

Nearly 7,500 acres conserved in Aroostook County

BY AISLINN SARNACKI
BDN STAFF

Nearly 7,500 acres has recently been conserved in the town of Orient, located in southern Aroostook. The Conservation Fund announced this week. Managed as a working forest for more than a century, this newly conserved land includes one of the largest white-tailed deer wintering areas in the region, as well as key waterfowl habitat and miles of undeveloped shoreline on scenic lakes and brooks.

After years of planning, the

land has been transferred from The Conservation Fund to the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. The land, located on the international border, will continue to be sustainably harvested for timber while being managed in a way that protects important wildlife habitats. The property also will be open to a wide variety of public recreation.

Permanently conserving this land is the first big step in a larger project called the East Grand Lake Watershed Initiative, a multiphase initiative to protect more than 12,000 acres and 30 miles of

undeveloped shoreline on five lakes in the area, including 21 miles on East Grand Lake alone. "This is a large project that is

The land will be sustainably harvested for timber while being managed in a way that protects important wildlife habitats

really trying to integrate community and economic needs with conservation and environmental needs," said Tom Duffus, vice

president and Northeast representative for The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit organization that has worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 7.5 million acres of land.

The Conservation Fund purchased the land in Orient and an additional 4,520 acres in the Town of Weston from Wagner Forest Management in 2011 through its Working Forest Fund, but it wasn't until March of this year that Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands had the necessary funding to purchase the land from The Conservation Fund.

"It took that amount of time in order to generate the funding," Duffus explained. "That's one of the services we provide at The Conservation Fund. When parcels that are important to conservation are available, we can become the temporary owner and buy the time to work through the details of community needs and interests and find public and private funding sources."

The conserved land in Orient is in two parcels: 5,992 acres in north Orient, stretching to the shore of North Lake and tracing

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Jeff Owen (left) waits for kids to get ready before paddling into the faster current of the Stillwater River in Orono on Wednesday. Owen teaches wildwater kayaking and canoeing skills to children in the area.

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Thrills and spills

Club paddlers taste adventure with wildwater canoeing

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

With just two days of practice in a narrow, tippy, wildwater canoe, 15-year-old Elias Veilleux took a major step forward Wednesday afternoon: He graduated to an even more slender, unstable boat.

"Get your paddle in the water," said Jeff Owen, who coaches the junior and under-23 wildwater teams of the Maine Canoe and Kayak Racing Organization. "Be slow. Methodical."

The current was slow on the Stillwater River, but before long, Owen was fishing Veilleux's boat out of the water during the 90-minute workout. And he wouldn't be alone. Over the course of an hour and a half, several teammates would end up swimming instead of paddling.

Their coach patiently offered advice and chased down capsized boats and bobbing paddlers to offer assistance.

"It was a solid month [before a previous



Jeff Owen arrives to assist Elias Veilleux, 15, after his wildwater canoe tipped over while practicing on the Stillwater River in Orono on Wednesday.

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student and I] could get into the boats on our own and paddle them for a ways without flipping them over," Owen confides, recalling his introduction to wildwater boats just three years ago. "And that was just paddling on flatwater."

Welcome to the wonderful (and often wet) world of wildwater canoeing.

Not your average craft

A non-paddling observer would look at the

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11-year-old gets hunting grand slam

After Jeffery Martin experienced a frustrating bear season in 2014, Scott Martin wondered if his son would want to take part in the next year's hunt.

"The year he turned 10, he spent probably close to 25 hours in the bear stand with no luck," the Patten man said. "He put a lot of time in that first year. But we never saw a bear when we were sitting in the blind."

Jeffery, 11, laughs at the memory.

"I wanted to go out [in 2015], but I didn't really, really want to go out," he said.

But he did. One key reason: By that point, he was officially chasing an elusive hunting "grand slam," and he was trying to bag the state's four wild game animals — wild turkey, bear, moose and deer — in the same season.

The bear he shot on the second-to-last day of the season filled the second piece of the grand slam. He bagged a moose just four days later.

And on youth deer day, he and his dad traveled to Kenduskeag and Jeffery completed his slam.

Scott Martin, 43, said he's never completed a grand slam of his own — he's never shot a bear — but he did grow up loving the outdoors and hunting.

And the duo agree on the exact day they began focusing on completing the grand slam.

"He was 10 when he shot the turkey and turned 11 a month later," Martin said. "Before he turned 11, I got drawn for a moose permit. And about the time we got the moose permit, we started thinking something [special] might happen."

While tenacious and skilled hunters may succeed at filling their turkey, bear and deer tags, it takes a lot of luck to bag a moose: If your name isn't drawn in the moose permit lottery, you can't participate.

Well, that's almost the case.

Jeffery was listed as his dad's subpermittee, and either of the two would be allowed to shoot a moose.

"When I got drawn for the permit, there was no question who was going to do the shooting," Scott Martin said.

Martin shot his first moose at about Jeffery's age, after his own father took him along as the subpermittee.

Jeffery said all of the hunts were exciting, but he loved the moose hunt best.

"I really like the part where we would call and then we'd hear a call back, and [the moose] would come close to coming out," he said.

During the deer hunt, Scott Martin took his son south to Kenduskeag, knowing that doing so would improve his son's odds for two reasons. First, there are more deer in central Maine than there are in Patten. And second, hunting in Kenduskeag on Youth Deer Day meant Jeffery also would be allowed to target antlerless deer if he chose to do so; no "doe permits" were allotted in the zone closer to their home, so he would have been targeting only bucks if they'd stayed in Patten.

Scott Martin said his son's commitment to hunting has impressed him.

"I enjoy being in the outdoors, and I'm real proud of his dedication," he said. "I was real happy to see that he was able to see the reward of putting the time in on the bear stand."

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JOHN HOLYOKE

1-Minute Hike: Range Pond State Park

Difficulty: Easy. Much of the park is wheelchair accessible, and the park's 1-mile nature trail is easy enough for young children.

Watch the video
bangordailynews.com

How to get there: The park is located off Empire Road in Poland. From Interstate 95, take Exit 75 and drive south on Route 202 for 1 mile, passing Crossroads Market and Southern Maine Auto Auction, and turn right onto Route 122 (Poland Spring Road). Drive 0.8 mile to a stop sign and turn left onto Route 122 (Hotel Road). Drive 3 miles and turn right onto Empire Road. Drive 0.7 mile and turn left onto State Park Road, which is marked with a large sign for Range Pond State

Park. Drive about half a mile to the main parking area for the park, stopping at an entrance booth on the way to pay admission.

Information: Featuring wide sandy beaches on the scenic Lower Range Pond, Range Pond State Park has long been a popular place for the public to enjoy watersports, picnicking, sunbathing and fishing. And in recent years, the park has expanded its network of walking and biking trails and started opening its gates year-round to offer a wider

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AISLINN SARNACKI



A gull floats near the shore of Lower Range Pond in Range Pond State Park in late April.

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