



# **2023 Review & Looking Ahead: Highlights, Challenges & Goals**



# Agenda

**Annual Meeting, Tuesday, January 9, 2024**

- Welcome & Introductions: Susan White, President
- Slate of Board & Officers: Janet Williams, Secretary
- Introduce Advisory Group Members: Janet Williams, Secretary
- 2024 Budget: Jim Gilbert, Treasurer
- 2023 Review & Looking Ahead: Highlights, Challenges & Goals





# Slate of Board & Officers

**Annual Meeting, Tuesday, January 9, 2024**

- **President:** Susan K. White, Hampden
- **Vice President:** Rolf Olsen, Searsport
- **Secretary:** Janet Williams, Searsport
- **Treasurer:** Jim Gilbert, Winterport
- Greg Biddinger, Belfast
- Steve Bulloch, Searsport
- Rob Burke, Newburgh
- Sandi Cirillo, Searsport
- David Italiaander, Searsport
- Jill Kulbe, Searsport
- Robert E. Ramsdell (Emeritus), Brunswick





# Advisory Group

**Annual Meeting, Tuesday, January 9, 2024**

- Mayo Bulloch, Searsport
- Cloe Chunn, Swanville
- Derek Dunbar, Searsport
- Josh Goldstein, Belfast
- Timothy Haugh, Brewer
- Stephene Kelley, Searsport
- Marjorie Knuuti, Searsport
- Bill Kulbe, Searsport
- Susannah Magers, Searsport
- Tom Mullin, Richmond
- Bay Nadeau, Searsport





# Proposed 2024 Budget

Income		Expenses	
Donations-Business	\$8,500	Total General Operating Expenses	\$2,880
Donations-Individual	\$15,000	Total Marketing Expenses	\$310
Donations-Municipal	\$3,050	Total Postage	\$215
Fundraising Events	\$2,600	Total Printing Expenses	\$1,040
Fundraising Misc.	\$60	Total Program Expenses	\$30,200
Total Fundraising	\$29,210	Total Trail/Island Maintenance	\$3,400
Total Grants	\$10,000		
Total Other Income	\$750		
Total Income	\$39,960	Total Expenses	\$38,045
		Net Operating Income	\$1,915



# The Year in Review

## In 2023, FOSI...

- Had significant increases in individual and business members' donations
- Introduced more people to the island, even in winter
- Collaborated with numerous new and old community partners, and added a student representative to our Advisory Group
- Continued to help raise awareness about the proposed offshore wind port project
- Worked tirelessly to maintain and improve accessibility to the island, clearing debris after large storms and building new and improved stairs to the eastern beach





# Educational Programs

- In 2023, FOSI continued to offer many different types of programs to appeal to people of all ages and abilities. We hosted a couple of remote virtual learning events in the winter months, but leaned more toward in-person offerings in other months. For Science Squad, we followed a hybrid model, offering activity kits and in-person events. We installed three self-guided StoryWalks on the island between June-September.
- Over the course of 2023, we offered 15 public programs (a combination of in-person on Sears Island, at the Searsport Community Center, and Zoom presentations), with over 1,100 participants.





# In-Person Programs

- Our in-person programs geared toward adults included a forest therapy walk, early morning birding, flower printing, a talk on monarch research, fern identification, and the geology of Sears Island.
- For families, we also hosted Earth Connections, a Solstice Traditions & Crafting Party, a Fling into Fall Block Party, an All Ages Craft Gathering, and helped with the Kids Fun Run on Sears Island.





# Forest Therapy Walk

with Joanne Moesswilde ANFT Forest Therapy Guide




**April 8, 9:45 am - 12:00 pm on Sears Island**  
To register, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

Friends of Sears Island Presents

# Fern Identification Walk

with Karen Johnson Maine Master Naturalist



Friends of Sears Island is hosting a

# Block Party at Fling into Fall

at Mermaid Plaza in Searsport

**October 7**  
11 am - 2 pm

JOIN US FOR:

- Mini pumpkin painting
- Giant bubbles
- Family friendly dance music
- Grilled cheese, tomato soup, chips, hot chocolate and cider available for a suggested donation to



# A SEARS ISLAND FLOWER PRINTING WORKSHOP

with fiber artist Sandi Cirillo



**JULY 19, 4PM - 6PM**

- Make a flower tote bag!

\$3 materials fee per person

BELFAST BAY WATERSHED COALITION + FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENT

# World Migratory Bird Day

Birding Walk on Sears Island with Cloe Chunn



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**Searsport Recreation Department**  
Invites you to the



# 2023 Kids Fun Run

**August the 19th 10:00 am on Sears Island**

Annual Fun-filled 1K races  
100 meter dashes

T-shirts, prizes and



**August 1**

# MONARCH BUTTERFLY NATURE WALK

with Wesley Hutchins

Friends of Sears Island invites you to an

# All Ages Craft Gathering

at the Searsport Community Building

**Sunday, November 12, 2:00 - 4:00 pm**

Make a paper lantern, felted friendship bracelets, and a



# Earth Connections Program for Kids

A Science Squad program for children ages 6-12 on Sears Island



**April 26, 4pm**

Register by emailing [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND & CARVER MEMORIAL LIBRARY PRESENT

# Summer Solstice Traditions & Crafting Party

**MAY 31 4-5:30pm**




At Carver Memorial Library, for ages 6-12 with an accompanying adult  
To register, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

COASTAL MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND

The Coastal Mountains Nature Program is a series of **free** guided hikes led by Maine-based naturalists!

# Geology of Sears Island

**10:00AM Saturday, October 7th Sears Island**

**Steve Norton**, Professor Emeritus of Earth and Climate Sciences at UMaine, will lead us on an exploration of the past 50 million years of Midcoast Maine's geological history by exploring the rocks and sediment of Sears Island. This walk is free and open to all! Please leave dogs at home. **Registration is required!**

Call 207.236.7091 or contact [info@coastalmountains.org](mailto:info@coastalmountains.org) to register or learn more!
































# Virtual Programs

- Virtual programs continued to be an excellent way to reach our audience, particularly in the colder months. We offered presentations on winter hiking and life in tide pools.

