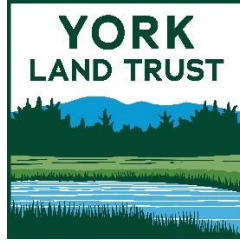


York Land Trust



York River Watershed Grant Report

May 9, 2025

Project name: Expansion of York Land Trust's McIntire Highlands Preserve

Project leader/contact: Doreen MacGillis, Land Protection Specialist

Project summary and benefits: York Land Trust (YLT) has acquired three Town of York-owned parcels (100, 104, and 108 Kingsbury Lane in York) totaling approximately 42 acres that were donated by the Town and added to YLT's 458-acre McIntire Highlands Preserve. Protecting the parcels helps to protect the water quality of the York River and Boulter Pond Reservoir; protects important habitat for native plants, fish and wildlife; contributes to watershed climate resilience; and expands an existing recreational trail system for the public to enjoy.

Project tasks: The following steps were taken by YLT to acquire the three parcels:

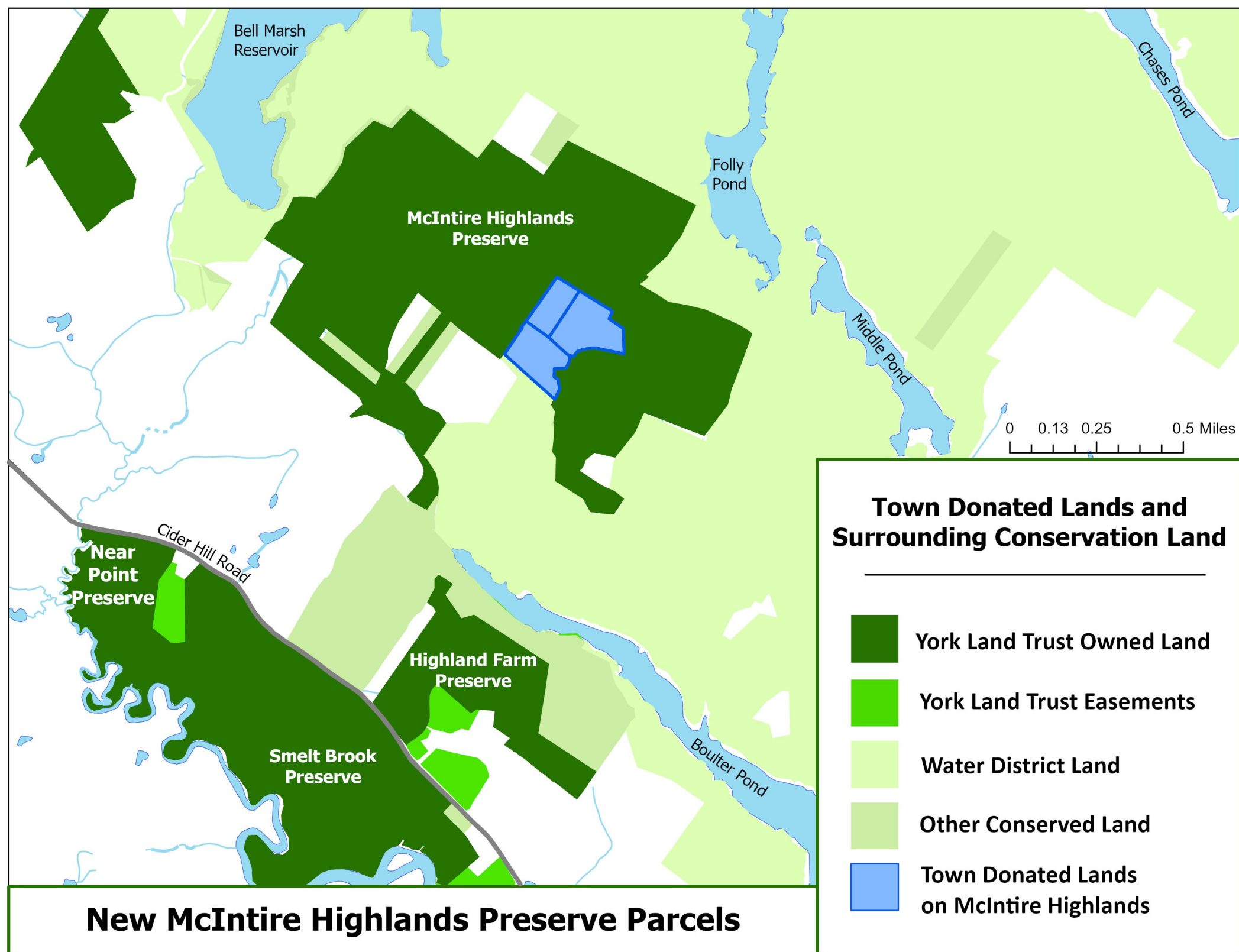
- Title work was completed by York Land Trust's attorney in February of 2025; there were no title issues to rectify.
- A boundary survey of the parcels was completed by Kimball Survey and Design, Inc. in January 2025.
- An Environmental Hazards Transaction Screen was completed by YLT's Land Protection Specialist in March 2025.
- Preparation and review of closing documents by YLT and the Town of York occurred in March 2025.
- A closing on the property with documents signed by YLT's Executive Director and the York Town Manager occurred in March 2025.
- YLT's attorney has recorded the deed at the York County Registry of Deeds.
- YLT's Executive Director invested the Stewardship endowment funds for the property at Maine Community Foundation in April 2025.
- A boundary agreement with Kittery Water District to clarify the southern boundary was completed in May 2025 and will be recorded at the registry of deeds next week. The survey will be updated to reflect the boundary agreement and recorded at the registry of deeds next week.
- The newly acquired parcels will be added to YLT's McIntire Highlands Preserve Management Plan by YLT's Stewardship Director and the property boundaries will be marked by June 30, 2025.

