

## Build it right: Teaching skills to avoid a trail fail

If you build it, they will come. But build it right, it will last and they will keep coming back. The Maine Trail Center wants to pass along those skills, and also provide a facility for the Appalachian Trail Club's maintenance crew.



Lester Kenway photo

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club is planning a new \$1.3 million facility in Skowhegan that will offer land managers a venue to teach trail-building skills.

By **DEIRDRE FLEMING**  
*Staff Writer*

The need for more durable and sustainable hiking trails in Maine has come into the spotlight during the coronavirus pandemic as land trusts have experienced a surge in hikers, some of them on trails badly in need of repair.

Soon there could be help for those trails, as Maine becomes one of a handful of states in the nation to offer a fixed-site, trail-building school.

On Monday, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club will launch a public fund-raising campaign for the \$1.3 million Maine Trail Center, a multi-use facility

it plans to build near the Kennebec River in Skowhegan. The center will serve as a site to house volunteer trail crews working on the AT, and as a facility other groups can rent or use for trail-building workshops or to teach trail-building design and skills.

The Maine club, which maintains 267 miles of the Appalachian Trail, needs to raise \$600,000 by year's end in order to break ground next spring. Already, the club has raised \$733,000 through private donations and grants from private foundations. And it has secured the 55-acre Skowhegan woodlot where the center will be built with a lease from the Somerset

Woods Trustees, said MATC President Lester Kenway.

Trail experts in Maine are thrilled about this new opportunity.

"Trail development is only growing in demand, especially coming out of the last year when people are realizing how critical trails are to personal well being and the healthy infrastructure of communities," said Mike Smith, director of the Outdoors Sports Institute in Millinocket, which helps rural communities build trails.

"And in Maine, we are not unique in having a certain amount of bad trails.

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## You ready for spring turkey season?

Now is the time to get all your gear together so when it's time, you can focus on the hunt.

**A**nother spring turkey season is almost upon us and it can't come soon enough, unless you're not prepared.

Mentally you might be, but is your equipment all organized and in proper working order? With time to spare, now is when you should go through your gear. It will help you avoid potential



**BOB HUMPHREY**  
**HUNTING**

pitfalls, and bridge the gap before opening day.

First, rescue your vest from whatever musty corner of the garage or basement where it was last

hung or dumped and empty it, completely. Don't just remove the contents; turn it upside down and dump everything out, somewhere you don't mind making a mess. That way you can rid it of all the twigs, fir needles and dirt that might otherwise foul up or clog the stuff you'll eventually put back in. Throw out those stale, flattened and rock-hard, bite-size candy bars, energy bars or whatever other once-edible items you stuck in there and forgot about as well.

Now that everything's out and in plain sight you can take inventory. Put the stuff you need in one pile and the items you could do without in another, like last year's license, broken decoy stakes, empty shotgun hulls and that raccoon skull you picked up.

A big part of your paraphernalia includes calls. Start with the slates. Clean them with a dry towel or rag, then rough up the surface with sandpaper or a Scotch pad, which should be in the pile. If not, add it when finished prepping call surfaces. Do the same with the tips of your strikers.

Next come box calls. Gently sand the bottom of the paddle and the rails with a fine grit (100) sandpaper, then dress the paddle with grease-less (this is very important) chalk. Now test them to make sure they "sing." You may need to adjust spring tension by tightening or loosening the hinge screw to get just the right tone. While you're at it, replace the rubber band that holds the call together when not in use.

Now inspect your diaphragm calls, and this is why it's a good idea to do this well ahead of time. Don't be cheap. If they're worn out, dirty or the reeds are irreparably stuck together, throw them out and get new ones. If they're salvageable, put them in a bowl with some water and

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### CANOEING IN MAINE



Photos by Christine Wolfe

Reflection rise from the shoreline up river beyond Cape Arundel Golf Club while paddling the Kennebunk River.

## A paddle along the shores provides a new view of Cape Arundel and the surrounding splendor



The Boston & Maine Railroad trestle, at the turnaround point of this up-and-back trip while paddling the Kennebunk River, is an impressive structure, and a good place to stop for lunch.

Starting near Dock Square, the adventure puts nature on display, with a golf course and railroad trestle adding to the charm.

By **MICHAEL PERRY**

**W**hile we wait for our inland waterways to shed the last of their winter ice, there are many outstanding April canoeing options available near the coast.

