



# Salt Marsh Restoration - Upper York River and Smelt Brook

Jennifer Hunter, York River Stewardship Committee  
Tatia Bauer, Maine Coast Heritage Trust

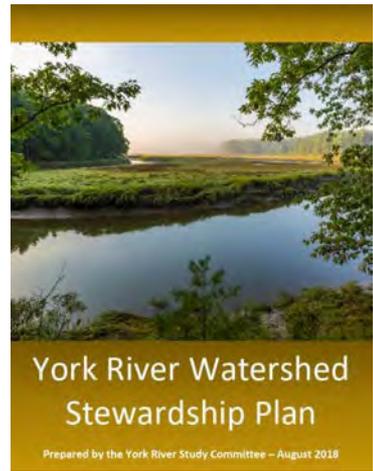
**York Land Trust - Annual Meeting**  
**October 5, 2025**

# York River Stewardship Committee

- Formed in 2023 after national WSR designation
- York River Watershed Stewardship Plan and priorities
- YLT: key partner for achieving designation and ongoing resource protection

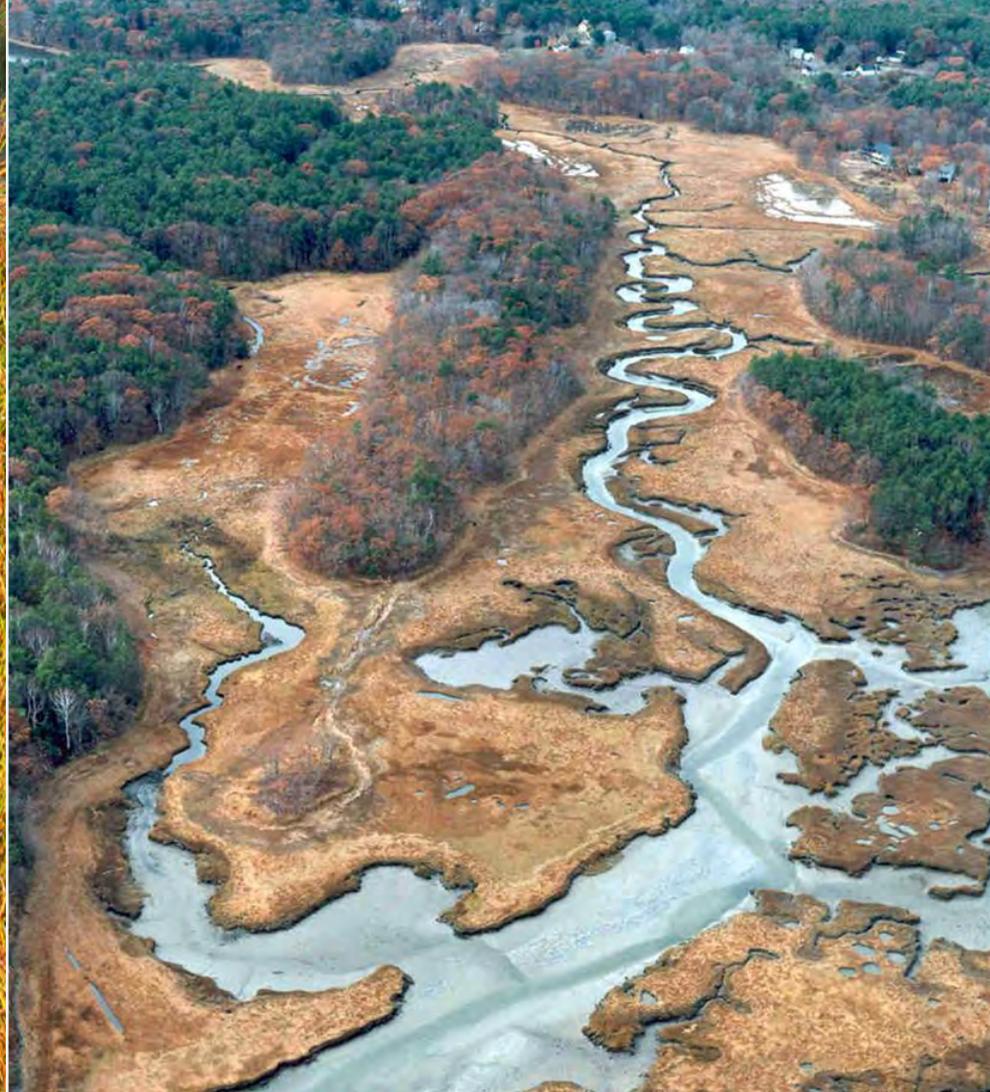


YORK RIVER  
WILD & SCENIC



