



Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust

Conserving Land  Protecting Nature



Impact Report

Our Vision

Beautiful Mississippi Madawaska wilderness protected for all time, where all species thrive and people engage with nature.

Our Mission

To legally protect and steward private lands which have ecological, biodiverse, aesthetic, and cultural value, while at the same time fostering engagement with wilderness.

Our Guiding Principles

- To champion land conservation and the rights of all species to exist.
- To practice the best standards of stewardship for the benefit of plants, animals, and landscapes.
- To foster a respectful relationship between people and natural spaces.
- To connect people with nature's healing power to meet their physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs.
- To encourage community engagement and collaborative initiatives.
- To lead in innovative approaches.

Land Acknowledgement

Through all our work, the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust acknowledges and is grateful to all the original stewards of the land. For many thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples have inhabited, cared for, and used these lands and waters, applying Indigenous knowledge systems and laws.

We are particularly grateful for the opportunity to gather and work on the ancestral and unceded traditional territory of the Omà̀m̀iwini, also known as the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We commit ourselves to the work of reconciliation with them and all Indigenous Peoples, and to learning from the Omà̀m̀iwini ways as we steward the lands that have been entrusted to us.

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Welcome to MMLT

Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust is a non-profit, registered charitable organization incorporated in 2003. We take direct action to legally protect and steward ecologically sensitive lands across the Mississippi River watershed, north to the Madawaska River. The landscape is a mosaic of rocky hills, wetlands, forests, farms, towns and even a small part of a major city, Ottawa.

We are extremely grateful to our members, donors and volunteers who have been the source of our success to date and who make everything we do possible. We invite you to join this incredible community of dedicated, passionate and skilled people in our work to conserve land, ensuring that there are places that are protected, where all species can thrive, for all time.

Our founders had two main goals, which we continue to honour:

- **To reverse the loss of natural habitat and species living in these ecosystems.**
- **To allow people to experience the healing power of nature.**

MMLT does this by obtaining properties through donation, purchase, or a combination of both. Alternatively, we can enter into a Conservation Easement Agreement with landowners to legally assume conservation protection of their property in perpetuity.

Some MMLT properties are open to the public to enjoy the trails and nature, and some are reserved for research and educational purposes. We protect over 3,300 acres of conservation lands, including 2,735 acres of forests, 442 acres of wetlands and 51 acres of grasslands.

Priority lands for conservation are old growth and interior forests and high quality wetlands, focusing on natural linkages and corridors that are vital for ecosystem services, biodiversity, and the protection of species at risk.

Once properties are acquired, MMLT has the responsibility of caring for these lands - paying the property taxes and insurance, maintaining trails where they exist and ensuring they are safe, monitoring the evolution of the properties, and conducting research. We have an experienced and dedicated team that manages the operations and takes responsibility for the ecologically sensitive properties in our care.

Our open properties are visited by thousands of people a year. The experience of a calming forest bath, being inspired by a beautiful landscape, or in-depth learning about the natural world that surrounds us can be life changing.

This report presents the impact of our work on the land, on wildlife, and on people. We encourage your support to grow our organization, thereby increasing our capacity to conserve and steward land, and facilitate human engagement with nature. We hope you will join us as a land donor, volunteer, member, or financial supporter - please see the details on P19.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN KOTZE
President



STACIE LLOYD
Executive Director

MMLT Timeline



2003

Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust Conservancy (MMLTC) formed and received charitable status

Initial 3-year strategic plan adopted

2008

First paid staff member hired, a Program Manager

Permanent Endowment created under the Ottawa Community Foundation

First protected land acquired: Blueberry Mountain at cliffLAND (above left) - the first Conservation Easement in North America to include a covenant mandating public access

2013

MMLTC received Ontario Land Trust Alliance Vision Award

First Creativity Blitz

2 properties showcased by the Government of Canada for Canada 150 celebrations

Renamed Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT)

First Festival of the Wild Child (below)

High Lonesome Welcome Centre opened (right)



2018

Bioacoustic monitoring

20th anniversary celebrated

First full-time Conservation Coordinator hired

First Executive Director hired

Most recent property protected - our 12th



2023

New 5-year strategic plan adopted

2024 and beyond

Steadily build our capacity and capabilities to meet our vision and mission
Grow our land holdings and steward them with excellence
Inspire our community to participate in conserving and experiencing nature



MMLT PROPERTIES

MMLT Conservation Philosophy

Within our catchment area, the Mississippi River watershed northward to the Madawaska River, MMLT protects landscapes with a rich diversity of living organisms and well-functioning natural processes interconnecting all the components of nature, including people, within a varied mosaic of land and water habitats and ecosystems.