We recently enjoyed a four-hour, 10-mile round trip paddle on the Kennebunk River from the Old Grist Mill site near Dock Square in Kennebunkport upriver to the impressive Boston & Maine Railroad trestle. While there are homes along the river, there are also many serene wilderness sections to meander through. Chances are good you will have your "first of" 2021 sighting. We saw our first blue heron and first turkey



Mallards were seen and heard around every turn.

vulture of the year, but will leave the first osprey sighting to you. Around every bend, flocks of geese and mallards announced our arrival with loud

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## State agency seeks input on management of striped fishery

Striped bass fishermen in Maine will have the opportunity to comment on management of the species on Wednesday when the Maine Department of Marine Resources hosts a virtual meeting from 6 to 8 p.m.

The purpose of the forum is to provide updated information on the management of striped bass and to

gather feedback on management of the Maine population from saltwater guides, recreational fishermen or anyone else interested in the recreational fishery.

Specifically, the department will provide data related to the abundance of juvenile stripers and angler activity based on the electronic logbook as well as the timeline of management actions

expected to be taken by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Fishermen do not need to register for the meeting, and can join the virtual forum at [bit.ly/2PUcZHJ](https://bit.ly/2PUcZHJ). They also can call in to the forum at 209-4724 and use the identification code 766-620-554.

— Deirdre Fleming, Staff Writer



Michael G. Seamans/Morning Sentinel



COMMENTARY

# Belichick remains quiet on QB plans

It's the big question for Patriots fans heading into the draft and Bill Belichick seems to be keeping all options open, such as moving up from the No. 15 spot.

By KAREN GUREGIAN  
*Boston Herald*

The Patriots plan at quarterback has everyone on pins and needles. Is Cam Newton really and truly the guy going forward?

By far, that's the most important question lurking over the Patriots heading into the 2021 draft. Between the suspense, intrigue, and plain old curiosity, there is no greater Patriots topic on the board.

Who will lead Bill Belichick's team this season, and beyond?

Quarterback is the most important position on the field, and with all the money spent on upgrades across the board, specifically on offense, that player will either put the Patriots over the top, or keep them riding in neutral.

So during his first session with the media since the Patriots finished the season out of the playoffs, what did Coach Bill Belichick have to say? What's the plan? Where does he stand with respect to all the quarterbacks in the 2021 draft class?

Let's just say if anyone was looking for any hints or clues, a Belichick press conference is the wrong place to look.

The Patriots head coach put on a classic performance. He was polite, gave long-winded answers, and essentially said next to nothing.

He gave a master class in generic answers. Not that he should tip his hand, but a little insight might have helped on the quarterback front. Instead, there were quite a few generalities tossed out by the Patriots head coach, with one possible exception.

Belichick was asked if he would over-draft a quarterback he likes, knowing that player might not be available where they have him graded.

The underlying point here was whether or not Belichick would move up from his spot at No. 15 in order to grab the quarterback he wanted, be it Justin Fields, Trey Lance, Mac Jones, or whoever.

It's what everyone in Patriots Nation is clamoring to find out.

While Belichick didn't commit, it's fair to say he didn't exactly rule it out, either.



Ashley Landis/Associated Press

Will New England Coach Bill Belichick and the Patriots try to move up in the draft to select a quarterback? "That question really applies to every position on the board," Belichick said, remaining coy on his plans.

"That question really applies to every position on the board," Belichick said, later adding, "At some point, you decide to make that investment, and we all see how the player turns out."

"That's fairly common at every position. There's always players at every spot that fall into that category, that you know you're going to have to draft higher than what they've done. If you're willing to do that, and that's what's needed to get the player, then you draft him at a higher spot and hope that his production eventually reflects the potential you saw in him."

Are the Patriots willing? Hard to say based on that answer. Belichick moved up the board in the first round to get both Dont'a Hightower and Chandler Jones in the 2012 draft.

So it's been done. With a quarterback, the answer should be obvious. Of course teams have to be willing.

The Chiefs made a huge move to land Patrick Mahomes. Two Super Bowl appearances later, with one title, they're happy they did. The Bills slipped up the board for Josh Allen. One AFC East title later after more than two decades of futility makes them glad they did.

The Patriots?

Hopefully, Belichick is just being coy, and has quarterback as the priority. Hopefully, he really isn't lumping quarterback in with every other position.

In an offense-driven league, the

quarterback stands alone.

Belichick implied the Patriots have gone over various scenarios in their head, and will have an answer on draft day what they'll do at No. 15.