# Maine Coast Heritage Trust

- Statewide land trust focused on coastal conservation
- Marshes for Tomorrow Initiative
  - Marsh migration land protection
  - Salt Marsh restoration
    - i. Two positions focused on supporting projects
    - ii. Nine ongoing projects
- York River
  - Land protection assistance
  - Marsh Restoration presentation - end of 2023



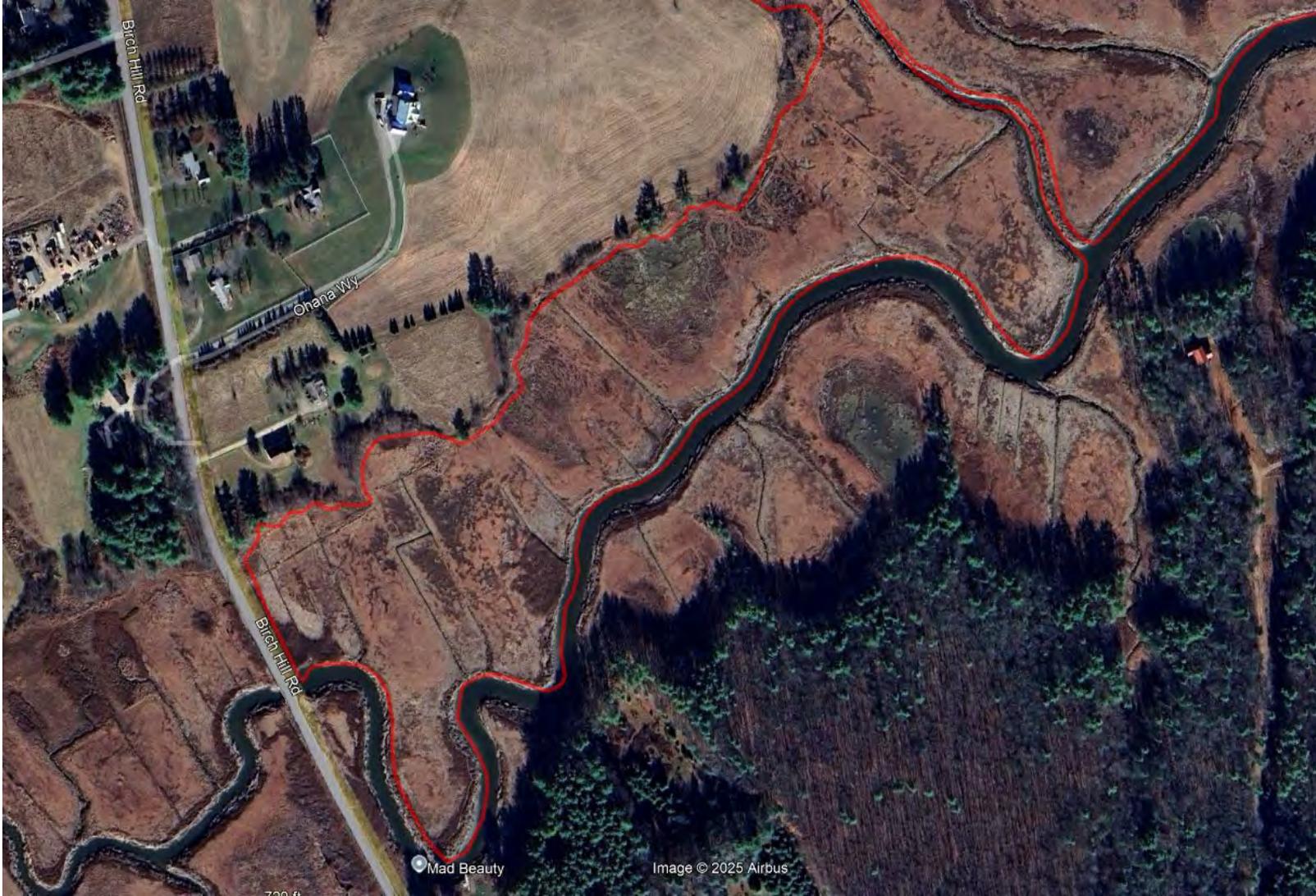


S:\PROJECTS\2025\MarshRestoration\CHT\Map\Map.mxd Project: 10/24/2025

“Repairing a dyke” Azor Veinneau; Nova Scotia Museum, Accession number 87.120.2;