We know that many of the lands and waterways in our area support important sources of livelihood for people in our community – forestry, agriculture, home construction, aggregate extraction, as well as a variety of recreational services. As residents, we use and need the products and services provided by these landscapes. While we accept that some land and water must be used primarily to serve such priorities, we encourage everyone to be mindful of our impact on nature.

We believe that some of the lands in our area should be left largely unmanaged – places where natural processes can unfold on their own terms and timelines – places that play host to their share of the full richness of our world – and places that store and absorb carbon emissions. This is what we mean by conservation – that some lands in our area should remain as intact as possible, as unmanaged by human hands as possible, and for as long as possible.



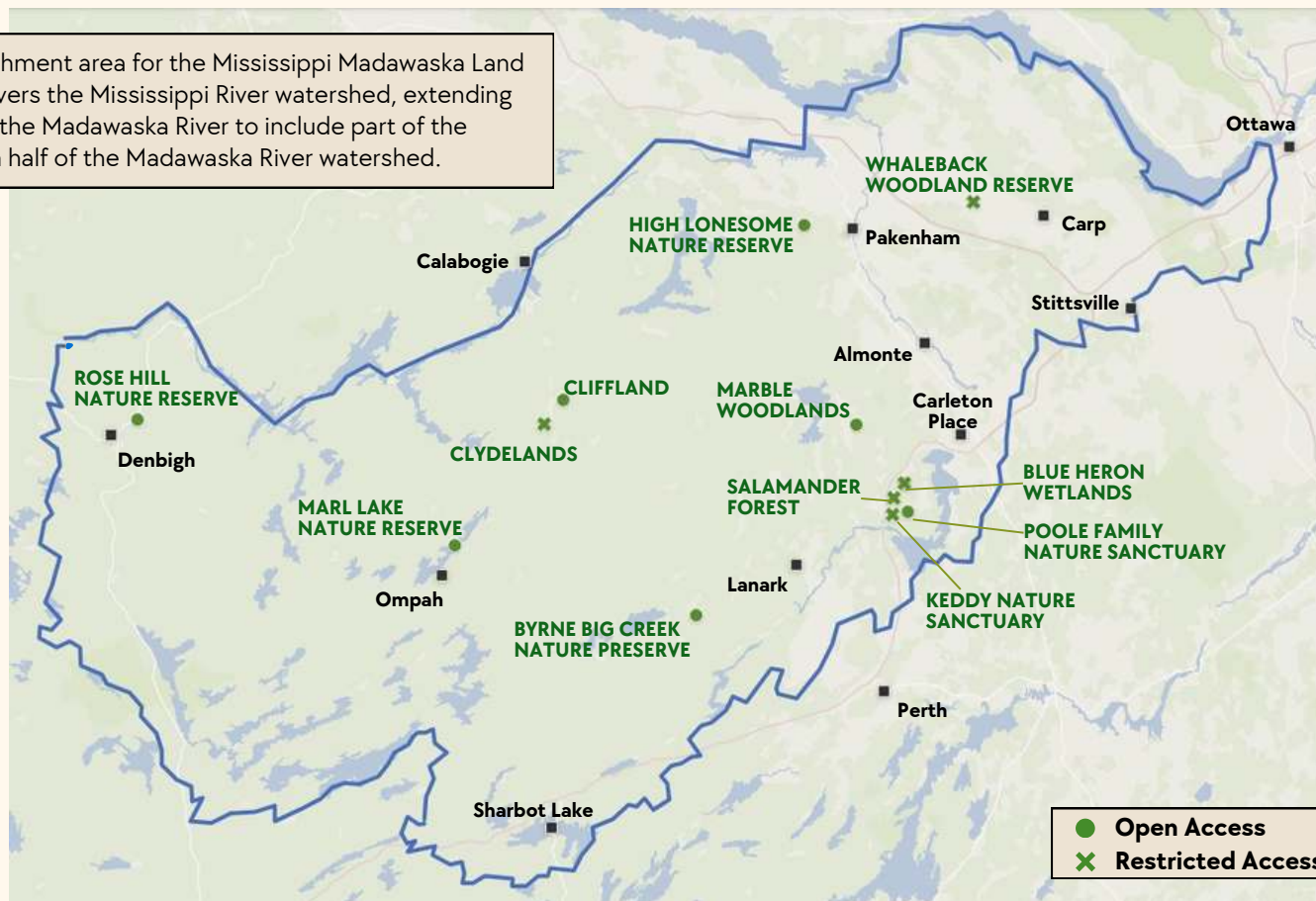
We also believe that people should have the opportunity to experience nature in ways that keep damage to a minimum. To that end, we encourage visitors to some of our conservation lands to explore them on foot. Some of our publicly open properties have managed walking trails with interpretive signage. Others are restricted for guided visits or for ecology research studies.