Friends of Sears Island & Carver Memorial Library Present

## Winter Hiking in Midcoast Maine

with Mish Sommers of Happier Outside




**March 8 at 6:30pm via Zoom**

FMI visit [friendsofsearsisland.org](http://friendsofsearsisland.org) or [carverlibrary.org](http://carverlibrary.org)

Friends of Sears Island & Carver Memorial Library Present

## Life in Tide Pools

with Naturalist Sandra Mitchell



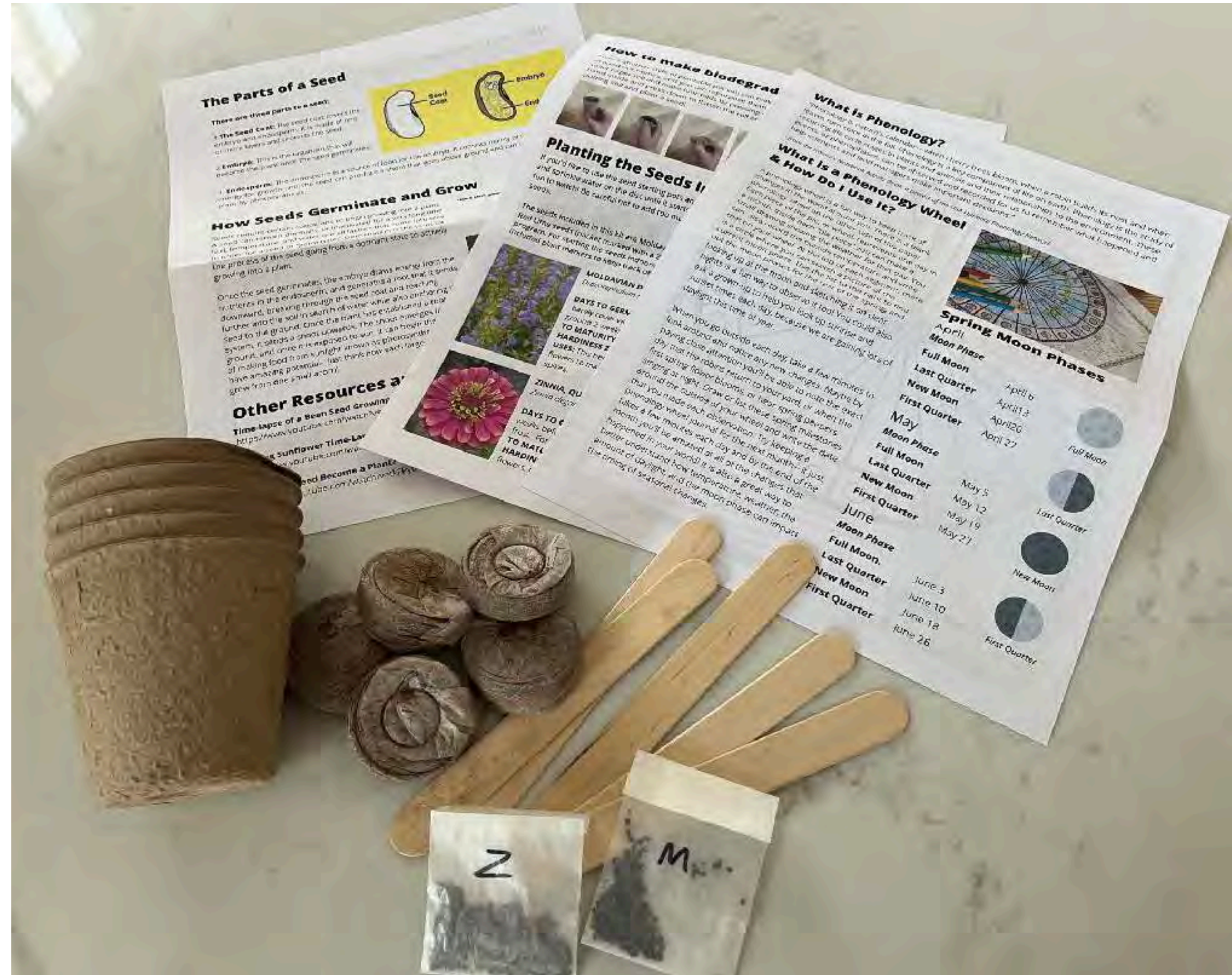
**March 29 at 6:30pm via Zoom**

FMI visit [friendsofsearsisland.org](http://friendsofsearsisland.org) or [carverlibrary.org](http://carverlibrary.org)



# Activity Kit Program

- We created 156 activity kits for families, focused on four different themes, including “Freeze the Day,” “Seeds, Soil, Spring!,” “Summer Fun Challenge,” and “Autumn Activity Kits.”
- These continued to be very popular and a great way for families to pick up nature-based educational materials to learn together at home at their leisure.



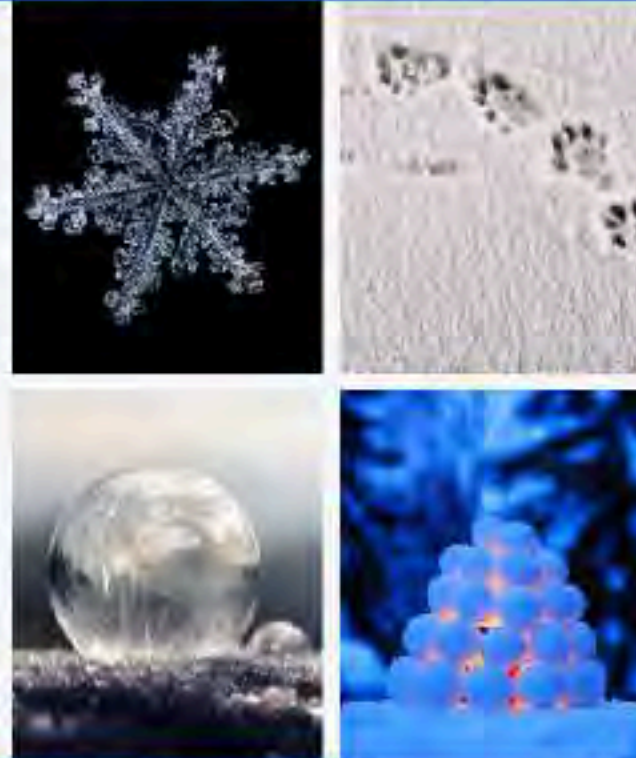


FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

## Freeze the Day!

A Science Squad Grab-and-go Activity Kit for Kids

There is so much fun to be had in winter and lots of cool things you can do with snow and ice! Our January activity kit includes materials to have plenty of frozen fun. Make paper snowflakes, beautiful frozen bubbles, ice lanterns, and practice tracking animals in the snow. The kit also includes a small magnifying glass and black paper to help your child examine snowflakes, as well as handouts on how they form, project instructions, ideas for family fun in the snow, and more!



For kids ages 5-12. To reserve a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)



FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

## Seeds, Soil, Spring!

A Science Squad Grab-and-Go Activity Kit for Kids

Celebrate the beginning of spring and learn about starting seeds, garden planning, and how to track important seasonal changes in nature! This activity kit will include a packet of flower seeds, small peat pots and soil discs, and popsicle stick plant markers to start seedlings indoors. A phenology wheel (for journaling about seasonal changes) and a garden planning worksheet will be included as well as project instructions.