SMARTeams Runnel Workshop, March 2, 2020





Birch Hill Rd

Ohana Wy

Birch Hill Rd

Mad Beauty

Image © 2025 Airbus

700 ft



630 ft

Image © 2025 Airbus

Google

York D.

# Salt Marsh Restoration Project: design phase

## WHY

York River salt marsh systems are irreplaceable in the landscape

Marsh systems are degraded and vulnerable with sea level rise, threatening resiliency and marsh migration potential

YRSC: opportunity to advance the pace and scale of local salt marsh restoration

\*\*\* Majority of marshes in Maine are privately owned (including land trusts); majority of restoration has occurred on publicly owned marshes

## HOW

Gauged landowner interest: YLT & USFWS  
RCNWR

Assembled Project Team: landowners, MCHT, WNERR, MNAP, YRSC members

Hired NWR in September 2024 for design phase to assess restoration needs and develop approaches to restore marsh functions and health

# York River-Smelt Brook Salt Marsh Restoration Project

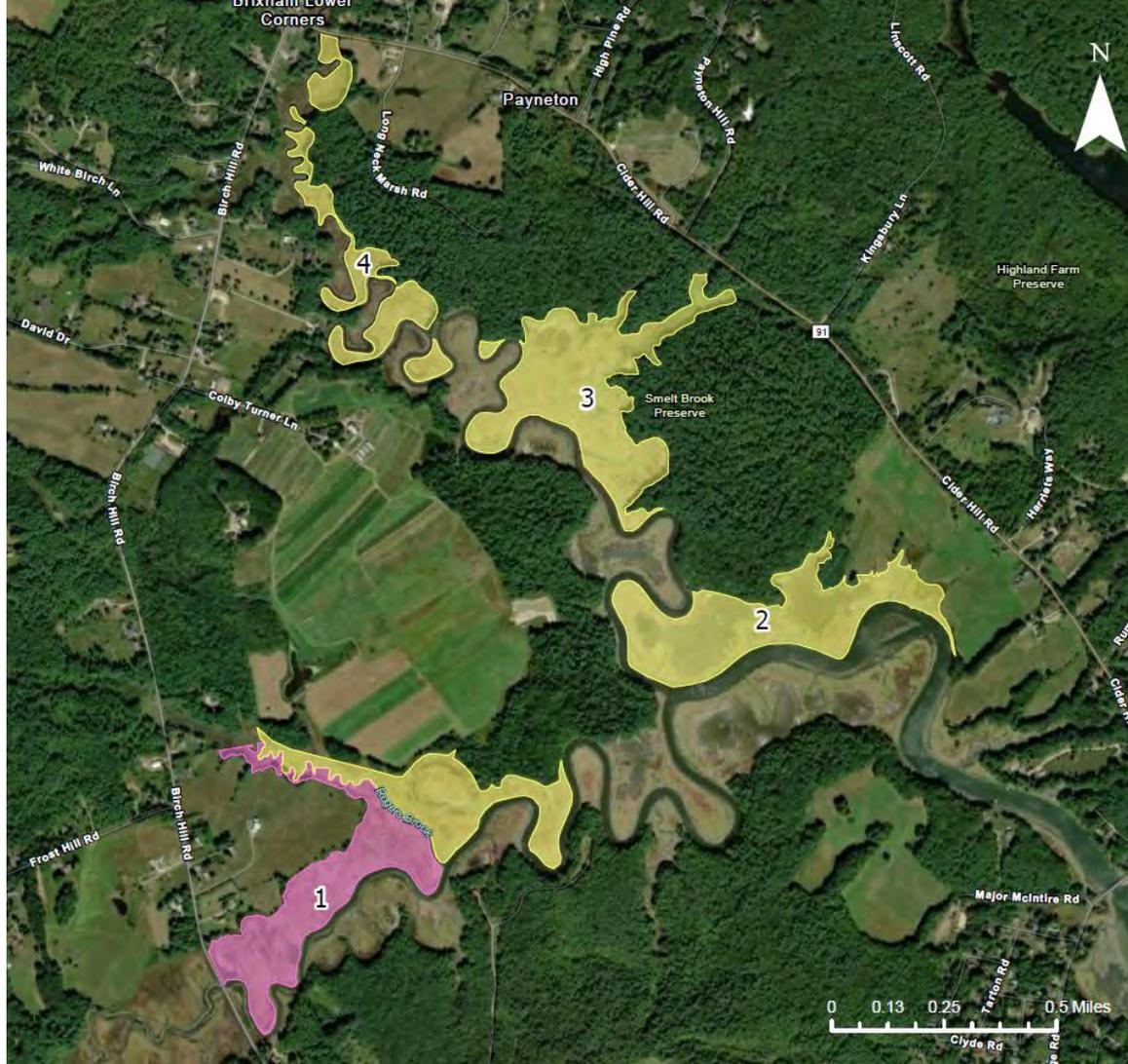
132 acres of marsh

- USFWS = 28 acres
- YLT = 104 acres

Divided into 4 sub-areas

## Findings/design summary:

- Ag infrastructure mapped
- Ditch remediation (filling)
  - 131 ditch sections (4,817')
