to secure 6.1 acres (3,000 waterfront footage) on Greenland Island with its rugged, undeveloped shoreline designated as a natural place for public benefit. The mortgage was retired in 2009. The lunch site and fireplace, a pearl

amidst Greenland Cove, still casts a memory to old timers of Billy Springer, known as “The Hermit of Greenland Island.”

Dale's continued dedication to conservation led to the permanent protection of significant lands on Spednic. Collaborating for over a year with Dick and Lucy Packert, a permanent conservation legacy of 12 acres on their family-owned Hathaway Island was established. As a result, shore frontage of 4307 feet will remain forever wild across from the Castle Road landing on Spednic. The purchase of Dri-Ki Point from Baskahegan Company followed in 2014. This spectacular 1,041 foot

(Continued on page 4)

frontage and lunch site was made possible by Dale's leadership and the generosity of the Sam Shine Foundation, Sarina Gwirtzman, and other WWLT members.

One of Dale's major conservation achievements was the complex, five-parcel Headwaters Land Acquisition. Beginning in 2018 with the 3,050-acre Glendenning and Greenleaf parcels along Monument Brook (supported by the Sam & Betty Shine Foundation), the project focused on critical ecological protection for the St. Croix Watershed. Over the next five years, three additional parcels were added: the 906-acre Headwaters Forest, with vital deer wintering habitat and brook trout spawning streams, a 421-acre Clark Brook parcel, and a 203-acre Williams Brook parcel. Finally, the acquisition of 4,600 acres of ecologically important land in the headwaters encompassing the entire western shore of Monument Brook brought assurances of clean water sources for the Chiputneticook Lakes. A crowning touch was secured by Dale shortly after this by working with a private land

owner to purchase a 5-acre piece that provided the Trust with access to Monument One.

After years of sporadic contact with the owners, Dale completed the purchase of Muncy Point in 2024, eliminating further development on this shoreline of Spednic Lake. It was his last effort. For 27 years he was the driving force of our conservation initiatives; the very heartbeat of the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust. He cared deeply for the future of the wilderness that he loved. With a steady hand and moral compass, he left a legacy that will live on. May sportsmen, our children, and our grandchildren look back someday with appreciation for his good work.

Dale's vision for the future of this special place extended beyond his lifetime. His dreams and goals are to be carried on through the Dale & Jana Wheaton Family Endowment, which will support staffing and ensure the continuation of WWLT's valuable conservation work. You are invited to help.

*Dale's Celebration of Life will be held at the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust Center on July 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 pm.*

## ***Charting a Stronger Future: WWLT's Strategic Plan Nears Completion***

As the seasons shift and the East Grand landscape begins to bloom once more, so too does the future of the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust. We're excited to share that we are nearing the finish line of a deeply thoughtful, two-phase strategic planning process—one designed to ensure WWLT remains healthy, proactive, and rooted in a strong vision for the future.

With the guidance of experienced strategy executive Kelly Dearman, we began this journey by focusing

inward. Phase One, wrapping up in June, has centered on *stabilizing* the organization—strengthening internal procedures to ensure smooth transitions and a solid foundation for growth.

Next, we'll launch Phase Two: Sustain & Grow, a three-year effort to identify opportunities, engage new partners, and sharpen our focus for the greatest impact. This phase is about building on our strengths and staying aligned with our mission as we look ahead.

We're proud of our committed Board of Directors and grateful for your continued support. Together, we're making sure WWLT is prepared not just for today, but for the long-term care of this special region we all love.

# *Spring Into Stewardship: Big Projects Ahead*

**By Anna Levitsky**

This spring, WWLT is hitting the ground running with a robust lineup of stewardship initiatives, and it's all thanks to a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

These funds will support a range of active land management efforts in WWLT's Headwaters Forest, beginning with a major infrastructure upgrade: the installation of a Stream Smart Crossing over Daggett Brook. This project will address long-standing issues with erosion and sediment runoff, while also supporting aquatic connectivity by allowing fish and other organisms to safely pass through the waterway.

