Woodie Wheaton
LAND TRUST

NEWSLETTER
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Mud Lake and the crest of Mud Lake Falls - Photo Credit: Capshore Photography

Tannery Shores - The Next Chapter

by Anna Levitsky

By now, Tannery Shores is likely familiar to you. We've introduced our plans for this historic property on Spednic Lake and shared some of what we believed it could become. Since then, a lot has happened and the vision is beginning to feel much more real.

What began with a simple goal of protecting public access to the lake has developed into something we believe can have a lasting impact on the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust and the region we serve. Over the past year, we have completed the first phase of work, reached some important fundraising milestones, and spent a lot of time thinking about how Tannery Shores can help us connect more people to this place.

Tannery Shores sits on 17 acres along Spednic Lake in Forest City. The property includes a historic landing, several old camp buildings and a stretch of shoreline looking out across one of the most intact conservation landscapes in the region. Long before it became Tannery Shores, it was an integral steamboat landing for a bustling industry.

During the 1800's, Forest City was part of a busy cross-border economy centered around hemlock forests. Bark harvested from the surrounding forests was transported by lake and river to tanneries producing leather for markets far beyond this remote corner of Maine. The landing at Tannery Shores connected settlements, workers, goods and supplies at a time when the water was one of the primary ways people traveled through the region.

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A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you, but I think Mother Nature outdid herself this fall. The colors across the Region have been some of the most vibrant we've seen in years. And as I reflect on all that's happening at the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust, I can't help but think the vibrant colors of this fall are a fitting reflection of the bright future ahead of us.

Recently, board member Steve Martin and I were reflecting on the excitement surrounding WWLT. Having worked together for nearly a decade, we've seen the organization through many stages of growth. But **there's a renewed energy today that's hard to miss** among our staff, board, members, and partners. After years of conversations and planning, we're seeing many of the organization's long-standing goals become reality.

As you'll read in this newsletter, we're continuing to pursue opportunities to conserve important lands. Protecting these special places remains at the heart of everything we do. At the same time, we're expanding our efforts to care for the lands we've already protected, strengthening community partnerships, and finding new ways to connect people with the landscape we've worked so hard to protect.

I'm proud of where we are as an organization. We've worked hard to strengthen our financial position, establish clear priorities, and build the relationships needed to support our future. We have an engaged board, a dedicated staff, and a growing network of supporters who believe in what we're doing. We may be a small organization, but we've never let that stop us from thinking big. We're moving forward with confidence and a shared sense of purpose.

I hope this newsletter leaves you as excited about our future as I am. We've built incredible momentum, and your support is what allows us to turn that momentum into lasting conservation. **Please consider making a year-end gift to WWLT.** Your donation will directly support our efforts to create meaningful connections between people and the places we protect. **With your help, we can carry this momentum into the new year and accomplish even more for this place we love.**

With Gratitude,



Anna Levitsky
Executive Director

Tannery Shores - The Next Chapter

(Continued from page 1)

As that industry disappeared, Spednic became increasingly known for its fishing, sporting traditions, and undeveloped shoreline. Maine Guides, sporting camps, and generations of visitors built a new economy and way of life around the same forests and waters that had once supported industry.

This history feels especially relevant to WWLT. Our organization was founded in 1994 by local Maine Guides and residents who understood how special this landscape was and how easily it could change. What started around kitchen tables and sporting camps grew into more than three decades of conservation work.

Tannery Shores gives us an opportunity to preserve those pieces of our story. It allows us to protect the landscape while also creating a place where people can experience it.

This year, we completed Phase 1 of the project with the restoration of the canoe house and surrounding grounds. WWLT's handmade classic canoe collection now has a home on Spednic Lake, and the property gives us a permanent starting point for paddling programs, lake tours, conservation education, youth activities, volunteer events, and community gatherings. What we talked about as a vision in our last newsletter is now becoming something you can actually see and use.