- Channel restoration (runnels)
  - 196 channel reconnections
- Habitat and wildlife mgmt recommendations/designs



# York River-Smelt Brook Salt Marsh Restoration Project

Northeast Wetland Restoration  
17 Keay Road, Berwick, ME, 03901  
207-252-4841

York, ME  
August 27th, 2025

Project Area 3  
Existing Conditions Plan  
Sheet 3-2

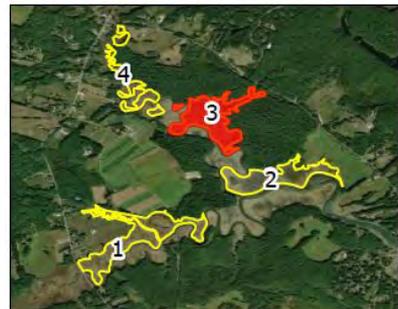
## Legend

Agricultural Infrastructure

— Early Period Embankments

— Late Period Embankments

— Clay Cored Embankments



# York River-Smelt Brook Salt Marsh Restoration Project

Northeast Wetland Restoration  
17 Keay Road, Berwick, ME, 03901  
207-252-4841

York, ME  
August 27th, 2025

Project Area 3  
Proposed Actions Plan  
Sheet 3-3

## Legend

Proposed Ditch Remediation

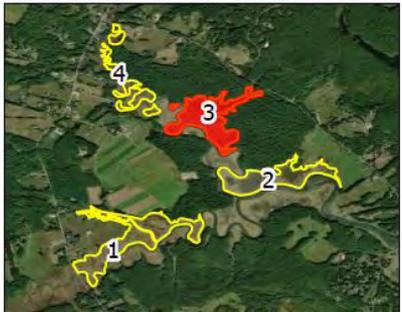
- Linear Treatment
- Point Treatment

Proposed Phragmites Control

- Brackish Ditch
- Marginal Ditch
- Phragmites Control Areas

Proposed Tidal Channel Restoration

- Late Successional
- Early Successional



# York River-Smelt Brook Salt Marsh Restoration Project

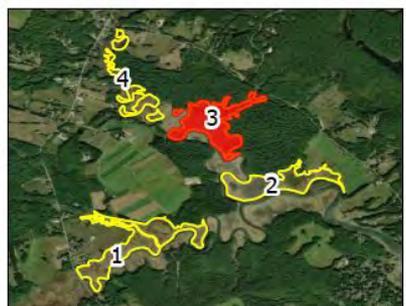
Northeast Wetland Restoration  
17 Keay Road, Berwick, ME, 03901  
207-252-4841

