



# SHORELINES

## TRUSTING THE TIME IT TAKES

*“As land stewards, we are only a brief part of a much longer story, learning when to intervene and when to step back in an ongoing effort to foster a resilient future.”*

– Eli Forman, IHT Land Steward

Photo by Dan Rajter

# SLOW ROOTS, STRONG FUTURES

What Beach Grass Teaches Us About Learning Over Time  
with Environmental Education



**In a bright, chilly April morning, local students knelt in the sands of Reach Beach, tucking slender shoots of beach grass into the Earth. The work was simple, yet carries forth a vision over ten years in the making!**

Since 2014, local seventh graders have been helping to protect beach grass at Causeway Beach, while learning how small, steady acts of care can restore entire shorelines. With the help of volunteers, this restoration now extends to Reach Beach at Gray's Cove.

Beach grass is one of Deer Isle-Stonington's unsung heroes. Its roots stretch outward beneath the surface - *sometimes more than ten feet in a season* - forming a buried network that slows blowing sand, captures what would otherwise be lost, and gradually builds the shoreline higher.

What appears fragile is, in truth, a species built for patience, persistence, and long-term resilience. IHT's Environmental Education program grows in much the same way: slowly, through hands-on experience and repeated return.

**Your support is the reason these rhythms of care continue.** You make it possible for young people in this community to learn with their hands and senses, to witness how the land responds to attention over time, and to understand their role in shaping a resilient coastline.



Deer Isle - Stonington High School Students help prepare the sand for new Beach Grass plantings.

IHT Environmental Educator, Martha Bell, reflects, *“During the planting process, students think deeper about changing weather patterns, coastal geology, plant adaptations and shoreline resilience - it connects them to the place.”*

**Because of you, students don’t just learn about coastal resilience - they actively participate in building it.**

Just as beach grass holds the sand through shifting tides, long-term educational commitment holds a community steady. When you support our programs, you’re planting roots - quietly, powerfully - that will strengthen our shores and our students for years to come.



## VISIT OUR BEACH GRASS PROJECTS

**Causeway Beach:** From the Deer Isle bridge, drive south on Route 15 for 1.8 miles, crossing the Causeway to the preserve entrance on the right, opposite Scott’s Landing Preserve.

**Reach Beach at Gray’s Cove:** From the Deer Isle Causeway, drive South .8 miles. Then turn left onto Reach Rd. Continue nearly 4 miles until Reach Rd becomes Oak Point Road. Reach Beach and parking will be on your left.

# HONORING THE ISLAND

Reflections on Change, Continuity, & Repair  
in Conversation with Captain Garrett Aldrich

**S**horelines shift, forests regrow, and ecosystems respond to a warming climate. Generations learn - again and again - how to belong. Deer Isle, like all land, is always changing. Yet for those who have lived here their whole lives, the pace and shape of that change feels newly visible.

In conversation with Garrett Aldrich, a lifelong islander and Captain of the Isle au Haut Mail Boat, a clear ethic emerges: care begins with listening. Aldrich's ties to the island run deep - on both sides of his family, with great-great-grandparents from Isle au Haut and a grandfather who arrived from Boston in the early 1900s.

He speaks of a childhood shaped by freedom of movement - exploring shorelines, moving by boat from island to island, climbing trees and building forts in the woods. *"Those opportunities mattered,"* he reflects. *"In some places, kids just don't have that access."*

He has also witnessed what has been lost. Places that once felt abundant and open have been developed; land that was wild is now parceled and built upon. *“Change”, Aldrich notes, “was inevitable unless collective decisions had been made long ago”*. Still, he believes in the value of slowing down to observe what works over the long haul and what does not.

Some changes give him hope. Lands like the Lily Pond and Causeway Beach, once privately held, were protected because supporters of IHT had the foresight to invest for the future. Trails that families once walked informally now remain accessible to all. *“Those places hold people’s memories,” Aldrich says. “They don’t have to be there if no one is thinking ahead.”*

This care must also include truth-telling. Deer Isle is the homeland of Wabanaki Indigenous peoples. The land was taken from those who knew its rhythms for millennia. Stewardship today asks not only for conservation, but for repair through education, collaboration, and generosity. *“This land wasn’t ours to take. I have no problem seeing what areas would be valuable to them, sharing, and finally supporting them and their culture.”*

Deer Isle has endured by resisting easy transformation. It remains a working harbor, shaped by long winters and honest labor - conditions that quietly insist on commitment. Change will continue, but when we trust the time it takes by listening before acting and investing with patience, we choose a future rooted in continuity, care, and responsibility.

***Aldrich shares, “People are looking for the truth - the honest hearing of what this place is and what it has been for a long time. I am glad we still have that identity and hope we will for a long time.”***

# A BRIEF PART IN A LONG STORY

## On Land Stewardship

By Eli Forman, IHT Land Steward



**P**eople often ask me what I do for work, and when I reply, “I’m a Land Steward,” I’m usually met with a blank stare and the follow-up question, “What’s that?”

I struggle to explain, because land stewardship encompasses many related roles. Some days I’m a carpenter or logger, others a geospatial analyst, forester, or teacher. One of my favorite roles, though, is that of an environmental historian.

Many of the places I steward today look like forests, but they still carry the imprint of their past as agricultural fields from the turn of the last century. The dense, even-aged stands that have grown back are signs of land still in transition, shaped by choices made generations ago. Managing these forests is challenging, especially as climate change complicates what “healthy” forest development looks like.

**In some areas, stewardship means taking small, deliberate actions—such as thinning dense balsam fir to give slower-growing red spruce the light and space it needs to thrive. These decisions are made with decades in mind, not quick results.**

I’ll venture what may be an unpopular opinion here: winter, with all its chill and dark, is my *favorite season*. I enjoy summer’s long afternoons and fall’s brilliance (mud season we could all do without), but nothing compares to a bright February morning in the forest.