In addition to improving stream health, the NRCS grant enables a variety of habitat restoration efforts. These include commercial thinning and early successional patch cuts, which are designed to improve conditions for species such as the American woodcock. WWLT is also enhancing small game habitats by creating snags and brush piles, enriching the forest floor for a diverse range of wildlife.

To further boost ecological health, the stewardship team is tackling invasive species like wild parsnip and coltsfoot, which have taken hold along old logging roads. Removing these invasive plants will help native species reclaim their ground and maintain balance in the ecosystem.

We're also excited to welcome back Seasonal Land Steward Erik Kindblom for another year! Erik, who works as a

teacher during the academic year, brings deep commitment and energy to WWLT's stewardship efforts. Even in the so-called "off-season," he continues to keep a close eye on the land and help plan future projects.

As part of the NRCS-supported initiatives, WWLT is installing wildlife boxes, including homes for owls, bats, and ducks, along Monument Brook and other wetland areas in the Headwaters. Thanks to support from JMM Services, Inc., Erik brought this project to life with the help of his students at Wilbraham & Monson Academy in Massachusetts, where he teaches. The students contributed hands-on work building owl boxes, which will be installed later this summer alongside the other planned stewardship activities.

WWLT is incredibly grateful to our Stewardship Committee, Erik, and the students who contributed their time and effort to support conservation in action. These projects are a reminder that meaningful stewardship doesn't just protect land, it actively restores and revitalizes it.

We're also looking to grow our Stewardship Committee! If you're passionate about sustainable land management or have skills you'd like to contribute, we'd love to have you join us. Your involvement can help ensure that WWLT's properties remain vibrant, healthy, and teeming with life for generations to come.

## *More Memories Made on East Grand*

**By Mitchell Domagala**

Our story begins in Forest City, Maine, a piece of “heaven” nestled on the southern end of East Grand Lake which shares a border between the United States and Canada.

“The Crew”, a close group of friends, and I, have been ice fishing on East Grand for five years now. This past trip produced some very healthy fish. I always say that East Grand may not be loaded with action or have a ton of flags to chase, but when there is a flag, there is usually a good quality fish on the line. That saying held for us on the hard water in 2025.

On the first day of our trip, we caught three salmon, all measuring around 20”. One of the many nice things about East Grand Lake is you can catch salmon on the shoreline just under the ice, and can catch them off the shoreline too! On the second day, the group caught three lake trout, measuring 25", 26", & 28" long, and well-fed! We lost another three lakers...but we won't get into that. At the end of the day, another 18" salmon was caught. To top off the trip, the day ended with a memorable 26" salmon. It was so cold that day, the holes were freezing over, and the fish barely fit through! It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime fish!

The East Grand Lake Region has more to offer than ice fishing. This year we made the best of a high wind, low visibility day, and went snowmobiling. There are plenty of trail systems that connect right to the lake. From Greenland Cove, we connected to a club trail that got us to ITS 105. It was a gorgeous ride through the pine trees, about 7 miles each way. We reached the Mill Yard in Danforth to fuel up the sleds, and warm up with hot coffee and snacks. On the way home, we enjoyed the sunset through the pines on the trail. From Mill Yard, you can connect to the rest of Maine's 14,000 miles of snowmobile trails. Seriously, with enough gas, the options are endless!

Our 2025 Forest City trip was great. I will be honest, some years we catch more than others. However, the memories made and the time spent together are what make the trip worthwhile.

You too, could make some great memories by visiting this region. If you want to see what this region has to offer, I recommend you visit [woodiewheaton.org/explore](http://woodiewheaton.org/explore). I hope you enjoy your time in the Chiputneticook Lakes Region as much as we do!



## Thank you to our 2024 Donors!

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Conservation-minded members help us carry on the legacy of preservation, so future generations can get to know and love the area just as much as we do.

