

Jones Brook and Upper Long Cove

St. George, South Thomaston

MISSION-BASED LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

This focus area centers around Jones Brook and Upper Long Cove. It includes portions of the last three large undeveloped habitat blocks in St. George as well as the town's longest stretches of undeveloped salt water frontage. The region was defined through a collaborative process with the town of St. George, Friends of Long Cove, St. George Conservation Commission, Friends of St. George, and the St. George Historical Society. It includes public access at Fort St. George and the Town Forest, Historic Society lands, and highly productive wetlands in Upper Long Cove. In all, the focus area encompasses about 2,262 acres.

Jones Brook is a first order stream that drains much of the northern half of the town of St. George. The brook's main stem flows in a southwesterly direction for about one mile through upland forest, red maple and shrub swamps, sedge meadows, bogs, and beaver flowages before emptying into Long Cove. The terrain at the brook's headwaters is flat, with many small ephemeral streams winding through forested and open wetlands. Elevations range from about 100 feet on the low hills that define the Jones Brook drainage to sea level. Relief is most dramatic below Route 73 along Long Cove, where the valley drops steeply to shore. Upper Long Cove is tidal, with extensive mudflats at low tide. A small falls occurs where Jones Brook empties into the



cove. Upland forests are composed of red spruce, white pine, red maple, and scattered hemlock

and white spruce. They tend to be early to mid-successional in age, with abundant evidence of partial cuts within the past several decades.

Bedrock is composed primarily of granite, with abundant ledge outcrops along steep-sided stretches of Jones Brook, on bluffs overlooking Upper Long Cove, and along the shorelines of Long Cove and Wheeler Bay. Streams and ridges trend roughly north to south, paralleling the St. George peninsula. A band of schist parallels Route 131 to the west and underlies Fort Point. Soils vary from extensive, deep, and very poorly drained deposits of Medomak and Swanville silt loams on flat terrain in the Jones Brook headwaters, to shallow well-drained Lyman sandy loams with frequent bedrock outcrops on knolls and side slopes as you approach salt water. Wetland soils make up about one third (760 acres) of the Jones Brook watershed.

Upper Long Cove remains exceptionally scenic, with approximately 2.5 miles of undeveloped shore frontage. The stretches of Jones Brook that feed into the head of the cove and that occur below Kinney Woods Road are beautiful and fast moving, flowing over small ledge drops and occasional gravel beds. The southwestern coves of Wheeler Bay include about a mile of undeveloped shoreline with saltmarsh, extensive tide pools, and tidal flats. Both Long Cove and Wheeler Bay are high value coastal water bird habitats and provide foraging habitat for bald eagles.

The land around Jones Brook is remarkably undeveloped given its location on a rapidly developing coastal peninsula. It includes an intact stream/wetland complex and a 260 acre deer wintering area.

State Significant Natural and Cultural Features Summary Table

Name of Feature	State Status ¹	S-Rank ²	Location/habitat
<i>Natural Communities</i>			
Spartina saltmarsh		S4	Small examples in upper coves of Wheeler Bay
<i>Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species</i>			
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) #238A	T	S4	Nest is just south of focus area on Seavey Cove; eagles forage in focus area
<i>Significant Wildlife Habitats</i>			
DWA #020793 - Jones Brook		I*	260 acres; current aerial photos suggest good cover; needs ground-truthing
Long Cove CWWH		H	Entire cove
Wheeler Bay CWWH		H	Entire bay
Clark Island CWWH		H	Flats to northeast and northwest
<i>Significant Cultural Features</i>			
Fort St. George Historic Site		NA	Ruins and mounds of Fort St. George
MHPC # 018.017		NA	Southern shore of Clark I. (aboriginal artifacts)
MHPC # 018.010		NA	south of focus area near HOB property (aboriginal artifacts)

¹ SC = Special Concern, T = State Threatened

² S-Rank = state rank, and is based on an objective analysis of a species' or natural community's known distribution or abundance in Maine. Ranks range from S1 (critically imperiled with five or fewer occurrences in the state) to S5 (demonstrably secure in Maine, with more than 100 occurrences).

*IFW ranks wetlands and deer wintering areas as high value (H), moderate value (M), and indeterminate (I). Indeterminate habitats have not been checked on the ground. DWA = deer wintering area; CWWH = coastal wading bird and waterfowl habitat; MHPC = Maine Historic Preservation Commission; NA = not applicable.

