

Student Reflection

Catherine Fraser

Catherine Fraser, a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is an Environmental Policy major at Colby College. She interned for the Frenchman Bay Conservancy and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.



I am a rising junior Environmental Policy major at Colby College. After learning about land conservation and management in a Domestic Environmental Policy with my professor, Philip Nyhus, I was interested in interning with a land trust or some sort of urban planning organization this summer. Through Professor Nyhus, I was able to connect with Jim Levitt of the Lincoln Institute and become a part of the ALPINE Summer Institute. As a native of Minnesota, I have enjoyed spending my summer in Downeast Maine, while participating in the ALPINE Summer Institute! This summer, through the Lincoln Institute, I have been interning for the Frenchman Bay Conservancy (FBC) and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), working mainly on their Schoodic to Schoodic Whole Place Plan. The Plan envisions a corridor of conserved land from Schoodic Point to Schoodic Mountain, connecting the ocean to inland forest. If completed, the corridor would be one of the largest of its kind on the eastern seaboard and would greatly benefit wildlife, especially given the ongoing and impending threat of climate change. In 2015, FBC and MCHT received a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant to help conserve lands with significant wetland acres along the Schoodic Corridor. In the last year, important strides have been made to conserve 1,000 acres of land in the Whole Place Plan using the NAWCA funds.

This summer, my job was to help construct various conservation scenarios of a variety of parcels along the Schoodic Corridor with the remaining funds. In addition, I created a map using ArcGIS with various layers, aimed at helping FBC and MCHT to prioritize different parcels of land for conservation depending on resilience, diffuse flow, local connectedness, presence of imperiled species, etc. Before this, I had no formal GIS training, so I spent a great deal of time watching online tutorials and working with the GIS instructor at Colby to create this map. It was challenging and frustrating at times, but I am pleased with my final product and feel rewarded by my ownership of the project. I am hopeful that this map will be useful as a strategic planning tool in conserving land not only on the Schoodic Peninsula, but also throughout Maine. In addition to those projects, I also helped update a slideshow from an April 2016 conference on the Schoodic Initiative at Colby College and create a write-up detailing progress on the Schoodic Initiative for Jim Levitt to present/handout at the FBC Annual Meeting in August 2017. In updating these slides, it was amazing to see the progress (conservation of 1,000+ acres) that has been made in the last year, largely as a result of the 2015 NAWCA grant! It truly is an exciting time for land conservation in Downeast Maine.

Throughout this internship, I've really enjoyed learning about the rich history of land conservation in Downeast Maine. While perusing the Hancock County Registry of Deeds online to look at some properties of interest, I happened upon some of the original deeds the Rockefeller, Eliot, and Door families signed when conserving and donating their land back in the early 1900s. The long history of land conservation in Downeast Maine is fascinating, and I am happy that I got to play a part, however small, in conservation efforts in the region. Over the course of my internship, I really liked working with GIS,



and was continually amazed by how much data and information you can access for free on the internet. It was cool to be able to synthesize data from a variety of sources, like the Nature Conservancy, the Office of Maine GIS, and Nature's Network, into one comprehensive map. I would like to spend more time with GIS and take an actual class on it at Colby in the coming year.

Next spring, I am studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and I'm interested to see how my work this summer may inform the independent study project I will do as a part of my study abroad program. I've enjoyed learning about land conservation in Downeast Maine, but would love to learn about land conservation in another region of the world. I have been inspired by the strong connection to place that has driven many to conserve and advocate for their land. I am excited to see where my work with land conservation this summer may take me this year, whether that's continued GIS work this fall at Colby, or potential land conservation research next spring when I am studying abroad in Argentina! I am thankful to ALPINE for opening my eyes to the world of land conservation and for allowing me to explore and think deeply about my future education and career paths alongside a diverse group of young conservationists.