

RESTORATION AND RENEWAL ON LITTLE CHEBEAGUE ISLAND

Recreational visitors to Little Chebeague Island will notice major changes starting this summer thanks to a Recreational Trails Program grant from the Maine Department of Conservation.

The Maine Island Trail Association (MITA), in collaboration with several partner organizations, will be leading an effort to reopen walking paths, build new trails to link points of interest, restore old fields that have become overgrown and cut invasive bittersweet out of trees.

Interpretive signage will be revised and renewed and a practical, long term management program developed to insure that visitors can continue to enjoy the interior of this wild island and learn about its history and environment into the future.

This project builds on the work of Richard Innes, a dedicated volunteer who cleared trails, erected interpretive signs and researched the history of the island from the early 1990's until 2006 when he "retired" at the age of 82. Since then, MITA and others have struggled to keep pace with invasive vegetation that has choked the trails, colonized old fields, burdened trees and blocked signage.

Partners in this effort include Rippleffect,

the Cow Island based outdoor learning organization, that has committed their Cow Island Conservation Corps and Youth Leadership Summit students to assist with clearing vegetation. Portland Trails and Maine Audubon have also provided generous technical advice on equipment selection and maintenance techniques. The Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust (CCLT) and Oceanside Conservation Trust (OCT) are also interested in stewardship of the island.

Project Manager Erno Bonebakker would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in helping with this project in any way. Help is needed with trail work on the island, signage preparation, the generation of outreach material and financial support to supplement the grant funding. Even simple expressions of support for the project are useful to show how important Little Chebeague is as a recreational and conservation resource for the Casco Bay community. Erno may be reached at 207-871-0048 or by e-mail at ebonebak@gmail.com, and MITA can be reached at 207-761-8225.

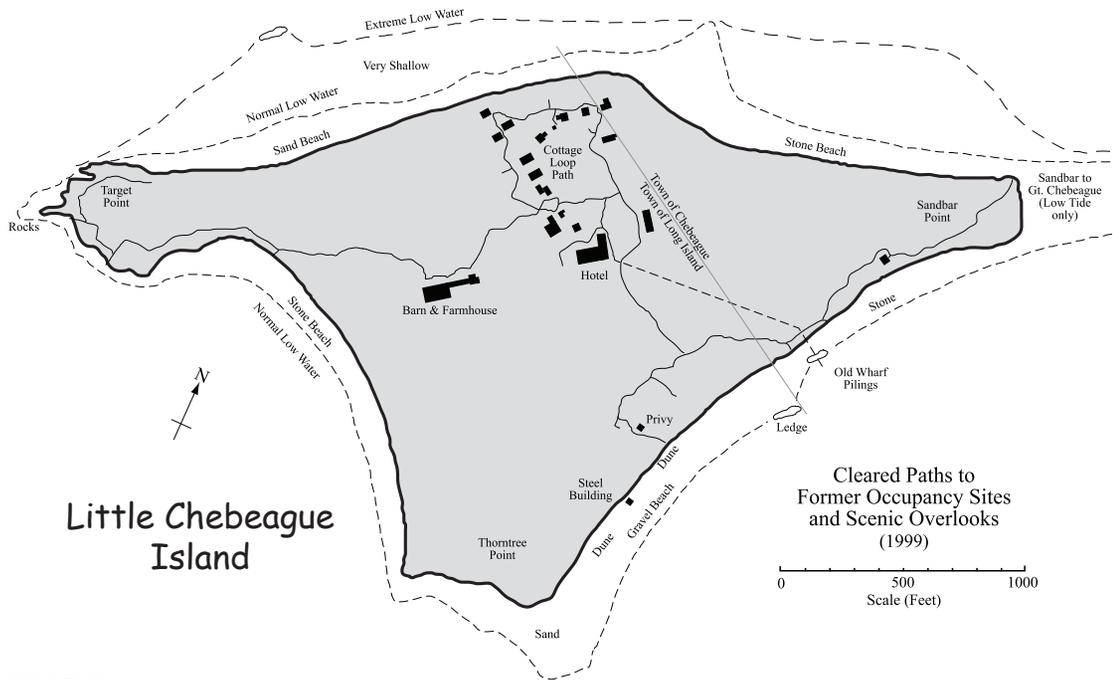
RECOMMENDATIONS

As visitors to Little Chebeague, we are guests in a natural coastal setting. Little Chebeague is kept in a marvelously natural state as an "unimproved state park," and that status will last as long as the island is cared for by its visitors. Please do your part to learn about Leave No Trace guidelines and practice them during your stay.

- Please stay within designated

trails and campsites to protect the fragile plant life and island soils not yet impacted. It doesn't take many footsteps for an area to be permanently damaged.

- Please use the privy or pack out your waste. Human waste is an eyesore and a health hazard.
- Carry out litter and garbage, your own and any you find. Trash doesn't belong on natural coastal islands.
- If you choose to have a campfire, kindle a small, safe one in a designated ring. Please collect driftwood from the shoreline, or dead and downed wood adjacent to the trails. An uncontrolled fire on Little Chebeague would be devastating; please make an extra effort to be safe with your fire.
- Please respect the local wildlife by not disturbing or feeding them. Take care to secure your provisions.
- Please leave what you find intact for future generations to enjoy. The natural and cultural resources on the island are important to the recreational experience.
- Keep your pets leashed at all times and pick up their waste. Unleashed pets often run off trail and trample vegetation. They can also disturb wildlife and other visitors.
- Please respect each other on this shared public land. Little Chebeague can be a busy place. From the bustling harbor to the crowded campsites, you are bound to bump into other visitors.



HISTORY

Despite its wild appearance today, Little Chebeague's landscape has changed radically from generation to generation. It has been deforested and reforested many times over, reflecting the various ways in which its settlers lived with the land and sea. Many of the lightly forested areas seen today are actually reclaimed pasture lands which used to support livestock on the island. In the late 19th century the island had several resort hotels and a farm. Later there was a summer cottage colony that lasted until 1943 when the US Navy took over the island as a recreation and training site for the crews of ships anchored in Casco Bay. At that time

the island had ball fields, a bowling alley, boxing rings and a skeet range. Hundreds of sailors at a time enjoyed lobster dinners before sailing off to escort convoys across the Atlantic. Only a few families inhabited the island after the war until it was acquired by the state in 1972 as an unimproved state park.

NATURE

Wild flowers such as violets, star flowers, and rugosa roses are abundant on the island. Little Chebeague also supports animal life such as deer, raccoons, songbirds, gulls, and marine ducks. Visitors should take special care to protect themselves from ticks, poison ivy, and browntail moths.

Little Chebeague Island is managed in partnership by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands and the Maine Island Trail Association.

For more information about the Maine Island Trail Association, please contact MITA at 58 Fore St., Suite 30-3, Portland, ME 04101 | www.mita.org