"Normally, something will happen. There could very well be a player there that either you don't expect to be there, or maybe he is a couple spots, at 12, 13, and he's still on the board," said Belichick. "Then the question comes, do you move up and try and get that player that's fallen a little bit? Those are the kinds of scenarios you go through. Which players would you move up for and get, which players would you not move up for that you'd wait and decide whether you want to pick them at the spot you're at?"

Belichick has never taken a quarterback in the first round. The earliest was the second round when they chose Jimmy Garoppolo with the No. 62 overall pick. While some are hoping he'd move up from No. 15 to snag the quarterback of the future, it still remains hard imagining him making that kind of move.

As for Newton, the question never got asked. Why re-sign him, especially after what he showed last season? Time ran out on the session before anyone touched on Newton.

In terms of the style of quarterback Belichick was seeking, whether it was a pocket passer like Tom Brady, or the now-trending mobile quarterback like Newton, the Patriots coach seemed open to both.

"Honestly, I'm not that concerned what the general trends are and all that. It's really just trying to help our team, find the best methods we can to make our team as competitive we can, whatever that entails," said Belichick. "There's certainly a lot of chapters in that book, a lot of different ways to do it. Whatever position you're talking about, if you want to enhance their skills, then you want to adapt a little bit what your scheme is to do that. That's a decision you have to make."

What decision will the Patriots make?

After 24 minutes with Belichick, it's still anyone's guess.

## EDELMAN

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ty that spanned 2001-18.

But was he transcendent and consistently great?

Clutch? Definitely. Valuable? No question. But transcendent and consistently great?

Listen, it's no skin off my back if Edelman or any player is voted in or not.

I am all for elevating players and their legacies, appreciating the individual over the jersey, and giving guys who deserve it a pat on the back.

But that's exactly what I'm saying: Edelman just retired. Let's appreciate what he did and how well he did it. He had a great career, especially as a 2009 seventh-round pick out of Kent State.

He is the latest example that all of these high-and-mighty GMs and coaches who thumb their noses at the analytics and mock draft communities often know no better.

(In fact, Hall of Fame sports writer Rick Gosselin was the one who tipped off Belichick to Edelman during the draft process in the first place. And I will never forget Gosselin saying on a podcast in recent years that he didn't appreciate Belichick telling that story, thereby becoming the first source of Gosselin's to out himself.)

There is no need, however, to force the Hall of Fame moniker upon Edelman or any player who wasn't transcendent and consistently great right when they retire.

Because doing that is what elicits the very reasonable retort that he is not, and gums up the discussion of Edelman's career, with detractors and counterpoints that might tear him down.

For example, my preference is to appreciate Edelman's career for what it was. But if one would use his Super Bowl MVP

award as a point in his favor, I would respond that he shouldn't have won that award.

The Patriots held a Rams offense averaging 32.9 points per game to three points in a 13-3 Super Bowl win, and an offensive player with no touchdowns and three second-half catches was voted the game's most valuable player.

(There's a strike against the sports writers.)

This is actually a perfect explanation of why these snap Hall of Fame conversations are happening:

Enough people watched that game and decided Edelman (10 catches, 141 yards) was more critical to the result than Dont'a Hightower or another defensive standout.

Hard to believe, but it happened, and it will stand in the history books forever.

That said, Edelman of course had a terrific career: 620 catches for 6,822 yards and 36 touchdowns in the regular season; 118 catches for 1,442 yards and five touchdowns in the playoffs.

He threw passes, including two TDs.

He returned punts and kicks.

He carried the ball.

He played defense.

He played through injuries.

He was tough as nails.

However, he was not the best player at his position or one of the best players in his sport for years on end. He was not transcendent and consistently great. And that's OK.

"He could, and did, do everything," Belichick said in a glowing statement. "Catch, run, throw, block, return, cover, tackle – all with an edge and attitude that would not allow him to fail under any circumstance. Julian Edelman is the ultimate competitor and it was a privilege to coach him."

High and deserved praise from arguably the best NFL head coach of all time.

And that is enough. Or it should be.

## OUTDOORS

### TRAILS

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In general, it's safe to say that across the country the idea of sustainable trails has picked up a lot of momentum. And with more people getting outside more, trails that are not built well degrade."