With Phase 1 complete, our attention has turned to Phase 2 and the restoration of the property's two lodging cottages. Our plans are intentionally simple. We want these buildings to continue to feel like traditional Maine camps while making them comfortable and useful again. The smaller cottage will provide a quiet place to stay, while the larger bunkhouse will offer additional lodging and gathering space for families, conservation partners, visiting organizations, artists, and small groups.

Thanks to the support we have already received, construction on the cottage will begin this spring. That is an exciting next step, but there is still significant work ahead. **We need to raise an additional $300,000** to keep our contractor on site and move directly into the renovation of the bunkhouse. Completing both buildings will bring us much closer to being able to welcome people to Tannery Shores and put the property to work for WWLT and the region.

That is really the heart of this project. For years, much of our work has understandably focused on protecting the land. **But conservation also depends on people having a connection to the places we are asking them to care about.** Tannery Shores can become a place where that connection happens. We can bring people onto Spednic Lake who have never paddled it. We can host conservation partners who want to better understand the landscape. We can welcome people who may arrive knowing very little about WWLT and leave understanding why this region is worth protecting.



Tannery Shores, October 2026

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Tannery Shores - The Next Chapter

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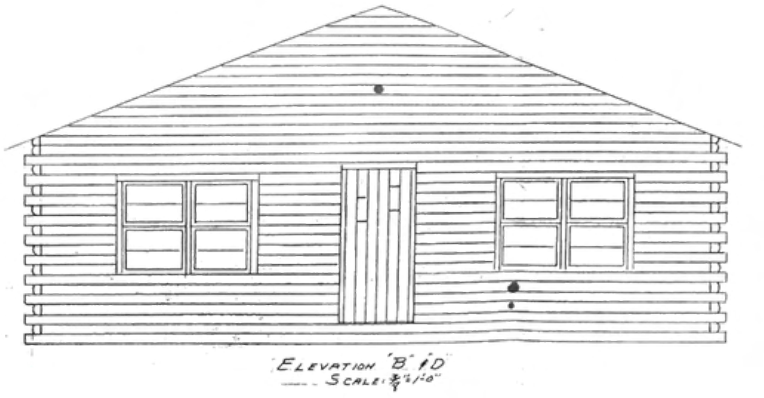
We also see an opportunity for Tannery Shores to support WWLT financially. **Thoughtful use of the cottages for lodging, retreats, and partner programs can generate revenue that supports our broader operations and conservation work.** Those visitors can also support guides, sporting camps, and other businesses throughout the East Grand region. For a small land trust working in a rural area, finding ways for conservation, community, and financial sustainability to support one another matters.



The Cottage (Phase 2)

One new idea we are particularly excited to explore is an artist residency. We are working toward a two-week pilot in August 2027 that would bring a small group of artists to Forest City to create a site-specific film inspired by the surrounding landscape. The residency would include filming throughout the Forest City area and an opportunity to share the work and creative process with the community.

This is something different for WWLT, and that is part of why we think it is worth exploring. Artists have a way of helping people see familiar places differently and introducing those places to people who may never encounter them. We hope that artists who spend meaningful time here will leave with their own connection to Spednic and share some part of that connection with others. The residency is only one piece of the larger vision, and it is dependent on fundraising. Our immediate priority is completing the cottage and bunkhouse to have the infrastructure needed to welcome people to the property. There is an exciting opportunity in front of us, but we intend to move forward responsibly and at the pace our fundraising allows.



Above: Orginial blueprint sketch of the bunkhouse

None of the progress so far would have been possible without those who believed in Tannery Shores. The Sam Shine Foundation provided important support for the initial acquisition, while the Maine Community Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation, and Spednic/St. Croix Stewardship Endowment Committee helped make Phase 1 possible. We are especially grateful to Jeff Bursaw and Michael and Tina Langeluttig for their generosity and belief in the vision, and to Leonard Ackerman for his valued support. Many of our members have also shared our excitement, made gifts, and encouraged us to keep moving forward. Together, their support is helping bring Tannery Shores to life.