York, ME  
August 27th, 2025

Project Area 3  
Proposed Conditions Plan (Single  
Channel Hydrology)  
Sheet 3-4

## Legend

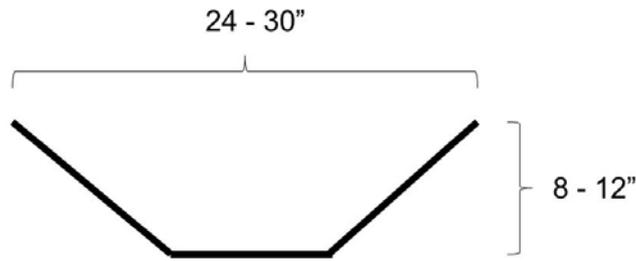
- Tidal Channel Network
- Tidal Channel Network
- Proposed Phragmites Control
- Brackish Ditch
- Marginal Ditch
- ▨ Phragmites Control Areas



## Channel remediation

Drain pools, bring in sediment, revegetate

- Dig shallow runnels
- November - April
- Connect pools to main channel
- Drains + brings sediment onto platform
- Utilize existing infrastructure when possible





Old Pond Marsh Restoration  
Runnel 1  
08.06.2025 10:35 AM  
44.53061, -68.26975 (±5m)





Mt Desert Narrows

Mt Desert Narrows

570 ft

Image © 2025 Airbus



Stage Trust  
Restoration  
PM  
18 (±6m)



Restoration  
3e  
45 AM  
6929 (±22m)  
SE



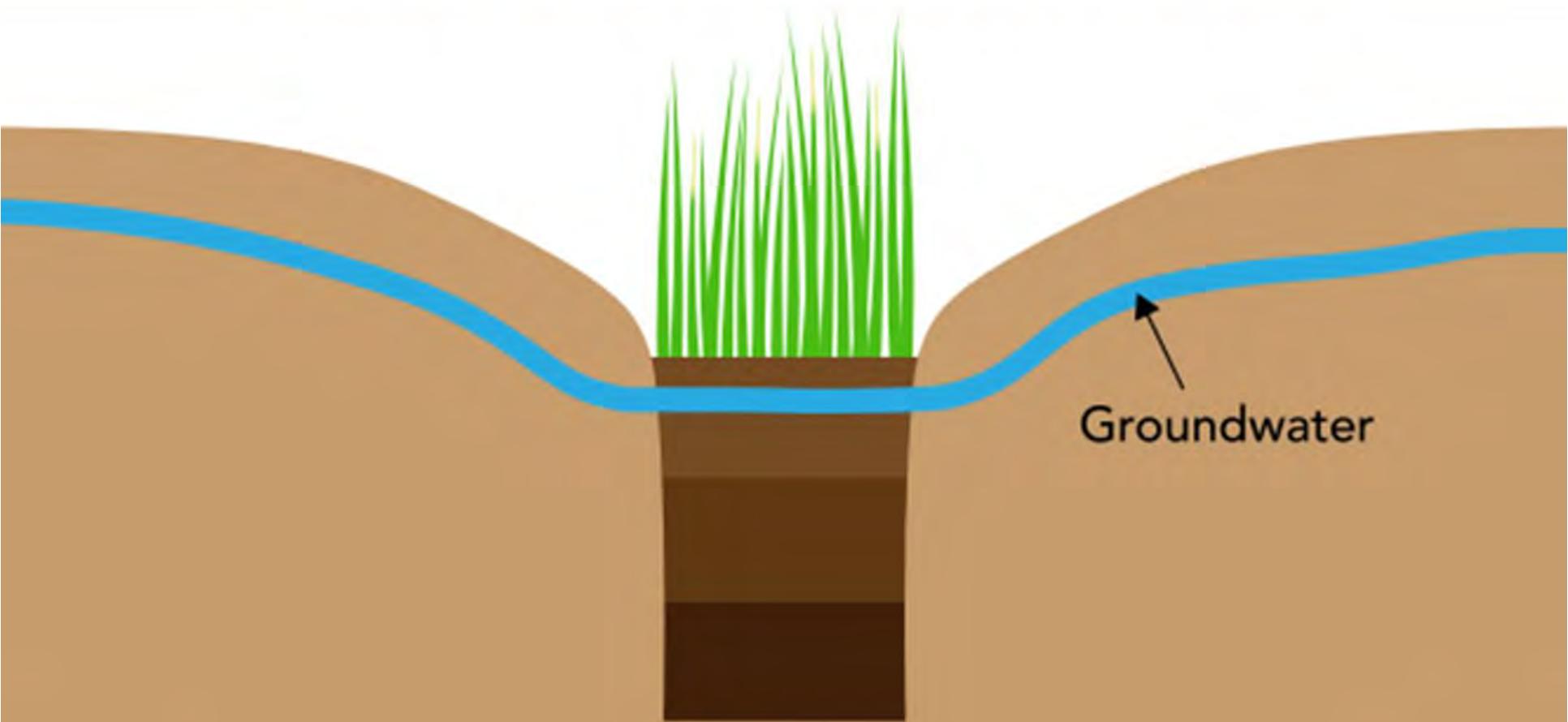
Maine Coast Heritage Trust  
Old Pond Marsh Restoration  
Pool edge 5 wide  
09.13.2024 11:21 AM  
44.52741, -68.26901 (±7m)