For kids ages 5-12. To request a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)



## Summer Fun Challenge Activity Kit

Get outdoors and make the most of your summer!

This kit is designed to encourage kids to make the most of their summer through a variety of enriching outdoor experiences. It is geared toward children ages 5 - 12.

**Includes:**

- A summer bucket list journal packed with ideas of things to do, writing prompts, and areas for drawing and journaling. The activity journal will include stickers to place next to each activity item once completed.
- Materials and instructions for a sun printing art project will also be included as a way to make something beautiful with natural objects and sunlight!



Register by emailing [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)

Activity kits can be picked up at the end of our family nature program on Sears Island on July 20, or at Carver Memorial Library from July 20 - 31.

FRIENDS OF SEARS ISLAND PRESENTS:

## Autumn Activity Kit

A Science Squad Grab-and-Go Activity Kit for Kids

Autumn is here, and the leaves are beginning to change color as the weather becomes cooler and the days shorter. Embrace the new season by collecting some colorful leaves to bring indoors as a decoration! This activity kit will include materials to make a preserved leaf mobile: wax to dip your leaf collection in, thread, twine, and a wooden hoop to hang them on. In the kit you'll also find project instructions and a leaf identification printout to help you determine the types of leaves you're collecting!



For kids ages 5-12. To request a free kit, email [outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org](mailto:outreach@friendsofsearsisland.org)



# StoryWalks

- We offered three StoryWalks on Sears Island in partnership with Carver Memorial Library in 2023, from June to September.

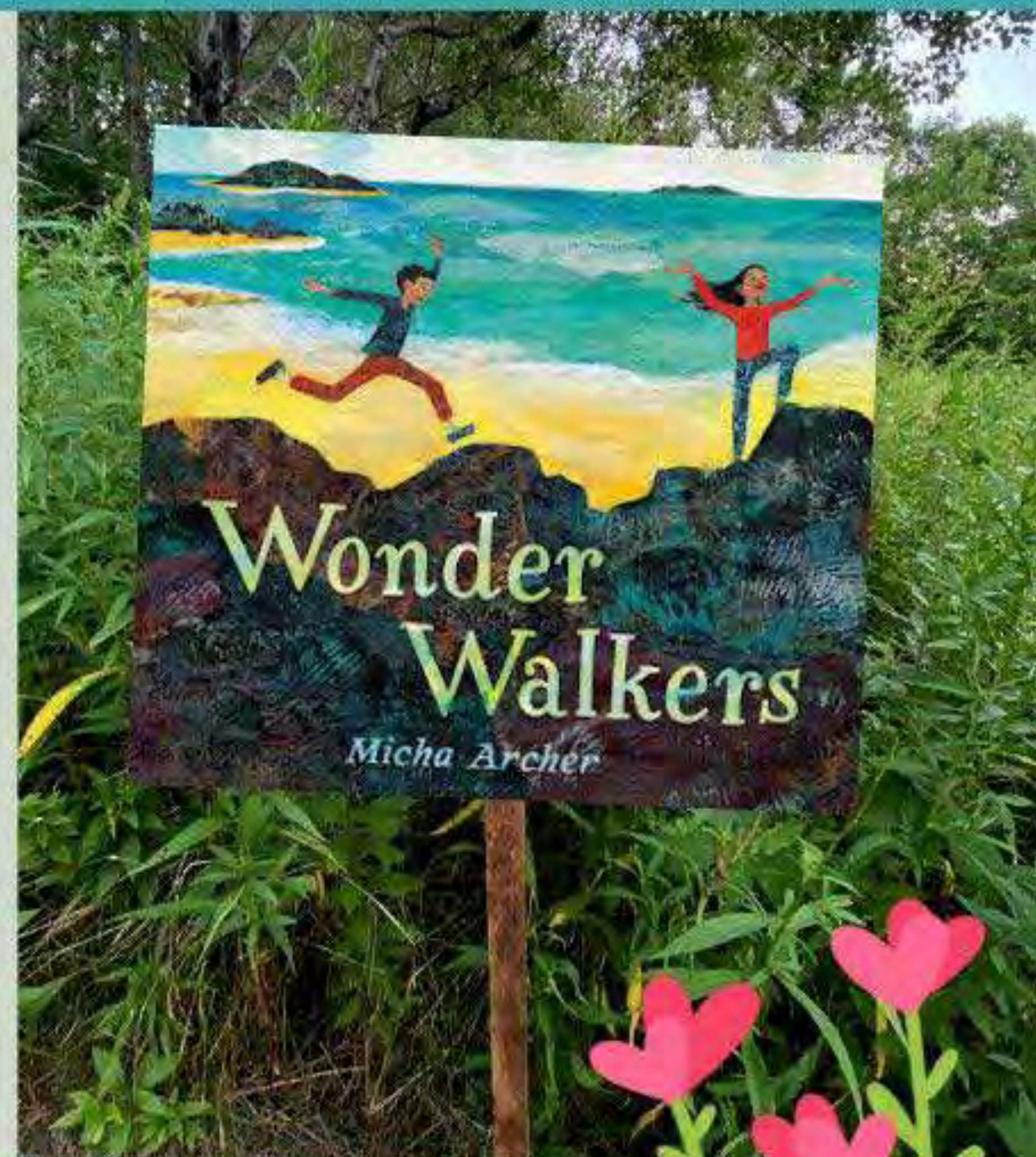




# Check out our StoryWalk® on Sears Island!

From June 15th- July 20th, you can read a book while you hike on the Homestead Trail! Our featured story is Wonder Walkers, by Micha Archer. You'll enjoy beautiful illustrations and thought provoking questions about the earth that will invite you to examine the wonders that can be found all around by taking a closer look with a curious mind.

*This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and the Carver Memorial Library*



FRIENDSOFSEARISLAND.ORG  
CARVERLIBRARY.ORG

## Check out our StoryWalk® on Sears Island!

From July 20th-August 24th, you can read a book while you hike on the Homestead Trail! Our featured story is You Are Never Alone, by Elin Kelsey. You'll enjoy beautiful diorama illustrations by Soyeon Kim and learn more about the interconnectedness between humans and nature, all while exploring Sears Island!

*This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and the Carver Memorial Library*



FRIENDSOFSEARISLAND.ORG  
CARVERLIBRARY.ORG

## Check out our StoryWalk® on Sears Island!

From August 25th - September 25th, you can read a book while you hike on the Homestead Trail! Our featured story is Hector Fox and the Giant Quest, by Astrid Sheckels. You'll enjoy the detailed illustrations and exploring Sears Island as you follow a group of woodland friends on a quest to discover a giant living in the marsh!