Our approach is centred on this philosophy of conserving areas of the natural landscape. We are an incorporated non-profit charity that works with like-minded donors and landowners to permanently acquire lands, or interests in lands, with an iron-clad commitment to steward them in perpetuity. We also seek to help area landowners who aren't ready to transfer their lands to us, but who are keen to make conservation a priority.

This, then, is MMLT's niche. **We know the landscape of our Mississippi-Madawaska catchment area and we are connected to the lands and its people.** We firmly believe that by working with landowners and donors in our communities we can make a meaningful and measurable contribution to protecting nature and natural diversity for all inhabitants and for all time.

The catchment area for the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust covers the Mississippi River watershed, extending north to the Madawaska River to include part of the southern half of the Madawaska River watershed.



● Open Access
 ✕ Restricted Access

Property	Acquired	Acreage	Public Access
cliffLAND (Blueberry Mountain) *	2009	1250	Open
Rose Hill Nature Reserve	2011	358	Open
High Lonesome Nature Reserve	2012	210	Open
Keddy Nature Sanctuary *	2014	529	Restricted
Clydelands *	2014	100	Restricted
Byrne Big Creek Nature Preserve	2017	100	Planned to be Open
Whaleback Woodland Reserve	2018	16	Restricted
Poole Family Nature Sanctuary	2018	110	Open
Salamander Forest *	2021	158	Restricted
Marble Woodlands	2021	200	Open
Blue Heron Wetlands	2023	106	Restricted
Marl Lake Nature Reserve	2023	256	Planned to be Open

* indicates Conservation Easements

OPEN: open to the public with a designated, maintained trail system. Where dogs are permitted, they must be kept on a leash and waste picked up and removed.

RESTRICTED: these properties are ecologically sensitive, therefore access is by permission or guided tour only.





THE BENEFITS OF LAND CONSERVATION

MMLT provides places of wildness where natural processes govern, creating optimal conditions for all species to thrive. Engaging with nature in this form offers a myriad of powerful human health benefits:

Fresh air oxygenates our bloodstream, improves our lung function, increases our energy, and sharpens our mind.

Walking along nature trails is an easily accessible form of exercise, which contributes to lower blood pressure and improved cardiovascular health.

Time spent in nature has been shown to reduce anxiety, stress, and depression; it acts as a natural remedy to improve mental well-being, while enhancing attention, concentration, and memory.

The beauty of nature enlivens our senses, invoking wonder and awe. This connection with something larger than ourselves becomes a wellspring of inspiration and a source of spiritual experiences.



MMLT facilitates access to these health benefits by opening some of its properties for various purposes:



Recreational activities such as hiking, snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing allow people to engage in authentic nature experiences.

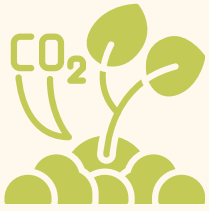
Programs for children and families, such as our annual Festival of the Wild Child, that offer unique experiences to connect with nature.

Educational activities, such as guided nature walks, that provide an opportunity for learning about and appreciating the natural world.

When people visit MMLT properties they often develop a respectful relationship with nature and a commitment to protect these vital wild spaces.