Winter reveals the land's underlying structure—*cold snow crunching underfoot, bare trees against an impossibly blue sky, and the deep quiet of fresh snowfall.* In that stillness, it's easier to sense the long timelines at work and to remember that forests move at their own pace.

In the coming year, we hope to take a hard look at the forests we care for. **With your ongoing support and the help of a grant-funded community tree steward in 2026, we plan to develop long-term forest management plans for several properties.** In some areas this may mean thinning dense fir thickets, or removing monocultures like Norway maple to create a more diverse species mix.

Though grounded in careful inventories and ecological knowledge, these plans are also acts of trust—trusting both what we know and the limits of that knowledge, and trusting the time it takes for our actions to bear fruit.

**Rarely will we see the full impact of our work. As land stewards, we are only a brief part of a much longer story, learning when to intervene and when to step back in an ongoing effort to foster a resilient future.**



## Behind Every Trail You Love is a Devoted Team.

Each Tuesday, a generous group of volunteers roll up their sleeves to keep our trails open, our bridges sturdy, and our shorelines cared for. With Conservation Director, Alex Drenga, and Land Steward, Eli Forman, leading the way, this team is at the heart of our stewardship efforts. Interested in joining them? Email us at [iht@islandheritagetrust.org](mailto:iht@islandheritagetrust.org)





Island Heritage Trust  
P.O. Box 42  
Deer Isle, Maine 04627

Photo by Dan Rajter

It may be that when we no longer know what to do,  
we have come to our real work  
and when we no longer know which way to go,  
we have begun our real journey.  
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.  
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

*Wendell Berry*

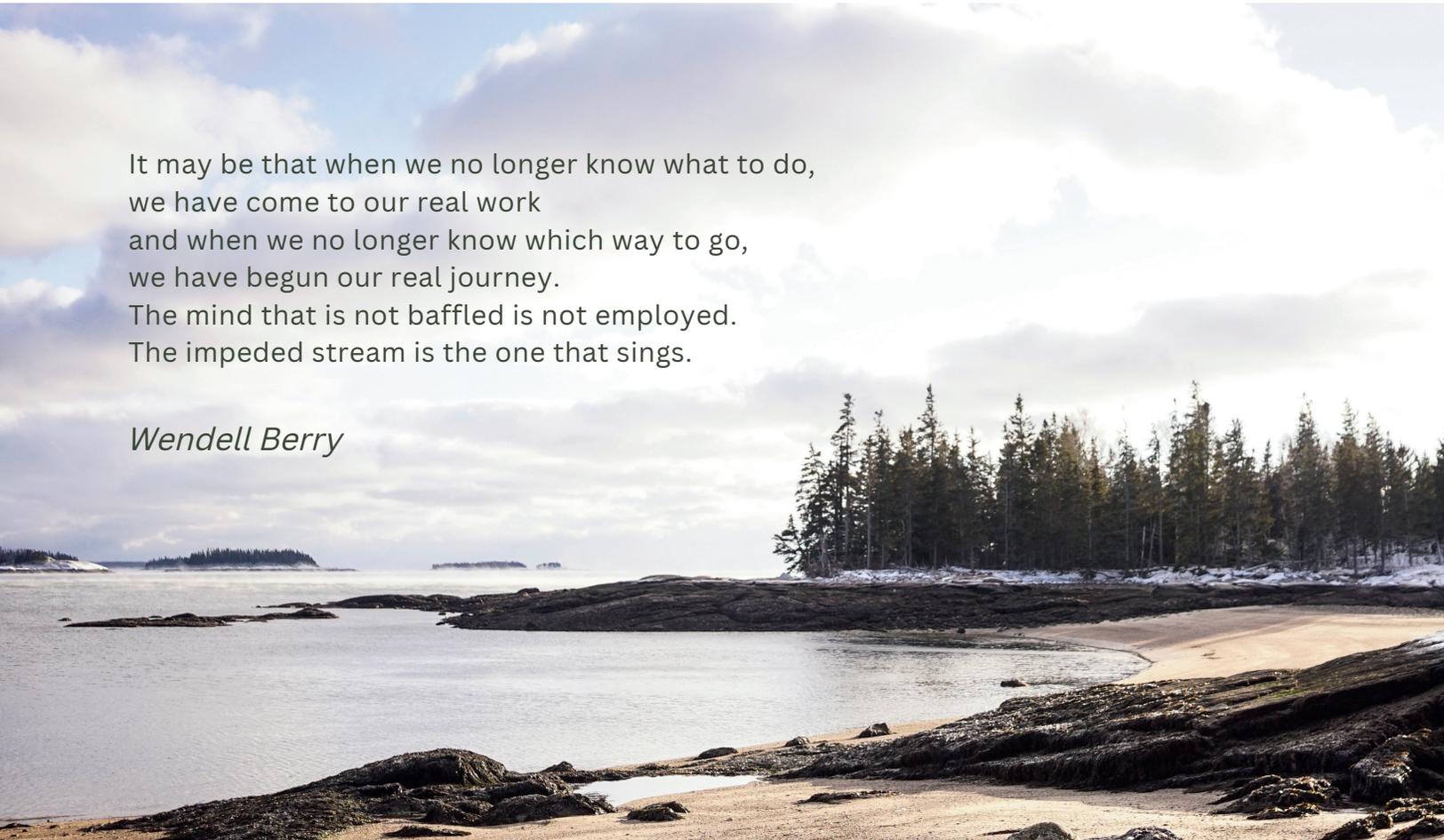


Photo by Dan Rajter

WWW.ISLANDHERITAGETRUST.ORG  
@ISLANDHERITAGETRUST