

Freshwater Tidal Marshes - Ecology



The permanently protected Eastern River Preserve is part of the much larger Merrymeeting Bay watershed. This fresh water ecosystem, rich in biodiversity, provides valuable habitat for many migratory and resident wildlife species.

With its woodlands, tidal marshes and wetlands along Otter Creek, this conservation land protects habitat for wood ducks, common mergansers, and wading birds including great blue herons and American bittern, as well as bald eagles, osprey, kingfisher, and the species they eat, such as alewife.



In addition, the riverbanks serve as travel corridors for white-tailed deer, bobcat, coyotes, and black bear. Many areas along the riverbank support large trees, providing nesting sites for pileated woodpeckers and barred owls.

*Merrymeeting Bay is not a true estuary since the average overall water salinity does not exceed 0.5 parts per thousand.

Tidal Marshes - Plant Diversity

Fresh water tidal marshes, like the one that you see around you at the Eastern River Preserve, are dominated by patchy stout herbs, with a mixture of wild rice, softstem bulrush (a sedge), common arrowhead, sweet flag and pickerelweed, often covering large areas.

Rare plant species can sometimes be found in this habitat including the ones listed below.

A partial list of interesting tidal marsh plant species:

- Alisma triviale* - northern water-plantain
- Bidens cernua* - nodding beggar ticks
- Pontederia cordata* - pickerelweed
- Sagittaria latifolia* - common arrowhead
- Sagittaria montevidensis* - tidal arrowhead
- Schoenoplectus americanus* - chairmaker's rush
- Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* - softstem bulrush
- Zizania aquatica* - wild rice



Bidens cernua - nodding beggar ticks

Rare Eastern River Plant Species

- Bidens eatonii* - Eaton's bur-marigold
- Bidens hyperborean* - estuary bur-marigold
- Eiocaulon parkeri* - Parker's pipewort
- Sagittaria montevidensis* - spongy-stemmed arrowhead

About Kennebec Land Trust and the Eastern River Preserve

For many years, we've loved visiting preserves all over Maine. We think the Eastern River Preserve is a special place, and we want to share it, as others have shared with us.



Phil Brzozowski & Judy Schuppian
December, 2018

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**Kennebec Land Trust** Founded in 1988, The Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) works cooperatively with landowners and communities to conserve the forests, lakes, streams, wetlands, fields, and wildlife that help define central Maine. KLT protects and stewards land permanently, offers access to conserved properties, provides opportunities for people to learn about and enjoy the natural world, and works with partners to support sustainable forestry and farming. Our properties feature more than 50 miles of trails for everyone to enjoy! Your donation to KLT supports land conservation, trail development and maintenance, and conservation and sustainability programs.

*Thanks to those who contributed expertise and time for this brochure:*  
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*Photo credits:*  
*Don Cameron, Phil Downes, Theresa Kerchner & Emily Perkins.*  
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# EASTERN RIVER PRESERVE

50 acres ~ Pittston, Maine



**Kennebec Land Trust**  
PO Box 261 • 331 Main Street  
Winthrop, Maine 04364 207-377-2848 [www.tkltr.org](http://www.tkltr.org)



Welcome to Kennebec Land Trust's  
**Eastern River Preserve**  
 We hope you enjoy your visit!



In 2018 Pittston residents Judith Schuppen and Philip Brzozowski generously donated the 22-acre Eastern River Preserve (ERP) to the Kennebec Land Trust (KLT). Judy and Phil love this land where for thirty years they have observed the tides and the seasons, paddled, painted, hiked, and gardened.

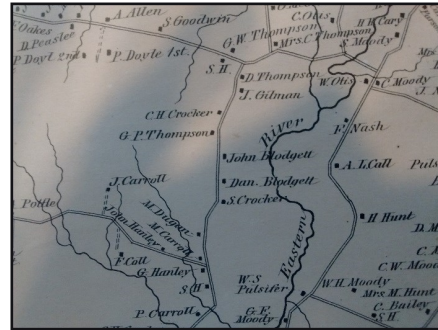
In 2020 KLT acquired 28 additional acres with generous funding from the Maine Coast Heritage Trust's Merrymeeting Bay/Marsh Migration Initiative. With these additions, the 50-acre ERP now protects 1,810 feet along Otter Creek and 4,120 feet along the tidal Eastern River, including valuable wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitat.

The tidal Eastern River, a fourteen mile-long tributary of the Kennebec River, starts in East Pittston at the confluence of its west and east branches, and flows southwest past the historic village of Dresden Mills into the Kennebec River. The fifty-square mile Eastern River watershed is part of the 9,524 square mile Merrymeeting Bay drainage.

The preserve's short, meandering path features Otter Creek and the Eastern River shoreline. and scenic views of the River and an extensive oxbow.