*This project is a collaboration between Friends of Sears Island and the Carver Memorial Library*



FRIENDSOFSEARISLAND.ORG  
CARVERLIBRARY.ORG



# Solstice Celebrations

- Successful summer and winter solstice celebrations were a resounding highlight of 2023. Both the summer and winter solstice celebrations continue to grow in the number of attendees, while also evolving into more dynamic events with many community partners and dedicated volunteers.
- Nearly 300 people attended the summer solstice celebration in June and roughly 250 or more attended the winter solstice event in December.
- Partners in the summer were Carver Memorial Library, the Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport High School students, and local food trucks.
- On the winter solstice, FOSI partnered with the Belfast Free Library, With Breath Puppetry, and a local food truck. Donations were collected for the Congregational Methodist Food Cupboard in Searsport.







# Summer Solstice by the Sea

June 21, 2023









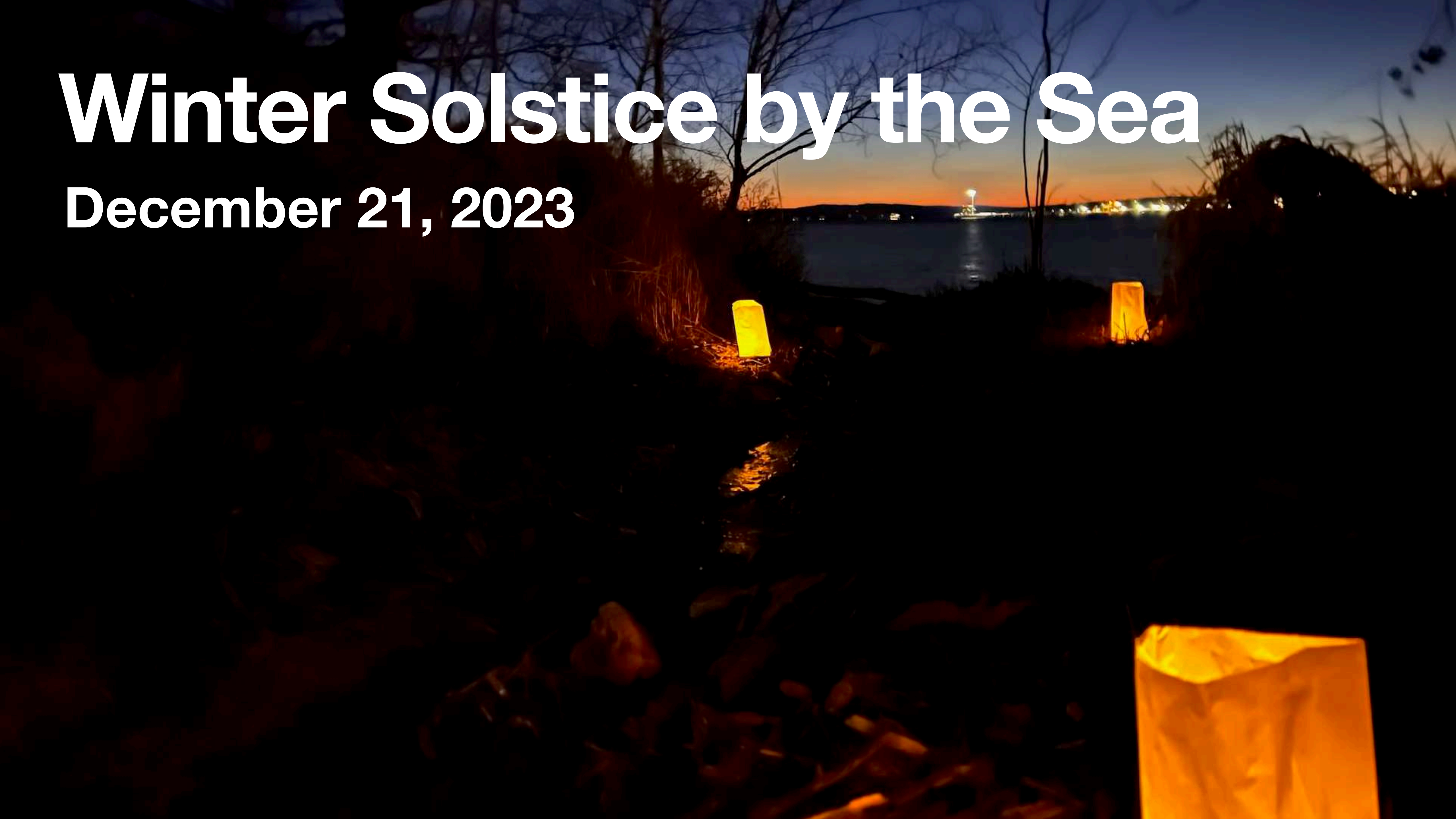




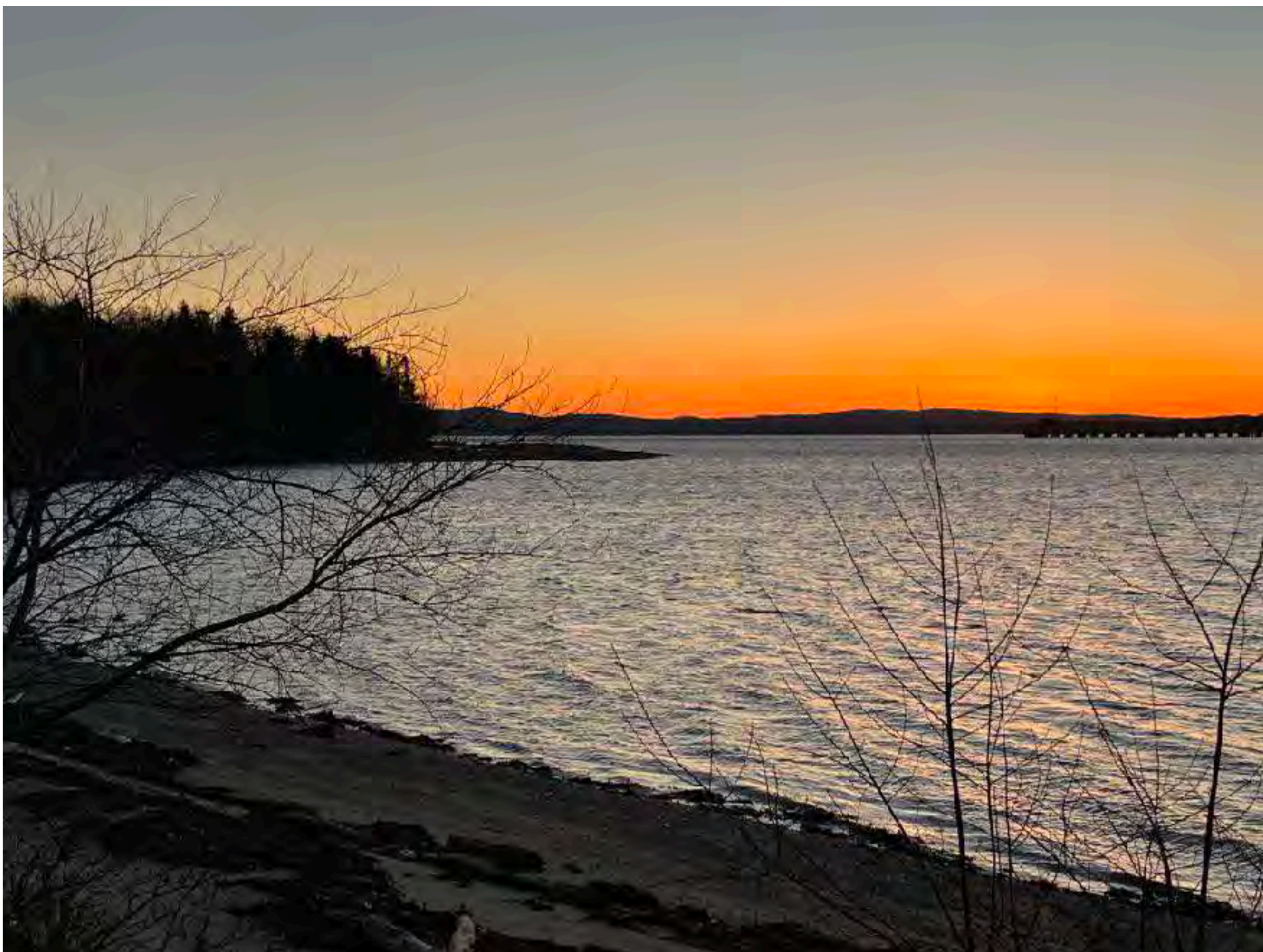


# Winter Solstice by the Sea

December 21, 2023





