Project budget: The \$10K grant awarded by the York River Stewardship Committee supported contracted survey work to conduct the property boundary survey. Approximately \$30,000 of YLT funds secured from individual donors funded the remaining property boundary survey costs, as well as all other project costs to complete the project tasks (legal work, title work, other closing costs, project management, and stewardship endowment). Expenses related to boundary marking and adding the property to the McIntire Highlands Management Plan have yet to be incurred.

Attachments:

Map of new parcels

YLT newsletter article



Feature story from YLT's newsletter: 2025 Landmarks Spring Issue

Town of York Donates 42 Acres to McIntire Highlands Preserve

An expansive 6,300-acre unfragmented block of forest stretches from Mt. Agamenticus to the headwaters of the York River. An area of statewide ecological significance known for its rich biodiversity, it is a key region for York Land Trust's conservation efforts and home to one of YLT's Public Access Preserves, McIntire Highlands Preserve.

Recent progress in expanding this tract of undeveloped land was made with the addition of 42 acres to YLT's McIntire Highlands Preserve. These three parcels, generously donated by the Town of York, bring the preserve's total size to an impressive 500 acres. This strategic acquisition is a major step in protecting critical habitats, enhancing water quality, and providing additional recreational opportunities for the community.

Located within the York River Watershed, these newly conserved parcels play a crucial role in protecting local water quality. Meandering streams and dense wetlands on the property flow into the York River and the Boulter Pond Reservoir, which supplies drinking water to parts of York, Kittery, and Eliot. Protecting forested lands and wetlands within the York River Watershed is especially vital as climate change causes sea levels to rise and extreme weather events to become more frequent. Conserved landscapes help absorb excess water and mitigate flooding, making our region more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

The newly conserved land falls within the Beginning with Habitat Mt. Agamenticus Focus Area, a region with one of the highest concentrations of rare plant and animal species in the state. The three parcels provide critical habitat for a variety of native plants, fish, and wildlife, including the north oak hardwood forest, a rare plant community in Maine, and the brook trout that breed and feed in the streams.

In March of 2022, the Town of York Select Board approved a request by York Land Trust to donate the parcels to YLT for permanent conservation. These were properties that the town acquired through tax liens and deemed undevelopable. Understanding the parcels' ecological significance and continuing a strong tradition of conservation support, the town voted to donate the parcels to York Land Trust. The town has since voted to donate additional town-owned parcels to YLT that are within our MtA2C and Cape Neddick Focus Areas. Progress is already being made with the necessary survey and title work and fundraising to accept these donations.

The acquisition of these parcels was made possible through the financial support of several key partners. Initial funding was provided by the York River Stewardship Committee through the National Park Service under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (CFDA: 15.962). The remaining costs were covered by the Doreen MacGillis Land Protection Fund, which was established with generous donations from YLT supporters in 2022 to honor YLT's

founding Executive Director. This designated land protection fund was established to cover the associated costs of land donations, such as title work, surveys, legal fees, deposits, stewardship endowments, and staff costs, as well as to allow YLT to act quickly on land conservation opportunities.

York Land Trust's commitment to conservation includes balancing ecological preservation with compatible recreation. The newly acquired parcels will be incorporated into greater McIntire Highlands Preserve, which offers trails with extensive opportunities for hiking, birdwatching, and nature appreciation. These trails also connect to an extensive network of trails on adjacent water district lands, providing residents and visitors with access to a broader outdoor experience in this unique landscape. YLT stewardship staff and volunteers have been busy with trail improvements and restoration efforts to this preserve after severe storms hit the area last year. To join a stewardship workday to help improve public access at our preserves, visit our website at www.yorklandtrust.org/events/.