There is one gift, and one story behind it, that we especially want to share. Sarina Gwirtzman first came to Spednic Lake with her then-boyfriend, and later husband, Burt Gwirtzman, 42 years ago. Over the decades that followed, Sarina and Burt passed Tannery Shores countless times while fishing on Spednic. Together, they developed a deep love for this area and a strong belief in WWLT's work to protect it.

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Tannery Shores - The Next Chapter

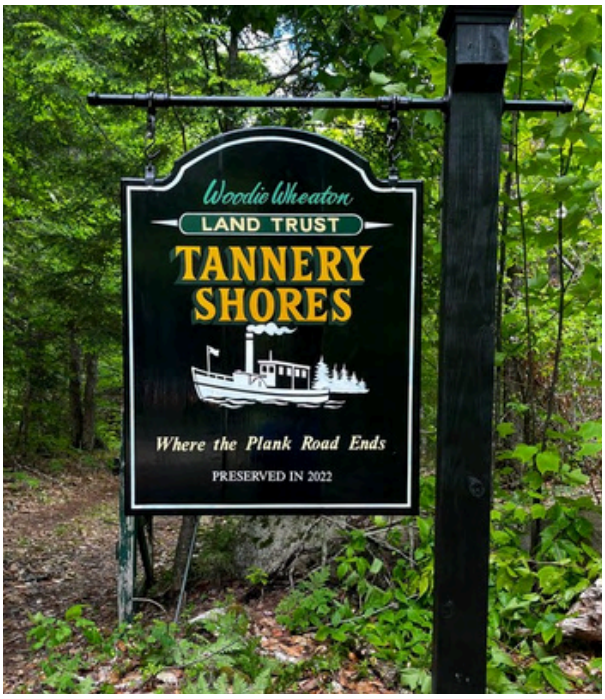
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Sarina has now made a major gift to Tannery Shores, helping move this project from an idea toward the place we know it can become. We are incredibly grateful for her generosity and for the meaningful way her gift carries forward the connection to Spednic she and Burt shared for more than four decades. There is something especially fitting about knowing that a place they passed so many times from the water will now help others develop their own connection to the lake and this remarkable landscape.

The Trust is proud to share that **the newly restored canoe house at Tannery Shores will officially be known as "Burt's Boathouse"**. We cannot think of a more fitting way to honor his love for the water. As canoes leave its doors and new generations head out onto Spednic, Burt's connection to this lake will remain part of the story.

In many ways, that is what Tannery Shores is about. The people who founded WWLT did not protect Spednic Lake simply so acreage could be added to a map. They protected it because this landscape meant something to them. It was where they worked, guided, fished, paddled, and spent their lives. They wanted future generations to have the opportunity to know it too.

We want Tannery Shores to do the same: honor its history while giving the property a useful future. It can be a place where people stay, paddle, learn, and leave with a stronger connection to this landscape. We want it to create opportunities for WWLT, our partners, and the surrounding communities while helping sustain conservation here for years to come.



New sign welcoming visitors to Tannery Shores. Generously constructed and donated by John Trainor.

Phase 1 showed us what is possible when people believe in this project. Now we are ready for the next step. **If you believe in what Tannery Shores can become, we hope you will consider making a gift toward the $300,000 needed to complete Phase 2 and help us open these cottages to the people who will become part of this property's next chapter.**





IMPACT REPORT

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, 2025 was a year of meaningful progress conserving the lands and waters that make this region special.

327,000+
ACRES
of conserved lands through regional partnerships to date

55+
MILES
of shoreline protected

31
YEARS
of conservation in Maine

2
COUNTIES
with conserved WWLT lands

OUR PATH TO LAND PROTECTION

We work with willing landowners to explore conservation opportunities through direct land purchases or conservation easements. Every property is unique, and we evaluate each opportunity based on five key values that help us identify lands where conservation can make the greatest impact.

WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION

Priority for water quality impact.

TRADITIONAL & RECREATIONAL USE

Seeking healthy, working landscapes and access for recreation.

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Protecting habitat and biodiversity, including rare and irreplaceable species.