# Website, Social Media, Technology

- We saw a big increase in followers to both our Facebook and Instagram accounts. In all, we reached nearly 54,000 people.
- Our email subscriber list also continues to grow.
- Excellent reviews continue to be posted on our “Google for Business” profile page.
- Website is very popular, with plans to add new galleries of flora and fauna.





# Community Collaborations

Year after year, FOSI continues to strengthen our community partnerships and find dynamic new ways to work together. In 2023, FOSI worked closely with:

- Carver Memorial Library
- Belfast Free Library
- Searsport Recreation Department
- Penobscot Marine Museum
- Congregational Methodist Food Cupboard
- Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition
- Coastal Mountains Land Trust
- With Breath Puppetry
- The Town of Searsport
- Searsport High School students





# Wind Port Updates

Sears Island appears to be a likely choice



What a “marshaling port” might look like



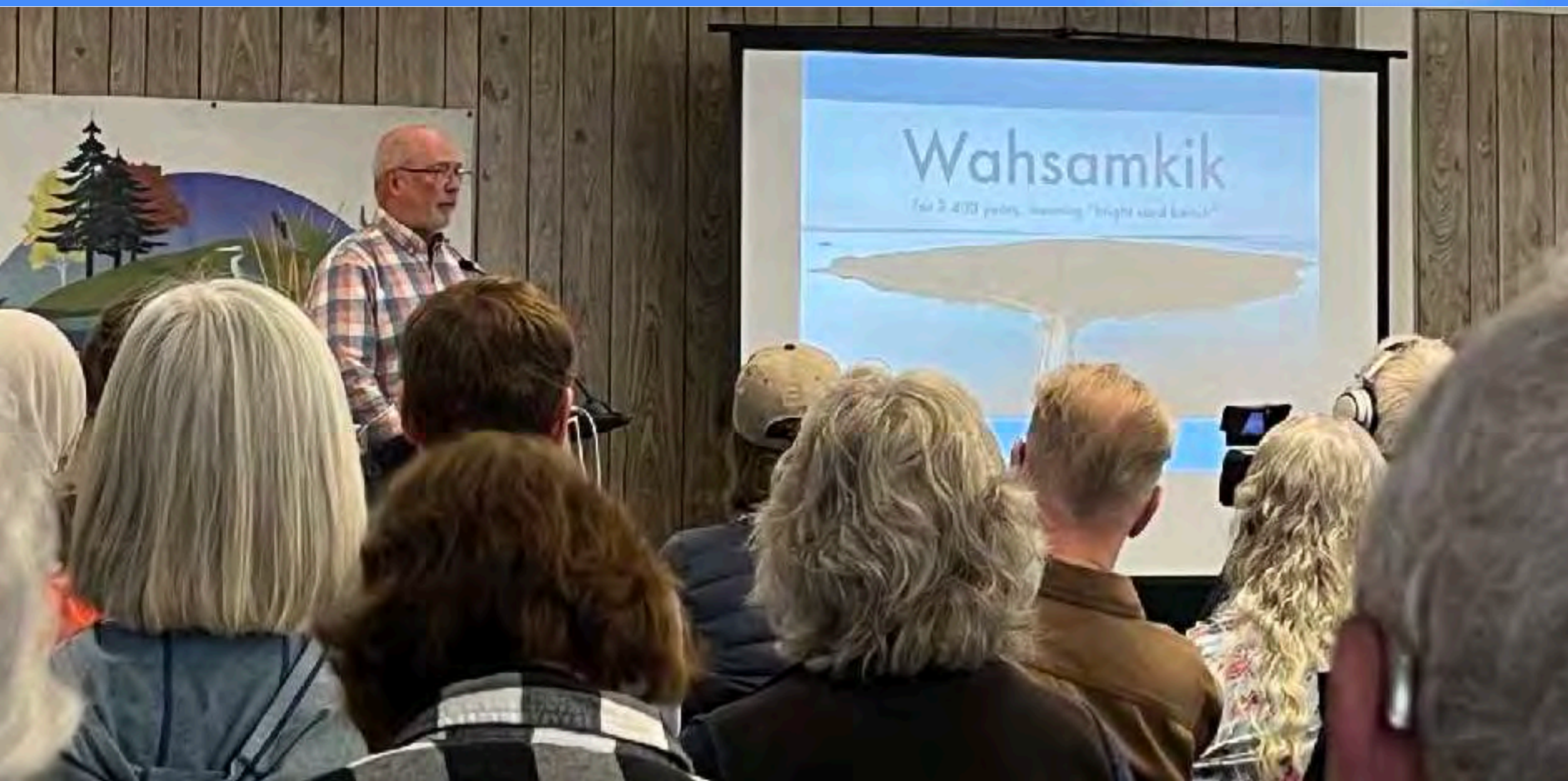


# A Wind Port for Searsport?



## Saturday, May 20

Doors open at 9:30 a.m. & Presentations 10:00-Noon  
Searsport Community Center • 42 Prospect St., Searsport