CURRENT USE

- Riparian zones of Jones Brook main stem and its smaller tributaries are essentially undeveloped, except for two houses near shore where Route 73 crosses the brook.
- There are still many large ownerships, particularly along Long Cove and the east portion of Jones Brook.
- The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands owns 2.6 acre Fort Point, a state historic site. Fort St. George was built in 1809 and purchased by the state in 1923. Earthen berms are all that remain, although the site affords beautiful views up and down the St. George River. The town recently purchased the Skoglund property (Map 22 Lot 7), which provides road access to Fort Point. The Historical Society owns a 36 acre tract on the east side of Route 131 that extends to Jones Brook.
- The town owns two contiguous properties with frontage on Jones Brook, including Kinney Woods (Map 19 Lot 2), a 78 acre tract that was heavily harvested prior to acquisition, and the town forest, a 59 acre tract of mid-successional mixed forest and wetlands. A mile-long loop trail, with a trailhead on Kinney Woods Road, circles through the western half of the town forest. A forest management plan was prepared for this tract that focuses almost exclusively on timber value.
- GRLT owns Tommy's Island in lower Long Cove.
- Two properties are in Open Space/Farmland taxation.
- Most of the Jones Brook watershed is undeveloped. However, now that shoreline is nearly built-out, pressure on marginal (due to wetness) building sites in the interior is increasing.
- The focus area contains portions of the three major habitat blocks that remain on the St. George peninsula (as shown on Beginning with Habitat maps). These include 1) Kinney Woods Road to Westbrook Street (1806 acres), 2) Upper Long Cove/Clark Island (1309 acres), and Kinney Woods Road to Route 73 (747 acres).
- There is no public access to Wheeler Bay or Long Cove. A small foot trail parallels the east shore of Jones Brook from Route 73 and leads to the head of Long Cove. This is apparently used by elver (eel) fishermen (fyke nets were seen near the brook outlet in the spring).
- The quarry pond on Clark Island is a local swimming hole. There is no legal access, however the owners informally allow pedestrian access. The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife holds a conservation easement on the southern portion of Clark Island. Five acre Seavey (Sheep) Island, which lies just offshore, is undeveloped.
- The Spectacles and High Island have small inconspicuous camps on them, but are otherwise undeveloped.

REASONS FOR SELECTION AS FOCUS AREA

- Last long undeveloped stretches of salt water frontage on St. George peninsula
- Large habitat block with intact stream and wetland system and a deeryard
- Strategic value to GRLT because of coastal location and identification through community collaboration
- Upper Long Cove, Clark Island, and Wheeler bay are exceptionally scenic areas and Fort Point offers beautiful views of the lower St. George River

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The western and northern boundaries of the focus area follow the Jones Brook watershed boundary. The eastern boundary follows lot lines or roads because existing patterns of development make following ecological boundaries impossible. Fort Point, Wheeler Bay, and Clark Island, although not part of the watershed, are included in the focus area because of the additional ecological, historic, scenic, and public access values that they provide.

CONSERVATION GOALS

- Protect through conservation easement and acquisition an undeveloped corridor (1/4 mile wide) along each side of Jones Brook and, where possible, extensive portions of the watershed, including the deeryard.
- Protect through conservation easement or acquisition an undeveloped riparian buffer that prohibits site development along Upper Long Cove (recommend a *minimum* of 330 feet).
- Protect a 330 foot no structures buffer around the southwestern portion of Wheeler Bay.
- Pursue formal protection for all of Clark Island.
- Pursue protection of an undeveloped corridor that connects the Jones Brook watershed with the Weskeag River focus area.

CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

Potential partnerships

- Work with St. George to add to Town Forest and Kinney Woods properties; foster wildlife-friendly forest management; offer a Beginning With Habitat style presentation to the town that describes the focus area and lays the groundwork for strengthening protection of wetlands and other important wildlife habitats, as well as wetland soils.
- Ask IFW to inspect the Jones Brook deeryard and wading and waterfowl habitats to determine status; if high value, the town can steer development away from these areas; partner with IFW on land acquisitions around Weskeag Wildlife Management area, i.e., projects that build corridor between the marsh and Jones Brook.
- St. George Historical Society and Bureau of Parks and Lands – interest in protecting other tracts that connect Fort Point to Jones Brook?
- Partner with MCHT on island protection, especially Clark I, Seavey I, High I, and the Spectacles.
- Partner with Hurricane Outward Bound and the town to promote working waterfront/town wharf projects.

Opportunities

- There has been strong local support for various conservation projects on the St. George peninsula, which has led to some key acquisitions and construction of a nature trail. The town's recent vote to acquire access to Fort Point increases the potential to connect Jones Brook to the St. George River. This would provide the only public access to salt water in the focus area vicinity.
- A lot could be accomplished through a relatively small number of landowners (e.g., R. Skoglund, J. Robertson, Standard, J. Polky) particularly along Long Cove and the eastern side of Jones Brook).
- Jones Brook frontage is "back land" for many tracts to the west. GRLT may be able to protect these through donated easements or at a relatively low cost.
- There is great potential to create good will by working with the town and historical society on stewardship of town-owned land.

- The land between the upper Jones Brook watershed and the Weskeag Marsh focus area is largely undeveloped. There is potential to protect a corridor between the two that incorporates the large deer wintering area south of Westbrook Street.

Potential management issues

- The area is becoming densely populated; protected properties will need to be actively monitored and cared for.
- There is potential for conflicts between private land owners and the “public.” The nearest public access is in Tenants Harbor. It would be nice to have pedestrian access to shore in another location. A GRLT fee-owned tract would be one way to do this.
- Development is occurring on marginal sites (hydric soils) in the Jones Brook watershed. This could eventually affect water quality and wildlife habitats in the watershed. Focusing protection efforts on riparian zones where roads cross streams and wetlands could help slow this trend down. Protection of some stretches of road frontage on Route 73 and along Kinney Woods Road is needed to prevent isolation of the Jones Brook habitat block from undeveloped land to the north.

Maps/photos:

2004 NRCS aerial true color slides (coverage doesn’t include coastal sections):

St. George tax maps 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25

Knox and Lincoln Counties NRCS soils sheets 56 and 65