CONSERVATION PRIORITY

Protecting lands identified as high priority for conservation and risk of development

CULTURAL & COMMUNITY SIGNIFICANCE

Supporting cultural heritage and community connections.

ACTIVELY PURSUING NEW CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Our Land Acquisition Committee and staff are currently exploring three promising conservation opportunities. While these projects are still in the early stages of evaluation, we are encouraged by their potential and look forward to sharing more details with our membership as they progress.

2025 FINANCIAL HEALTH

Following the completion of our strategic plan, WWLT engaged an independent financial expert to provide our Board with a thorough assessment of the Trust's financial position and recommendations to guide informed decisions for the future. The assessment affirmed our strong financial foundation and responsible management of resources, while highlighting the importance of growing our operating endowment to support expanding programs and stewardship responsibilities. With a clear understanding of where we stand and what is needed for the future, our Board is well-positioned to guide the Trust's continued growth. The ongoing support of our members will be essential to building on this strong foundation and ensuring we can care for the lands we protect for generations to come.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

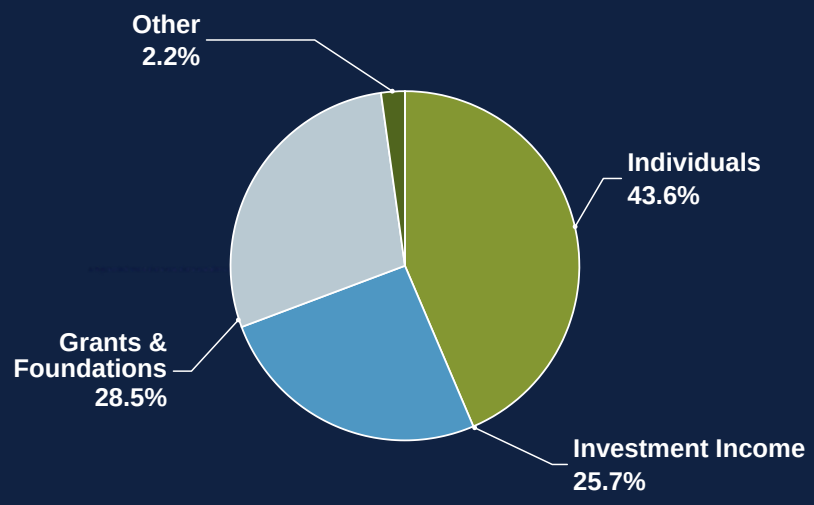
ASSETS

Current Assets	$4,722,790
Fixed Assets	$2,610,344
Total Assets	**$7,333,134**

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	**$1,124**
Total Liabilities	**$1,124**
Total Equity	**$7,332,010**

REVENUE SOURCES



MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

TRACY BIGNEY



Tracy brings more than 30 years of higher education experience in human resources, leadership, and institutional development, including serving as Chief HR Officer for the University of Maine System. Tracy is a former educator and experienced nonprofit board member. She is passionate about hiking, family, music, and supporting WWLT's mission.

DAVID VLADIMIROU



Dave is a Senior Wealth Advisor at Dakota Wealth Management with extensive experience in financial consulting, investment management, and estate planning. He has a lifelong connection to the Great Pond region through his family's land, and is passionate about preserving land for future generations.