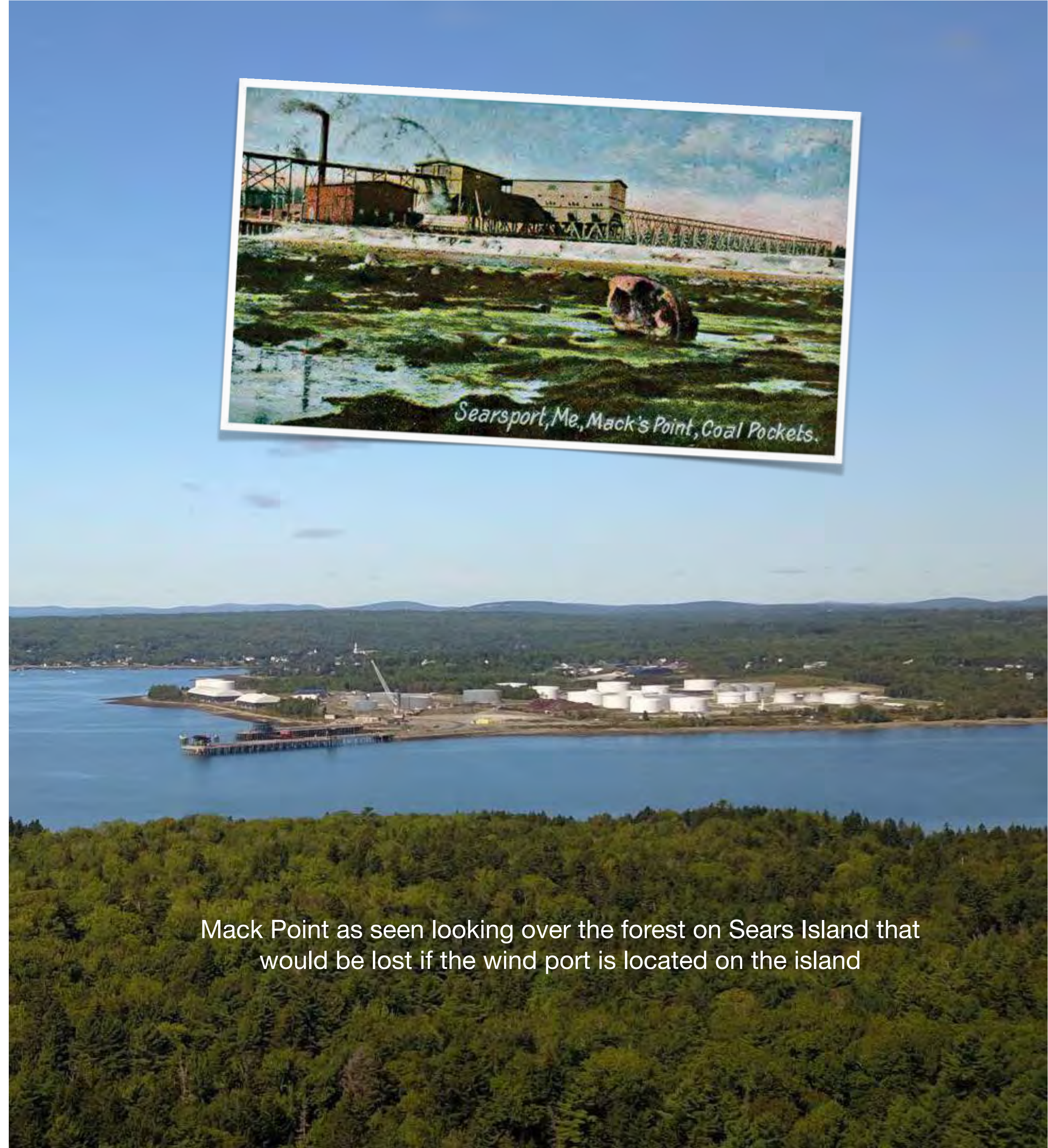




# Wind Port

## Mack Point makes the most sense

- An industrial site for more than 100 years
- Land is available
- Repurposing “brownfield” area to build renewable energy capability
- Forest & marine habitat on Sears Island remain intact



Mack Point as seen looking over the forest on Sears Island that would be lost if the wind port is located on the island



# Trails Report

We are fortunate to have a dedicated group of trail maintenance volunteers who do their best to keep them safe and in good condition. FOSI maintains eight major trails and four shorter connector trails. Over the past year, our crew:

- Completed installation of new bog bridges on the very wet sections of the Southern Shore Trail
- Improved the existing bog bridges on the Homestead Trail
- Built a connector trail between the farmhouse foundation on the Homestead Trail and the eastern shore beach





# Trails Report

- Removed invasive Asiatic Bittersweet vine found along the connector trail previously mentioned
- Added trail signs, notably on some of the connector trails
- Cut fallen trees and branches; mowed herbaceous vegetation that partially or completely blocked trails
- Mowed along the two existing paved and dirt roads to discourage encroaching vegetation
- Bush-hogged about 1 acre of old fields to maintain pollinator habitat, especially for monarch butterflies









# Volunteer Report

## Volunteers are the backbone of FOSI

- The FOSI Board and Advisory Group manage and administer FOSI, update our website, coordinate community workshops, and staff fundraising events. They also maintain the trails and make signs, lead guided nature walks, and help with on-island programs.
- Volunteers reported over 2,900 hours working for FOSI in 2023, nearly a 19% increase over last year.
- FOSI Volunteers (and some from the community) built a new stairway to the eastern beach, installed and improved bog bridges, cleared trails, mowed, and plowed.













# Fundraising Activities

- All totaled, excluding grants, we raised nearly 70% more this year than we did last year.
- Many of our fundraisers were collaborations with local businesses, such as benefit dinners held at Nautilus Seafood & Grill, Rio's Spiked Cafe, and The Harborwalk. FOSI was also a recipient of the Belfast Co-op's Common Cents program in August, and the Green Store's Anniversary Fundraiser.
- Sundog Solar committed to sponsoring our summer solstice celebration for two years, and we received funding from First National Bank and FNB Wealth Management to sponsor Science Squad in 2023. Additionally, the Jane and William Curran Foundation granted FOSI money to pay for the new stairs to the eastern beach and to build an expanded informational kiosk.