The Economic Value of Conserving Ecosystems

The twelve MMLT properties perform the following ecosystem services:



Long-term carbon storage
(estimated 75,000 tonnes)

Annual carbon sequestration
(3,500 tonnes CO₂ absorbed/yr)

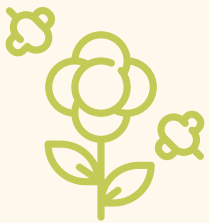
Atmospheric pollutant control



Nutrient cycling

Soil erosion control

Soil formation and retention



Habitat provision and biodiversity protection

Pollination

Minimal human disturbance
(restricted and closed properties)



Flood control

Water quality control



Recreation, aesthetics, and other cultural values (open properties)

The annual economic value of all ecosystem services of the twelve properties currently being protected by MMLT has been estimated at

\$22.3 million



FOREST: \$11.3 Million



WETLAND: \$11 Million

Two sources were used for calculating the value of MMLT ecosystem services:

- Ecosystem service values as ecological indicator for land management decisions: A case study in southern Ontario, Canada; Carolyn N.M. DeLoyde, W.E. Mabee; 2023.
- Estimating Ecosystem Services in Southern Ontario; Austin Troy & Ken Bagstad; 2009.

With a wide range of land types across our properties, MMLT is well-positioned to support research in many scientific areas.

MMLT experts conduct routine land surveys before properties are acquired, and on an ongoing basis following acquisition. The surveys record details of:

- Flora and fauna, including species at risk, and invasive species
- Specific ecosensitivities
- Hydrology
- Earth science features
- Environmental hazards
- Other types of threats to conservation of the property, such as potential future development

Researchers have conducted field studies on MMLT properties, including:

- Detection probabilities for rare plant species
- Insect collection and identification
- Bioacoustics monitoring
- Restoration of meadowlands for pollination

We are currently in collaboration with researchers from Carleton University and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to learn more about environmental decision-making when it comes to conservation prioritization.

As part of this work we have been identifying digital tools that may be used to streamline and standardize this prioritization process.



In partnership with local school boards, elementary and high school students are invited to our properties for outdoor classroom experiences in nature.

This includes practicing standard fieldwork protocols as well as developing project-based environmental initiatives to be applied on our properties.



Conservation of Species at Risk

MMLT properties provide habitat for many rare and uncommon species. In particular, almost 30 species at risk have been documented on our properties.

The term **species at risk** (SAR) refers to any naturally occurring plant, animal, or other organism that is in danger of disappearing from the wild. Factors that indicate a species is at risk include: when the population of a species is very small, if it is small and declining, if there has been a large decline in the population regardless of its total size, or if its geographic range is small and declining.

There are many types of species at risk found on our properties, including species which are considered endangered. An endangered designation means that they are one step away from becoming extinct, either at a provincial or national level.

Some of the endangered species that MMLT is helping to protect include:



Butternut trees, endangered because of a fungus that quickly infects and kills healthy trees.



Monarch butterflies, endangered due to habitat loss and the impact of climate change.



Blanding's turtles, endangered due to habitat loss and illegal poaching for the pet trade.



Cerulean warblers, endangered because of population decline and habitat loss.



Marquette-Muskoka Land Trust
Preserving the land • Celebrating the future

Marble Woodlands

Established by the Marquette-Muskoka Land Trust in 2013
to protect nature and enrich human lives.

VISITORS WELCOME

Government of Ontario
Ontario Parks

Marquette-Muskoka Land Trust

MEET OUR SUPPORTERS

MMLT Land Donor

Our land donors are valued partners in protecting nature for the long term. We are a qualified recipient agency under the federal Ecological Gifts Program.

Janet and Noel Noyes-Brown, along with their family, donated Marble Woodlands to MMLT in 2021. The family has always known the value of nature - they have spent a lifetime living in it, working in it, learning from and being fascinated by it.

The Noyes-Brown family purchased this property in 1980. "We loved our 200 acre Mississippi Mills property for 40 years and wanted to ensure the species that thrive there are protected and valued for many more generations to come."

The decision to donate their land to MMLT was to make sure that happened. Their awareness of the need to combat climate change and maintain biodiversity was coupled with the desire to give something back to the community.

"Marble Woodlands is a place to be enjoyed by the public, to wonder and look, to walk the trails and enjoy the natural flora and fauna."

Learn about becoming a land donor on P19 or [on our website](#).



MMLT Volunteer

MMLT is immensely grateful for our devoted volunteers, many of whom juggle full-time jobs yet still find the passion and time to support us in our land trust duties.