**Land and People: Pre-History and History**

The valley of the Eastern River did not become a tidal estuary until about 3,000 years ago when gradually rising sea level inundated the valley. Therefore, it is unlikely that there are any early (4000 years or older) archeological sites along the River. However, a published account (circa 1605) of the coast of Maine recorded a Native American village with a total population of about 50-100 people on the Eastern River. This account could be referring to a dispersed settlement around the mouth of the Eastern River on the Kennebec. From the report: *And on the small branch that runneth east standeth the fourth town, named by Massakiga; where there are but 8 households and 40 men.* (Purchas,1623.)

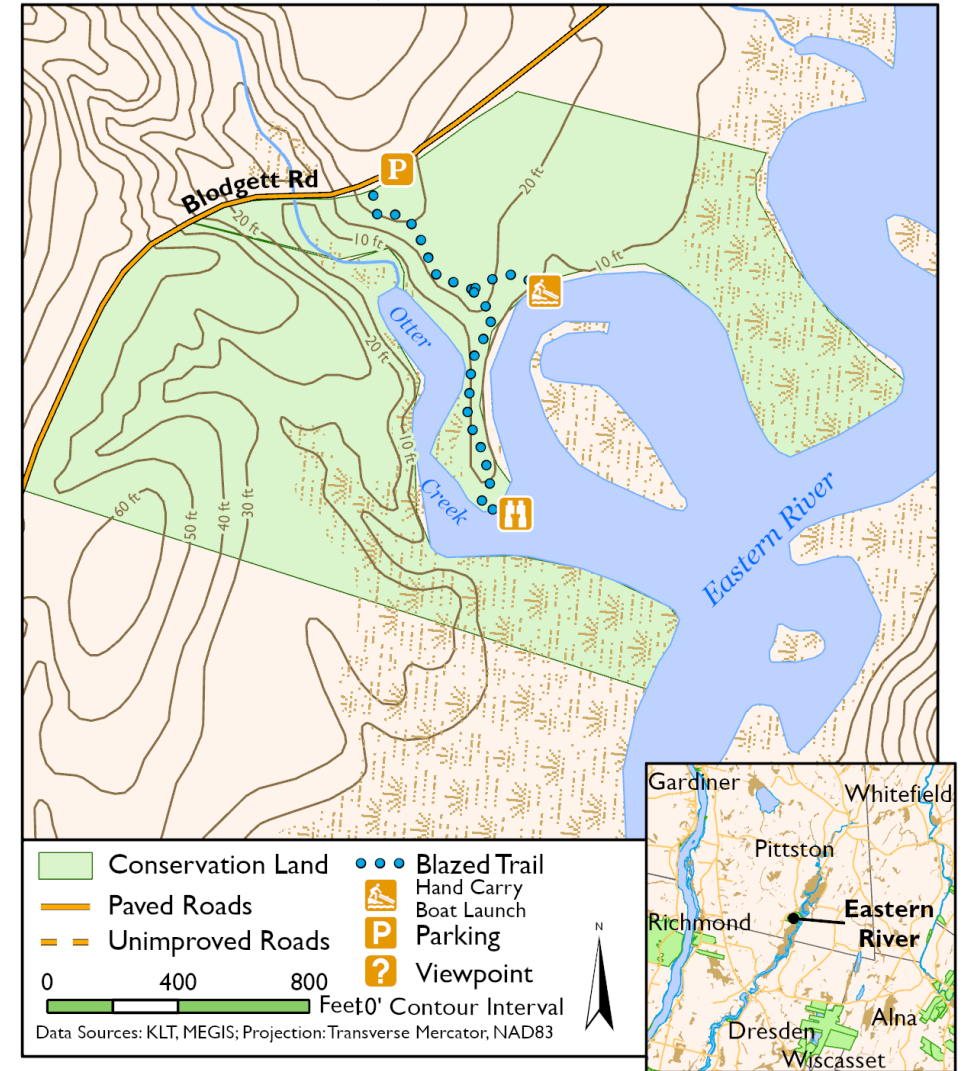


1879 Map - East River District

Several families attempted to settle along the Kennebec River between 1719 and 1753, but these efforts were not successful. In 1753 Dr. Sylvester Gardiner, a Boston merchant and Proprietor of the Kennebec Purchase, acquired a large tract of land often referred to as Ancient Pittston. That area included present day Pittston, Randolph, Gardiner, West Gardiner, and Farmingdale. The Eastern River Preserve was historically known as the Eastern River District. In the late 1700s to early 1800s the Thompson, Blodgett, Crocker, Call, and Stilphen families lived in "Gardinerstown".

Many members of these early settlement families held town offices in the 1800s – doing everything from constable and school agent to hog reeve, fence viewer, and measurer of wood and bark.

**Eastern River Preserve, Pittston**



**Trails:** The short, 0.3 mile Otter Creek Trail features scenic views of Otter Creek and the Eastern River, an extensive oxbow, and a hand-carry access point for paddling (at high tide).

**Note:** Watch your footing - some portions of the trail are uneven. Check for ticks after hiking!

**Public uses:** The Preserve is open to the public for nature observation, hiking, snowshoeing, and hunting in season. No motorized vehicles are allowed.

**Dogs:** For the protection of wildlife habitat and hikers, dogs should be under voice command or on a leash. Please pick up after your pets.