# Fundraising Activities

- Our summer and winter solstice events also brought in significant donations, as did our public information meeting about the wind port and our Fling into Fall block party.
- The towns of Searsport, Belfast, and Stockton Springs awarded us funds as well, and a large portion of our operating expenses was covered by individual and business donations.

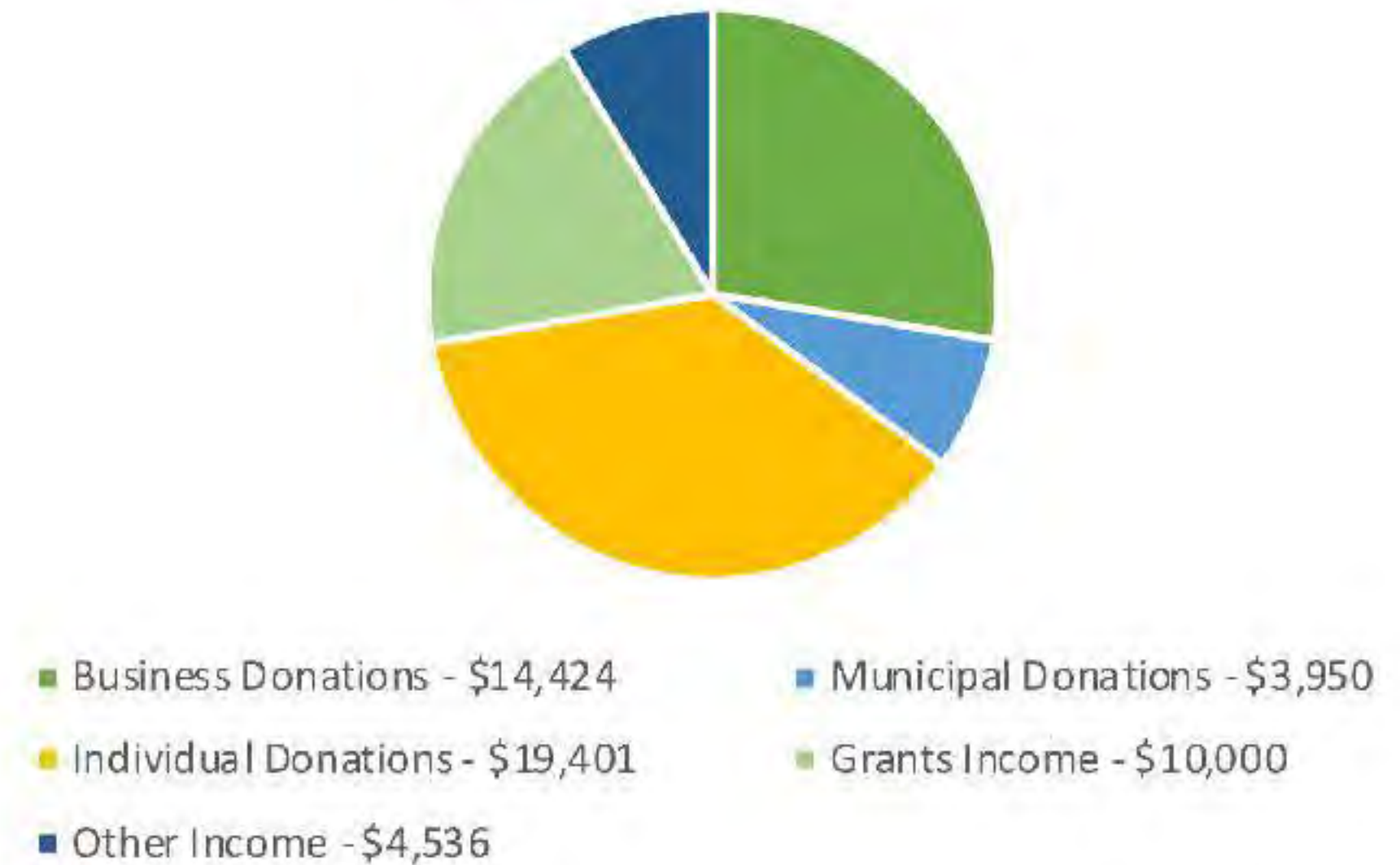




# Financial Review

- This past year, we received financial support from several local businesses, three municipalities, and many individual donors. We also received a couple of grants.
- We agreed to become the fiscal sponsor for a new project, the Alliance for Sears Island. This group provides information about the proposed wind port, which would manufacture, assemble, and launch wind turbines for an offshore wind farm.