Paul Smith has been volunteering with us since February, 2020. He works as a Research Scientist at Environment and Climate Change Canada, but with MMLT he is an active member of the Property Acquisition & Stewardship Committee, and is the property manager of both Clydelands and Marble Woodlands.

"The impact of land trusts like MMLT is as direct as it gets. When land is set aside for biodiversity and human appreciation of nature, the results are immediate. This plays a key role in achieving national and international conservation targets, like the vision of protecting 30% of the earth's surface for biodiversity by 2030.

"My volunteer work with MMLT gives me a chance to have a meaningful and measurable impact on conservation within my own community. This work feels especially important at a time when suburban and rural sprawl is bearing down on the nature that makes this community feel like my home."

Learn about becoming an MMLT volunteer [on our website](#).



MMLT Financial Supporter

MMLT relies on the generosity of financial supporters and members who sustain our operations of land conservation and stewardship. Monthly donations allow us to work with a consistent cash flow, and one-time gifts can help with special projects.

Ed Lawrence is a former head gardener of Canadian official residences and CBC radio gardening expert. He is a long-time member and supporter of MMLT, making monthly donations in tribute and remembrance of his wife Kate who passed away in 2007.

"This is a living memorial to our home and native lands. My professional training has taught me that planting trees is not enough, they must be maintained as well. Maintaining a piece of the various ecosystems in which our native flora & fauna exist is an essential part of stewardship of the land.

"This, for me, is a gift that I can leave behind for all in the hope that future generations will learn to love and steward our natural heritage. As a member of MMLT, the companionship of like-minded people is inspiring and educational. What else allows us to invest in 999 years of care?"

Learn about becoming a financial supporter on P19 or [on our website](#).



MMLT Event Participant

MMLT holds events throughout the year to provide opportunities for people to engage with nature on our protected properties. These include Winter Tree I.D., Spring Ephemerals & Shrubs, and the Fall Colours Walk. Our most popular event is the Festival of the Wild Child, held every August at High Lonesome Nature Reserve.

"We have always enjoyed what nature has to offer and its ability to help educate our kids, so it was no surprise that our family spent the entire morning at High Lonesome Nature Reserve for the 2023 Festival of the Wild Child event.

"There was so much to explore and plenty of interactive activities for our little ones to get up close and personal with nature. Our kids all agreed their favourite was the magical fairies trail. This activity highlighted nature's ability to spark our imagination, wonder, and curiosity for adventure. With information sheets in hand, we were able to read aloud points of interest under the canopy of the forest; drawing our attention to distinct mushrooms, types of moss, and hidden fairy homes.

"We highly recommend the Festival of the Wild Child to other families looking for opportunities to get out in nature!"

-**The Gorgichuks** (Avery, Brad, Asher, Ross, and Boden)

Learn more about our events [on our website](#).

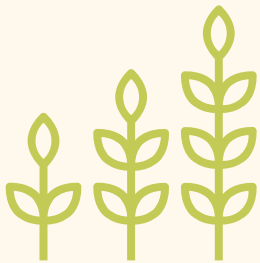




**HELP US GROW THE
FUTURE OF MMLT**

MMLT's Board and Staff have a new 5-year Strategic Plan that is focussed on increasing our capacity to conserve land and deliver meaningful programs.

Three Strategic Priorities align with MMLT's three main focuses: good governance and stable operations; land acquisition and stewardship; and human participation with nature. For each Priority, we have identified four 5-Year Goals. For each Goal, a number of Actions are taken on by staff, Board members and volunteers to move us closer to those goals over a single year.



Steadily build our capacity and capabilities to meet our vision and mission.

To achieve our mission, MMLT needs a robust organization with sufficient and consistent human and financial resources to meet our operating needs and long-term obligations.

Diversifying our funding and building our Endowment Fund (see page 19) will provide us with the financial resources to support this growth.



Grow our land holdings and steward them with excellence.

Honouring MMLT's vision of protecting land, we will focus on expanding our land holdings, prioritizing lands adjacent to existing properties.

Leveraging our experience of the last twenty years, MMLT will strengthen our approaches to land acquisition, stewardship, planning, management, and monitoring.



Inspire our community to participate in conserving and experiencing nature.