Old Pond Marsh Restoration  
Pool edge 5 wide  
08.06.2025 12:40 PM  
44.52743, -68.26900 (±6m)



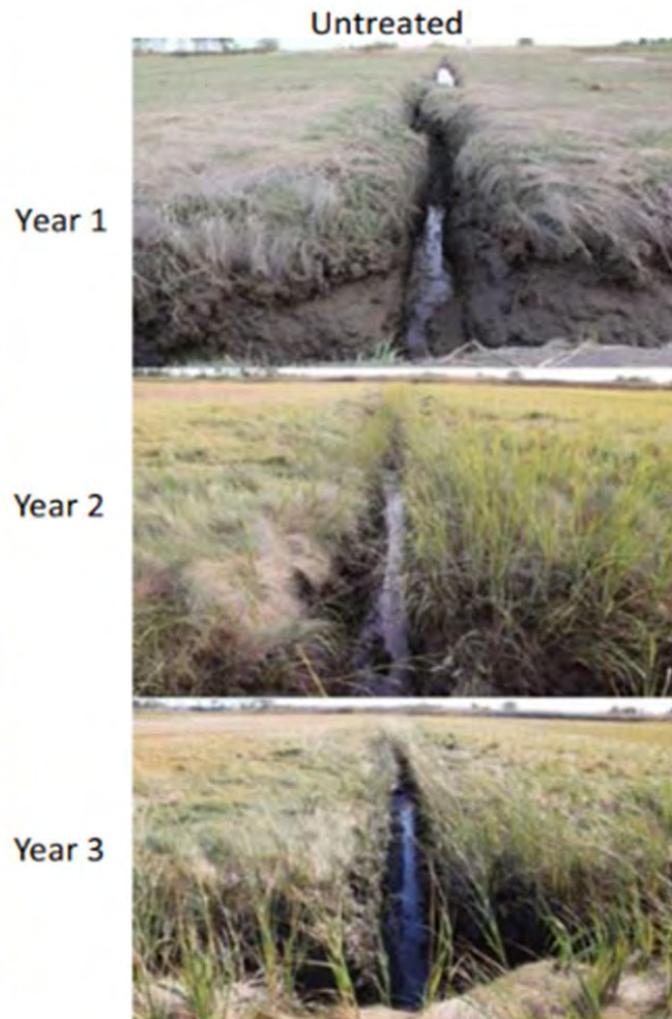
# Assisted Ditch Remediation Treated











# Next steps

- Funding
  - Pending MNRCP application
- Permitting - ongoing with MCHT and USFWS
- Summer 2026 - pre-restoration monitoring
- Fall 2026 - Fall 2030 - ditch remediation
- Winter 2026 - runnels phase one
- Winter 2027 - runnels phase two
- Summer 2027 - 2033 post-restoration monitoring + adaptive management

Activity	Cost	Existing funds
Implementation + Contingency	\$290,400	\$84,000
Staffing (USFWS, MCHT)	\$338,449	\$171,450
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$613,849</i>	<i>\$255,450</i>
<b>Remaining need</b>		<b>\$374,900</b>

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