Smart Giving Strategies for Lasting Impact

by David Vladimirou

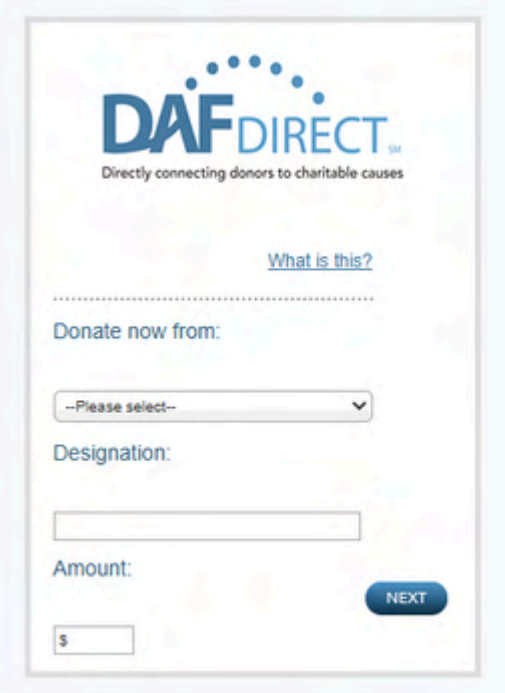
The primary mission of the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust (WWLT) is to protect and preserve the pristine Chiputneticook Lakes Region—a unique corner of Maine we all love. People come from all over the United States to experience our region, and see firsthand how unique our area is compared to other parts of Maine. Maine has some beautiful open spaces, but many of these areas have seen increasing development, and what was once wild is less so today. Our work ensures some parts of this special place remain wild and untouched for generations to come.

Fulfilling this mission requires ongoing commitment and funding. Beyond land purchases, regular operational costs—including taxes, salaries, contractors, and stewardship—remain an essential and growing annual expense. Strategic tax planning allows supporters to maximize their charitable impact while significantly reducing their tax liabilities. Here are a couple of examples.

1. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

For supporters aged 70½ or older with a traditional IRA, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) offers a direct, tax-efficient way to give.

- **How It Works:** Transfer up to $111,000 annually directly from your IRA to a 501(c)(3) charity like WWLT. (*Please note: the **2026** QCD limit is $111,000 per individual - this can change annually)*
- **Tax Savings:** The distribution counts toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) but is excluded from your taxable income. This lowers your Federal and State income taxes and can help reduce Medicare Part B/D surcharges (IRMAA) and taxes on Social Security benefits.
- **Key Deadline:** Funds must be processed and checks cashed by **December 31st** to count for the current tax year (processing by December 1st is highly recommended).



Example Tax Benefit on a $50,000 RMD
(assuming 20% Federal / 5% State Tax)

Strategy	RMD Amount	Direct to WWLT	Taxable Income Added	Combined Tax (25%)	Net to Owner	Total Tax Savings
Standard RMD	$50,000	0	$50,000	$12,500	$37,500	$0
With $15K QCD	$50,000	$15,000	$35,000	$8,750	$26,500	$3,750

Additional Ways to Give

Explore more ways to support WWLT and make a lasting impact through your generosity.

woodiewheaton.org/giving

Smart Giving Strategies

2. Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)
A Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) acts as a dedicated charitable investment account that allows you to contribute cash, appreciated stock, or non-retirement assets, grow those funds tax-free, and grant the proceeds to end charities over time.

- **Capital Gains Avoidance:** Transfer appreciated stocks—or "pesky" stock lots with missing cost-basis records—directly into a DAF without triggering capital gains taxes.

- **Immediate Deduction & Long-Term Growth:** Claim an immediate tax deduction in the contribution year, then invest the assets inside the DAF (via index funds or money markets) so your eventual gift to WWLT grows over time.

- **Streamlined Estate Planning:** Name a DAF as a beneficiary on bank accounts, trusts, life insurance, or IRAs to consolidate multi-charity estate gifts into a single managed account.

3. Combining Strategies for Maximum Tax Reduction
While QCD's must come directly from an IRA and cannot be directed into a DAF, you can utilize **both** strategies independently in the same tax year. Coupling a QCD from your retirement account with a stock donation into a DAF provides a comprehensive strategy to lower your tax burden while ensuring the Chiputneticook Lakes Region remains wild and undisturbed for generations to come.

Always consult your tax professional or financial advisor to determine the best strategy for your specific financial situation.

Thank You to Our Corporate Sponsors

A big thank you to our incredible corporate sponsors! Your generosity helps us protect the places we love and bring meaningful programs and opportunities to our communities. We're grateful to have you on our team!

Want to be part of it? We'd love to welcome more local businesses into the WWLT family! Corporate sponsorship is a great way to give back to the region we all care about.

Reach out to learn how we can partner together!

