

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Portland, ME – Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) has announced the spring 2021 Habitat Protection Fund awards. CBEP made four awards, for a total of \$30,000, for projects in Cumberland, Yarmouth, Harrison/Norway/Otisfield, and a fourth project that will be announced soon.

With the Habitat Protection Fund, CBEP supports the permanent protection of aquatic habitats in the Casco Bay watershed. The Fund provides cost-sharing grants to support transition and acquisition costs.

Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust (CCLT) received a \$10,000 grant from the Fund in support of the purchase of the *Read Easement* on 54 acres in Cumberland. CBEP cited the expansion of the existing CCLT-protected Rines Forest, the protection of meadows vulnerable to development, and the location of the parcel within a regional corridor connecting habitats and trail networks as a few of the reasons for fully funding CCLT's proposal. The property is part of an approximately 770-acre undeveloped habitat block, the second largest in Cumberland.

Western Foothills Land Trust (WFLT) was awarded \$5,000 for the acquisition of 2 parcels totaling 78 acres in Otisfield. The *Cummings and Robinson* parcels are each adjacent to WFLT's 252-acre Twin Bridges Preserve on the Crooked River. Acquisition of these parcels will protect the Little Pond tributary, the terrestrial habitat between Little Pond and the Crooked River, and 28 acres of additional wetlands. Forest management on the parcel will provide enhanced setbacks for river and stream corridors, and any identified vernal pools and wetlands.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) was awarded a \$5,000 grant for *Cousins River Fields and Marsh*, a 43-acre parcel in Yarmouth. The parcel was identified in a coast-wide analysis by MCHT as a high priority parcel which, if conserved and not developed, will accommodate salt marsh migration in response to sea level rise. In addition, the subject is a portion of one of the largest parcels (82 ac.) of undeveloped, unprotected land touching tidal salt water in York and Cumberland Counties. This property can easily be seen from the Cousins River Bridge on Interstate 295. The **Town of Yarmouth, Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT)** and **Freeport Conservation Trust (FCT)** have all been active partners, contributing time and money towards the project.

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CBEP's mission is to help conserve the ecological integrity of Casco Bay, and the organization provides scientific expertise and financial resources to help watershed communities address challenges such as habitat degradation, water pollution, and adaptation to climate change. (See more at cascobayestuary.org).