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club, founded in 1935, is one of 31 volunteer-led clubs along the Appalachian Trail that each spring bring in hundreds of volunteers to repair and maintain the AT. The club hires experienced trail workers to lead crews – with a total of about 40 individuals each season – to maintain the long-distance trail in Maine, one of the steepest, most rugged and remote sections of the AT. Historically, those trails crews have tented on land rented by the club, which provides their meals.

But finding the land to rent has become challenging, Kenway said. The Maine Trail Center will have two large buildings with a large conference room, kitchen, pantry, two bunkhouses that sleep 24 people, bathrooms and a large barn for storage. It will be located just 40 miles from Caratunk, about midway along the AT in Maine.

In addition, the Maine Trail Center can function as a trail-building training center for other land stewards in Maine, which has around 90 land trusts and a half dozen mountain bike clubs, all of which are building and maintaining trails.

"We can facilitate learning so people can stay for two-day workshops and actually do the work. These kinds of things you can't learn through a book or website. It's best done in the woods," said Kenway, who owns a trail-building company, Trail Services LLC, and has led workshops for the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service out West.

While trail-building companies like Kenway's have become more common in recent years, a fixed-site trail-building center where workshops are taught are uncommon across the country. The Maine Trail Center would be the first in Maine.

Most fixed-site, trail-building schools in the United States – the few that exist – are located at colleges, said Taylor Goodrich, American Trails communications specialist in California.

"As far as a school or center – they're growing, and there are sure to be more in the future. But this represents a great opportunity for Maine," said Hawk Metheny, the Northeast regional director for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which over-

sees the management of the 2,193-mile AT.

And with more people getting out on trails and public lands across the country during the pandemic, the need to educate land stewards on how to build trails that will drain properly and not erode from heavy foot traffic is a growing concern.

In the past year, the Outdoor Sports Institute partnered with the International Mountain Bicycling Association in Boulder, Colorado, to offer online trail-building courses when they couldn't be held in the Katahdin region during COVID-19. The 50-person course that cost \$425 sold out each of three times and drew people

from across Maine, as well as Canada and Europe, said Smith, the institute's director.

"It's been fun to watch folks engaging with – and learning from – each other," Smith said. "If there is a place like the new center in Skowhegan that will host trail education, we very actively support that."

Along with the explosion in trail building, there are miles of older hiking trails in the state that were built poorly, said Gary Stelpflug, Acadia National Park's 20-year trail superintendent.

"There are so many land trusts here. And when people first get hold of land they want to conserve, the first thing they do is put trails on them. And they're

not always good at it. I know, because I hike everywhere in Maine," Stelpflug said.

At Acadia, there is a lot of institutional trail-building knowledge on Stelpflug's staff. But he said new employees still are trained by experts that Acadia brings in or new hires are sent to trail-building seminars at other national parks. Once, Acadia brought in Kenway to teach a workshop.

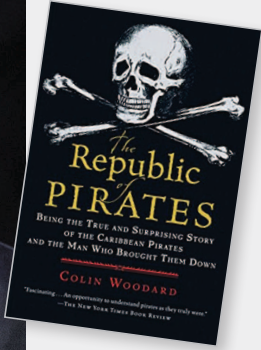
In-depth training is needed because there is a complex science to building sustainable trails that drain well or bridges that will last for more than a few years, said Jane Arbuckle, the 25-year stewardship director at Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Many land trusts don't have that expertise in-house, Arbuckle said.

"A lot of places where trails are built, the trail builders are doing the best they can but they don't have the experience to understand what it will look like in 10 years," Arbuckle said. "All kinds of trails have been built over the years. We need to have the trails withstand the increased use, and withstand the changes to climate change. With increased rain events, there is increased erosion. Having well-built trails now is pretty important."

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## NEWSROOM LIVE WITH COLIN WOODARD



### RUM, DEMOCRACY AND THE CRASH: THE SHORT HISTORY OF THE PIRATES' REPUBLIC

Join us for a conversation with author and Press Herald state and national affairs reporter Colin Woodard on the Golden Age of Piracy and the legendary buccaneers who not only sailed the oceans, wreaking havoc and disrupting trade in the Caribbean, but established their own republic in the West Indies.

Woodard's book 'The Republic of Pirates' is one of the sources of the international hit Netflix docudrama series 'The Lost Pirate Kingdom,' which includes on-camera interviews with Woodard on Blackbeard's pirate gang and their reign of lawlessness on the high seas. Woodard will sit down with Press Herald web editor Katherine Lee.

THURSDAY, MAY 13, at 7:00 P.M.

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