Maine WoodsWISE Resilience Program

by April Fowler

LEARN MORE

Do you own ten or more forested acres in Maine? The WoodsWISE Resilience Program provides financial incentives to help landowners make their woods healthier and better prepared for the future.

If you choose to participate, you'll work with an approved Resilience Forester to develop a plan and apply for funding. Eligible projects include thinning to improve tree growth, promoting new tree regeneration, planting trees, protecting your trees from browsing, removing trees affected by pests or disease, and controlling invasive plants.

The program reimburses 60% - 90% of eligible costs, including forestry services and implementation.

Scan the QR Code to learn more.

Inspiring Future Stewards: WWLT Warden Camp Scholarship

by April Fowler



Outdoor Learning at Warden Camp 2026

This July, the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust awarded a scholarship to one local youth to attend Warden Camp at the University of Maine 4-H Camp & Learning Center at Greenland Point, in Princeton, ME.

Hoping to inspire another generation of outdoor stewards, the Trust wanted to give a local child hands-on experience in conservation, outdoor safety, survival skills, and mentorship among Maine Game Wardens.

Mason Mailman of Danforth, ME, was selected as WWLT's very first scholarship recipient.

During his week at camp, Mason participated in boater safety training, map and compass instruction, and outdoor activities like riding on, and fishing from a Game Warden boat. Expressing his gratitude to the land trust and its members, Mason shared: "I will never forget all the skills I have gained and the memories I have made, thanks to your generosity." WWLT is proud to support local youth in fostering a lifelong appreciation for our region, and Maine's natural resources. We also want to thank Warden Tyler Leach for his time, effort and support of WWLT, and this program.

Stewardship in Action: A Healthier Headwaters

by Anna Levitsky

Protecting land is only the beginning of conservation. Through active stewardship, WWLT is working to strengthen the ecological health of the lands and waters we've worked hard to protect. At our 4,600-acre Headwaters Forest in Amity, Maine, that commitment is improving forest health, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

Our first Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) contract has delivered impressive results, including replacing an aging culvert on Daggett Brook with a new aquatic organism passage structure. This project restored the natural streambed, reopened miles of habitat for native brook trout, and improved flood resilience. This coming spring, we'll complete the contract with invasive plant treatments targeting wild parsnip, coltsfoot, and reed canary grass.

Building on this success, **WWLT has secured a second NRCS contract**, with work beginning this past summer. A major priority is restoring deer wintering areas through conservation thinning and forest treatments that encourage mature softwood stands. Additional work will improve northern hardwood forests and create young forest openings that benefit grouse, woodcock, and other wildlife.

We're also creating standing dead trees (snags), downed logs, and brush piles that provide important shelter and nesting habitat. Two additional wood duck boxes are planned along Monument Brook, while improvements to Daggett Brook will create pools and cover for native brook trout.

Our habitat improvements also include installing bat boxes, thanks to some wonderful community partners. A special thank-you to JMM Services for helping prepare materials and assisting with installation, and to Miss DeKeyser's seventh-grade class at East Grand School for their hands-on work installing the boxes. It's especially rewarding to involve local students in conservation efforts happening right in their backyard.

These accomplishments reflect the strength of our partnership with NRCS, whose technical expertise and financial assistance make this work possible. We're proud of the progress at Headwaters Forest and grateful to the partners and volunteers helping us ensure these lands continue supporting wildlife and healthy ecosystems for generations to come.



Students and the bat boxes they built for the Headwaters



Installed owl box



Installing predator guard for owl box

Woodie Wheaton
LAND TRUST

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Keith Matherne
Hannah Smith
Matthew Tribou
David Vladimirou

Operations Manager
April Fowler

Seasonal Land Steward
Erik Kindblom

Advisory Board
Arthur Wheaton
Elbridge Cleaves
Richard Kaufmann
Sandi Mitchell



Photo Credit: Capshore Photography

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
May 15-October 1
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office@woodiewheaton.org

Donate online or become a volunteer at WoodieWheaton.org