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More information about projects mentioned in the media release is included after the release.

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### **York River Stewardship Committee Awards \$43,000 for Six Projects**

The York River Stewardship Committee recently awarded \$43,000 through its York River Watershed Grants Program to four non-profit organizations, a town department, and a town committee for projects that help protect the York River and local watershed resources. Funding for the grants program is provided by the National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program, through a cooperative agreement with Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, which is the Stewardship Committee's fiscal agent.

"The national Wild and Scenic River designation for York River gives us the opportunity to protect resources for continued public benefit, and these projects and the organizations leading them are contributing to that goal," said Joan LeBlanc, Chair of the York River Stewardship Committee. "These new grant-funded projects will improve water quality and coastal habitats, conserve valuable natural and historic resources, promote safe and enjoyable public use of the York River, and engage more people in watershed protection activities – all key priorities for us," she noted.

The projects are now underway and vary in duration from 6 months to 16 months. Grant awards from the Stewardship Committee range from \$1,500 to \$10,000, and most of the projects involve additional funding provided or secured by grant recipients. The Stewardship Committee awarded grants to:

- **Old York Historical Society** for restoration of the McIntire Cider House
- **Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation** to expand its education programming and cleanups to the York River watershed area
- **York Land Trust** to conduct land surveys before acquiring three parcels that will be donated by the Town of York and added to its McIntire Highlands Preserve
- **York Conservation Commission**, in cooperation with **York Parks and Recreation Department**, for invasive plant management at Goodrich Park
- **York Parks and Recreation Department** to purchase a multi-kayak trailer and other gear for its ongoing York River kayaking tour series
- **York Ready for Climate Action** for enhanced outreach and engagement activities for the 2026 Climate Action Fair

Information about Wild and Scenic River designation and the Watershed Grants Program is available on the committee's website: [YorkRiverMaine.org](http://YorkRiverMaine.org). Community members are encouraged to sign up for the York River Stewardship Committee's periodic newsletter by using the subscription form on the bottom section of the website.

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The 2025 York River Watershed Grants Program grant recipients and projects are:

**Old York Historical Society – Cider House Restoration at McIntire Garrison (\$10,000).** Old York Historical Society is restoring the McIntire Cider House, an important historic resource that is structurally compromised due to water infiltration. Stabilizing the building is imperative to its survival and for its future use as a public gathering space. Restoration work in 2025 includes temporary structural supports, roofing, and foundation stabilization. After completion of additional restoration activities, the Cider House ultimately will provide a public space for visiting and learning about the history of the McIntire Garrison property and the former McIntire farm fields, now the Smelt Brook Preserve under the stewardship of the York Land Trust.

**Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation – Marine Debris Education and Cleanup (\$6,510).** Blue Ocean is expanding its successful educational programming and beach and shoreline cleanups to the York River watershed area. Blue Ocean will engage the public in identifying and addressing areas in need of cleanup, and they will organize and lead educational programs for schools in and adjacent to the watershed using the organization's life-sized whale, marine debris activities, and other resources. Local groups and residents can contact Blue Ocean to request a presentation or to suggest locations or volunteer for cleanups.

**York Land Trust – Addition to YLT's McIntire Highlands Preserve (\$9,500).** York Land Trust is conducting land surveys and other due diligence tasks necessary to acquire three Town of York-owned parcels, totaling approximately 14 acres, that will be donated by the Town and added to YLT's 500-acre McIntire Highlands Preserve. YLT's acquisition and stewardship of the parcels will help protect the water quality of Boulter Pond Reservoir, one of the region's water supply sources. The parcels are part of a 6,300-acre unfragmented forest block that provides critical habitats for native plants, fish and wildlife and creates a more resilient landscape.

**York Conservation Commission and York Parks and Recreation Department – Goodrich Park Invasive Plant Management, Phase 1 (\$10,000).** York Conservation Commission and York Parks and Recreation Department are initiating and coordinating activities to remove invasive plant species found at Goodrich Park to preserve the park's natural beauty and protect native wildlife habitats. They will hire a licensed resource professional to manage invasive species and initiate habitat restoration on the 5-acre area surrounding the Grant House, in coordination and with assistance from town staff and volunteers. The phased approach will follow the Invasive Plants Control Practice Plan for the entire 28.5-acre Goodrich Park that was developed in 2024 with assistance from the Maine Forest Service.

**York Parks and Recreation Department – Gear for York River Kayaking Tour Series (\$5,500).** York Parks and Recreation Department is purchasing a multi-kayak trailer and gear storage boxes to better facilitate implementation of its long-term York River kayak tour series that expands community access to the river. Parks and Recreation will continue to offer 6-8 free kayak tours per year through the fall of 2028. Tours include basic paddling instruction, safety information, and educational information about river ecology and the Wild and Scenic River designation.

**York Ready for Climate Action – 2026 Climate Action Fair (\$1,500).** York Ready for Climate Action will coordinate and manage this annual community fair to showcase actions, organizations, products, and programs that enhance sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Areas of focus have included home energy efficiency and electrification, land conservation, native plants, electric transportation options, and sustainable home goods and yard care approaches. YRCA is enhancing its outreach and engagement activities related to York River watershed protection topics.

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