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Project Goal

Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) protects the region's lakeshores, improves fish and wildlife habitats, provides public recreation opportunities, offers educational programs, and supports forest and water related jobs.

Brief Description

DLLT was founded in 2001 by the residents of Grand Lake Stream, Maine following grassroots conservation efforts in response to land sales and development plans in the area. Grand Lake Stream, in the heart of the Downeast Lakes region, has long been a destination for outdoor recreation, with exceptional forests, lakes, streams, rivers, and wildlife. The local economy is highly dependent upon these natural resources, which provide livelihoods for local craftsmen, guides, sporting camp owners and employees, and forest industry workers. DLLT works to conserve and manage the region's extraordinary natural resources, for current and future generations, to ensure economic opportunities, recreation access, and environmental stewardship.



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In its early days, DLLT, with assistance from the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) and the Northern Forest Alliance, negotiated an option with Wagner Timberlands to purchase 27,080 acres near Grand Lake Stream around West Grand and Fourth Machias Lakes. DLLT joined forces with NEFF for fundraising, creating the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership.

DLLT's work to conserve the Grand Lake Stream and the Downeast Lakes region has always included an interest in maintaining and creating economic opportunities. DLLT's conservation work supports guides and sporting camps by ensuring the natural resources they depend on for their livelihoods are available. DLLT also has community interests in mind when carrying out its work, ensuring that community growth is accommodated in balance with conservation.

As of today, DLLT has protected 370,000 acres of the forests, wildlife habitats, watersheds, and lakeshores in Grand Lake Stream and the Downeast Lakes Region, helping to sustain the region's economy and spectacular natural environment. DLLT manages the 33,708 acre Farm Cove Community Forest for wildlife habitat, forest products, and public recreation; it includes 71 miles of lakeshore. DLLT, as part of its West Grand Lake Community Forest Project, is now working to purchase a 21,870 acre parcel that surrounds the village of Grand Lake Stream and is adjacent to DLLT's Farm Cove Community Forest.

Lessons to Share

Early on DLLT realized that advocacy and petitions were not going to be sufficient for protecting the region's valuable natural resources. Buying and preserving land was the only way to ensure integrity of, and access to, the resources that are vital to the local economy. Large-scale fundraising was a challenge in the early days so DLLT formed a partnership with the New England Forestry Foundation, creating the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership. The partnership was a way to leverage individual conservation projects to achieve larger conservation goals. Ultimately, the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership lands combined with, and connected, more than 1.4 million acres of conservation land.

Considering, and reaching out to, all sectors has been an important fundraising strategy from the beginning. To achieve the broadest "reach," DLLT made a decision to be "apolitical" when issues arise, to allow all constituents to feel comfortable supporting and being a part of DLLT's work.

Building trust has taken time and has been at the core of DLLT's work from the start. In the beginning, relationship building was key. Initial local concerns were that the land trust would restrict public access and manage land in a way that was detrimental to the community. It took time to demonstrate that DLLT was a *community* based land trust, and that community interests mattered. Since it began, DLLT has been sensitive to, and supportive of, the economic needs of the community. Currently, the West Grand Lake Community Forest Project includes a provision to give a certain number of lots to the town, for the town to use as they choose (e.g. local housing, transfer station, cemetery). A third-party grant of \$650,000 will also be provided for the development of these lots.

Carrying out the DLLT work relies on a strong volunteer effort. With a paid staff of 4, capacity building efforts come from a volunteer structure with committees. In addition, the 9 member board is also very active; board members (who are local residents or have multi-generational ties to the area) are involved with day-to-day operations of the organization.

Paying for day to day operations can be a challenge for conservation organizations who often raise dollars for conservation projects and endowments successfully, but struggle to find general operating funds. To address this, DLLT now makes ongoing stewardship endowment funding part of any conservation campaign; these dollars are included as a percentage in the campaign budget goal.

Unlike many land trusts, DLLT is not a membership organization. Instead of spending dollars on recruiting and supporting members, DLLT relies on “supporters” for a base, saving the costs associated with managing a membership base.

DLLT has grown its education programming, in the community and in the schools, as a way to connect people with the organization. “Education” has become a much larger component of the organization than originally envisioned. It is a way to build support for conservation and the organization.



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And finally, over the years DLLT has explored innovative fundraising ideas. Working with the California Compliance Market program, which purchases carbon credits to sell to industries that need carbon offset credits, DLLT is using its fee-owned land for carbon offset credits, selling the credits to raise dollars for the organization. DLLT is the first out-of-state forest carbon compliance project for the California program. DLLT agrees to maintain the required amount of forest land to support the carbon offset for 100 years. Since DLLT also has an active timber program on its lands that helps support the organization, it must balance the carbon offset requirements with its forest management program. Currently, DLLT is harvesting about the same amount of timber with the carbon offset requirement as it would without it, so the two programs are successfully balanced.

For More Information

Website:

www.downeastlakes.org

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The Community Served: Grand Lake Stream Role in the region: Outdoor recreation hub

Total Population	109 (2010 Census)		
Median Age	55.8		
Role in Region			
	2000	2010	Difference
Total Households	76	55	-21
Family Households	49	34	-15
Nonfamily Households	27	21	-6
	1999 Median Household Income	2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates	Difference
Median Household Income	\$28,750	\$36,250	\$7,500