Total Income: \$52,311



Total Expenses: \$36,959

























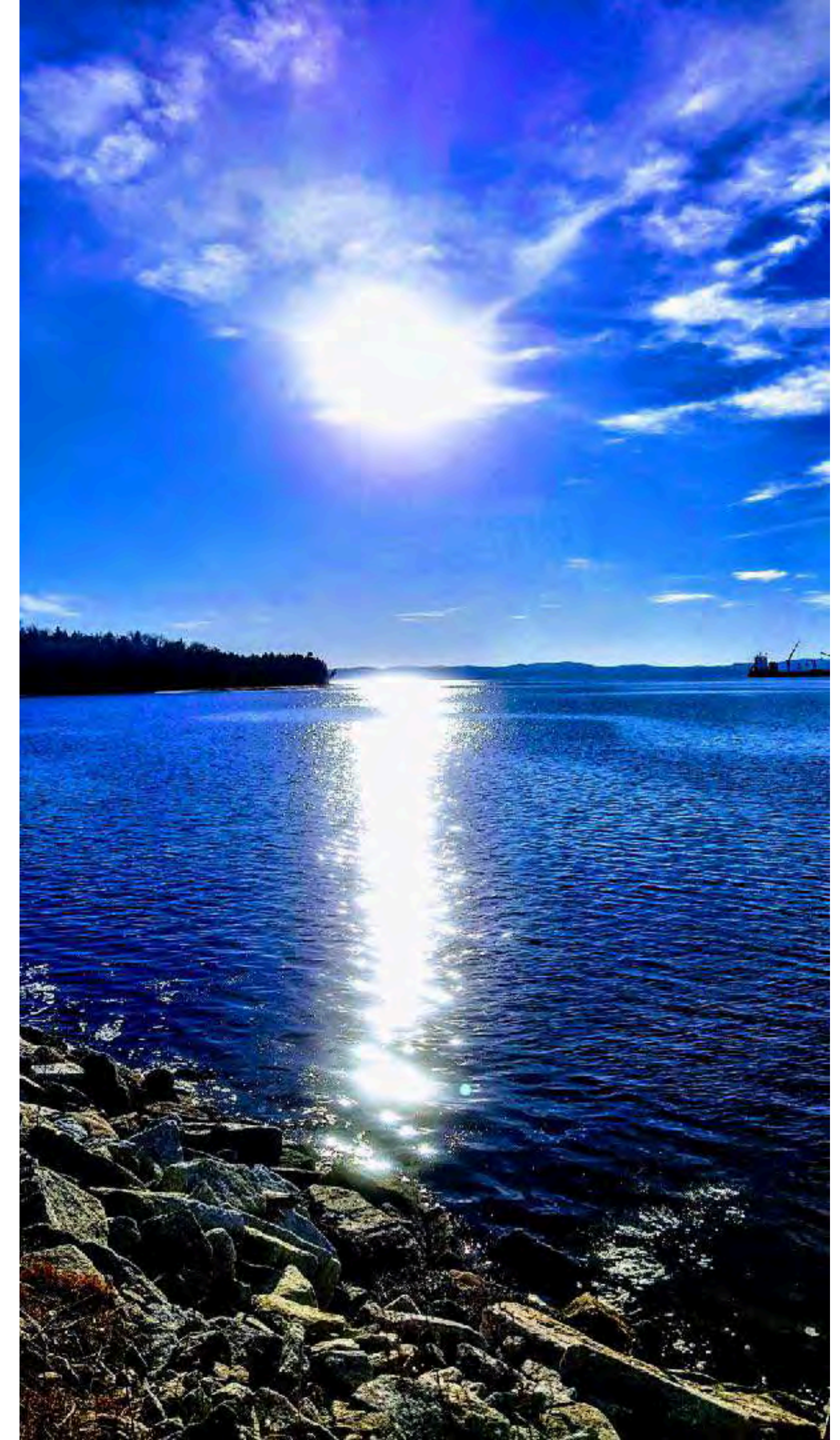




# What's on the Horizon?

Here's what's planned for the coming year:

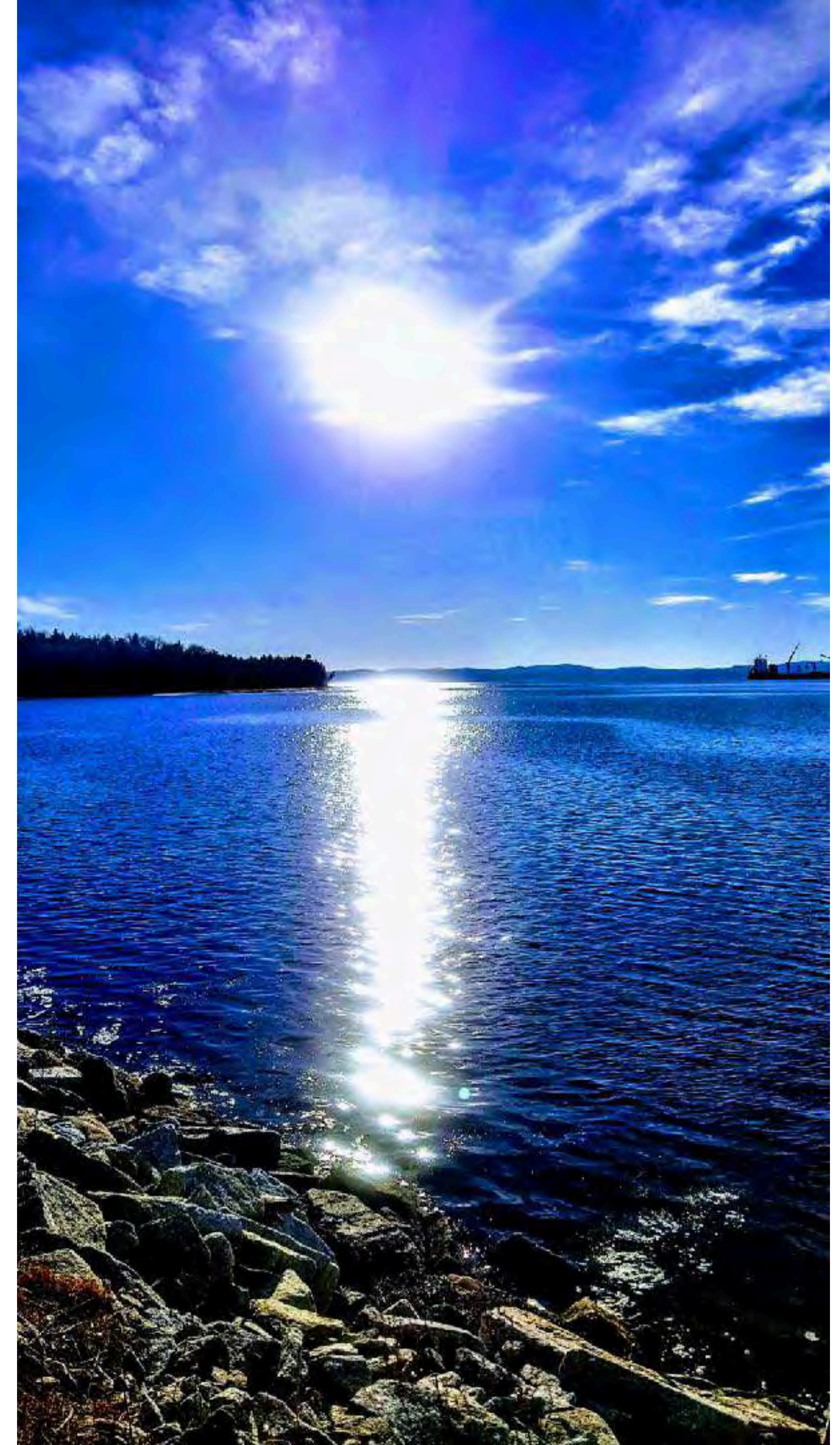
- We plan to replace and expand our informational kiosk to include additional interpretive information. If possible, we would like to include a small equipment storage shed to store tools for volunteers to maintain trails.
- We need to build new StoryWalk boards that are more durable to install on the Homestead Trail.
- A Unity College graduate student will share the results of her survey about recreational use of the island. The responses should give us new information about how much people value Sears Island.
- We hope to add new wildlife and wildflower image galleries to our website.





# What's on the Horizon?

- Volunteers plan to build a new enclosure for the trash receptacles to keep them from blowing away during strong winds.
- We need to expand our membership base to engage new members to help fulfill our mission.
- We hope to involve more students from Searsport High School and other schools in the area, as well as homeschooled students, in FOSI activities.
- Recognizing the strong links between art and nature, we hope to expand our partnerships with local galleries and artists.
- We plan to implement an Invasive Plant Control Plan through the Maine Forest Service.
- We will continue to actively monitor and report to you on the State's progress toward developing a wind port for Searsport.















**Thank you for helping us preserve and protect Sears Island, a unique and wonderful natural and recreational resource for the people of Maine.**