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## *2024 Chiputneticook Circle*

WWLT's Chiputneticook Circle program recognizes the commitment of our most generous members who make gifts of \$1,000 or more during the course of a year. Chiputneticook Circle donors provide critical annual support that allows WWLT to continue to protect and preserve eastern Maine's and western New Brunswick's exceptional places. By contributing to WWLT as a Chiputneticook Circle member, donors show their commitment to significantly supporting WWLT now and into the future.

### **The Trust would like to express gratitude to the following 2024 Chiputneticook Circle members:**

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**Please join us in protecting the Chiputneticook Lakes Region of Eastern Maine and Western New Brunswick today, tomorrow, and always. With a minimum gift of \$30, you'll be a part of a growing, passionate community. As a 501(c)(3), memberships are tax-deductible.**

**Donate online at [WoodieWheaton.org](https://WoodieWheaton.org).**

## *WWLT Collaborates with DART for the Downeast Regional Tourism Guide*

WWLT is proud to have partnered with the Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism (DART) office and to be featured in the *Downeast Regional Tourism Guide for the Grand Lakes Region*. Last fall, we had the pleasure of meeting Amy & Dan Olson and Kristin & Mark Simmons, who played an integral role in capturing and promoting the beauty of our region.

Amy, the owner of Capshore Photography, and Kristin, an artist and digital media instructor, were hired by DART to document our area's stunning landscapes and conservation efforts. During their stay, we had the opportunity to host them and share the work WWLT is

doing to protect this remarkable region. They truly captured the spirit of our efforts, and we are thrilled with the results!

You can explore the guide and learn more about the Grand Lakes Region on our website at [woodiewheaton.org/explore](http://woodiewheaton.org/explore), or visit [downeastacadia.com](http://downeastacadia.com) for additional information. The QR code on the right will also take you directly to the guide.

We are grateful for this collaboration and excited to share our story with even more visitors!

## *Acoustic Tagging Project on East Grand*

**By Matthew G. Warner, SCIWC**

To understand Togue (Lake Trout; *Salvelinus namaycush*) and Lake Whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*) habitat usage and spawning grounds in East Grand Lake, the St. Croix International Waterway Commission (SCIWC) developed an acoustic tracking project in cooperation with Acadia University, the New Brunswick Dept. of Natural Resources and Energy Development and the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Acoustic tracking utilizes two components: transmitters (tags), and receivers. Tags are surgically implanted in a fish and will transmit data about the fish's whereabouts and environmental conditions (depth, temperature) to an array of nearby deployed receivers. Receivers deployed in East Grand Lake will be owned and operated by the SCIWC. This project will also help make future management decisions.

Over the 2025 winter ice fishing season, SCIWC and Acadia biologists angled for, and surgically tagged 20 Lake Trout

(Togue) and 15 Lake Whitefish with acoustic transmitters. Many volunteers provided fish they had caught, and invaluable intel on targeting depths, tackle, and methods used. Fish to be surgically tagged were measured, then anesthetized before a tag was inserted through a small incision on the belly and sewed up with several sutures. Togue were tagged with an orange external dart tag as an indication to anglers if they are caught again, as well as a fin clip on the tip of the anal fin. The availability of Togue allowed biologists to be selective on which fish received a tag, ensuring survivability after surgery and release. Lake Whitefish proved challenging both to angle for and to surgically tag, but all was inevitably successful.

Acoustic receivers will be deployed in East Grand Lake over the next two years, while the tag batteries are still active. Our hope is that we will be able to determine their spawning grounds in the fall of 2025 and 2026 and learn a lot more about them along the way.

Matthew G. Warner surgically inserting an acoustic tracking tag into a Togue on East Grand Lake.

*For those wishing to learn more about the project, they can contact Matthew Warner at [matthew.warner@stcroix.org](mailto:matthew.warner@stcroix.org), or by calling the St. Croix International Waterway Commission at 207-952-9069.*

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## *Lakes & Land You Love*

Our mission is to protect, preserve, and conserve the land and water of the Chiputneticook Lakes Region of Eastern Maine and Western New Brunswick.

### *Contact Us*

Office Open Seasonally  
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