Giving people opportunities to experience nature is an important part of our mission. MMLT will continue to develop and revitalize a comprehensive program of events, and evolve the ways we communicate with our members and extended community.

Key to achieving this is improving recruitment, use and recognition of volunteers, and building and strengthening relationships with like-minded organizations and individuals.

We obtain properties through donation, purchase, or a combination of both, or we can enter into a Conservation Easement Agreement with landowners to legally assume conservation protection of their property in perpetuity.

There are many steps involved in the acquisition process including:

- **Financial planning** – with the costs of acquisition being so high, for every acquisition we pursue, we need to fundraise and apply for grants.
- **Conducting legal due diligence** with a land trust specialist lawyer, determining a fair market value for the property with a specially qualified commercial property appraiser, and contracting a professional biologist to document the ecological values of the property.
- **Developing stewardship plans** based on the principle that, other than protecting threatened species and mitigating against foreign invasives, we should not interfere with the natural ecological succession which will be shaped by climate change over decades and centuries into the future.

The whole process of acquiring just one property can take anywhere from many months to a few years. Most criteria for evaluating land are ecologically related.

- **Old growth and interior forests** – vital to a number of species for breeding purposes.
- **Quality wetland ecosystems** – important for their biodiversity as well as ecosystem services such as water filtration and purification, and acting as landscape sponges to reduce the risks of flooding.
- **Rare species** – our properties provide habitat for almost 30 listed species at risk.
- **Natural linkages and corridors** – as the climate changes, organisms often need to move to new areas as they cope with threats such as drought, flood, fire, food scarcity, and overpopulation.



Once properties are acquired, MMLT has to manage these lands – to monitor them and steward them based on sound ecological science.

Our mandate is to protect these properties in perpetuity so that they are available for many generations into the future. Our staff, property managers, and volunteers undertake:

- **A full species inventory.**
- **Baseline Documentation Reports.**
- **Property Stewardship Plans.**
- **Annual Monitoring Reports.**
- **Property management** which might include fencing, parking, welcome kiosk, signage, and trail maintenance.

How You Can Support Our Work

Donors and Members play a direct role in making our work possible. There are many ways in which you can support MMLT’s work towards our vision of beautiful Mississippi Madawaska wilderness protected for all time, where all species thrive and people engage with nature. Please contact us to discuss donations.

Donation of Land

As a donor of land, you become a partner in protecting nature for the long term. MMLT is a qualified recipient agency under the federal Ecological Gifts Program. That means you will be provided the best tax treatment for your donation and assured that your lands will be safeguarded forever.

Donations

You can support our conservation work through a one-time donation or by becoming a monthly donor. Donations can help us purchase new properties, fund special projects, contribute to our various funds, and support our ongoing operations. Tax receipts are issued for financial donations. The sidebar shows our donation levels.



Membership

MMLT members support the conservation values of the land trust. Membership renews annually. Benefits include:

- Inclusion in a community of like-minded individuals.
- Regular email updates on all our projects and upcoming events.
- Free members-only events, including nature walks.
- Complimentary admission to our Annual General Meeting.
- Participate in important decisions of the organization.

Legacy Giving

MMLT has established a **permanent Endowment Fund** that provides an annual disbursement to MMLT that is intended to cover the operating and maintenance costs of our properties. What an incredible way to leave a legacy gift - helping to ensure that MMLT has the financial capacity to care for its lands in perpetuity. These planned gifts offer many tax advantages as well.

Corporate Support

Businesses can support MMLT’s work by matching donations made by employees, or by becoming a Property, Trail, or Sustaining Sponsor.

Visionary	\$50,000 and above
Trailblazer	\$25,000 - \$49,999
Guardian	\$10,000 - \$24,999
Conserver	\$3,000 - \$9,999
Sustainer	\$1,000 - \$2,999
Friend	\$100 - \$999
Supporter	Up to \$99

MMLT appreciates the support of community, funding, and conservation partners.



Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust

Conserving Land  Protecting Nature



Thank you to the many photographers who capture the beauty of MMLT properties, including:

The Clifford Family - Sheila Craig - Avery Crampton - Andrew Dunbar - Bill Howe
Simon Lunn - Janet Mason - Rienne Moore - Emily Moynes - Howard Robinson - Ken Spicer

Report assembled by Ian Brown and edited by Kris Riendeau

Connect With Us

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