

ASPEN LEADERSHIP GROUP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MAINE ISLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION
PORTLAND, MAINE



MAINE ISLAND TRAIL **ASSOCIATION**

Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the Maine Island Trail Association in the search for an Executive Director.

The Executive Director will be responsible for the overall management of the organization, in partnership with the Board of Trustees, including oversight and evolution of the organization's strategic direction, its brand and reputation, programs, finances, fundraising, human resources, and all day-to-day management and operations.

The Maine Island Trail Association is a membership organization dedicated to advancing a model of thoughtful use and volunteer stewardship of Maine's wild islands, creating an inspiring recreational water trail that is cared for by the people who use it. Founded in 1988 to administer the newly established Maine Island Trail, MITA's founding belief is that people who love to recreate on the islands can be successfully encouraged to play a role in the stewardship of these fragile and treasured places. MITA's multi-decade success is evidenced by the fact that islands on the Trail are often healthier environments than islands that are left entirely alone. MITA members include paddlers, sailors, powerboaters, and non-boaters alike. As part of their membership benefits, members receive comprehensive information about the Trail including a 350-page guidebook and access to the MITA app, helpful tips for safe and responsible boating, and guidelines for low-impact recreation. MITA members are also the most crucial component in helping keep the Trail healthy and pristine through their tremendous volunteer efforts and generous support.

MITA boasts some 8,000 active members, all of whom play a role in maintaining the Trail and its network of over 200 sites. This includes lending support through membership fees and donations or performing stewardship work as MITA volunteers. As the Maine Island Trail and MITA have evolved, so have the organization's initiatives to do even more to carry out its mission. While still guided by the founding principle of stewardship through recreational access, MITA continues to grow and find new ways to do more for its members, its land-owning partners, and the Trail. MITA is as excited for the future as it is proud of its history.

The heart of MITA is volunteer stewardship, which establishes trust with island owners and sustains the Trail. While there are other ways to engage people in MITA's mission, taking people on stewardship outings is its most practical and impactful way of bringing people into the mission. MITA is engaging in efforts to broaden the demographic of members and non-members, including younger people and families and the fishing community, enhancing visibility of MITA's mission to new constituents.

Island access is critically important to MITA members, often being why they first join MITA. Individuals encounter barriers to access including limited knowledge, boating skills, and financial resources. Indeed, being challenging destinations to reach is part of the islands' allure and an implicit part of their management but these barriers may be too daunting to engage future generations whose interests, skills, and resources may differ from those of MITA's founders. MITA's work with intermediary Trail access partners is increasing the capability of a larger and more diverse group of people to enjoy coastal recreation.

The quality of the Maine Island Trail experience is dependent on the wild character and natural and cultural resources of the Maine Coast. Maintaining that wild character is a challenge in the face of a seemingly unending presence of marine debris—in particular plastic—that makes its way into the waters of Maine. MITA's stewardship programs are increasingly called to address environmental issues that affect the islands including invasive species that alter and sometimes overwhelm upland ecosystems and contribute to species loss, and the potential effects of sea level rise on the future integrity of the individual islands and the Trail itself. MITA is adopting new roles to witness and communicate conditions observed along the Trail, sharing this information with partners, but leaving responses to the discretion of individuals.

Without cooperative island owners, there is no Trail. MITA continues to serve and earn the trust of its island owners via stewardship while seeking new ways to add value in mutually beneficial areas. Although MITA does not directly conserve land, it connects private landowners to land trusts and facilitates conservation efforts and continues to deepen its relationships with island owners as an indispensable partner in the myriad issues they face.

The Maine Island Trail is an example of sustainable recreation: A small, grassroots community successfully established a nationally known recreational asset based on trust and collaboration with private and public landowners. The Maine Island Trail has grown steadily for over 30 years, resulting in a spectacular wilderness resource for outdoor forays and adventures with no equivalent in North America.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to Board of Trustees. The Executive Director will oversee ten total staff, including three direct reports.

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In the mid 1980's the State of Maine wondered if there might be some recreational value in the approximately 1,300 small islands it owned. The Island Institute, selected by the state to undertake this survey, hired David R. Getchell and his trusty Torngat, an 18-foot metal Lund outboard, to inspect these state-owned islands from Penobscot Bay all the way to the Canadian border. During his exploration, Getchell realized that a wilderness treasure existed right in our front yard and "here was a rare chance to develop an outstanding waterway for small boats." In 1987 he wrote an article proposing such an island-studded waterway and further suggested that this unique "water trail" could be managed by the people who used it. The following year, "Getch," joined by 30 others of like mind, founded the Maine Island Trail Association to encourage stewardship and low-impact use of coastal islands by small boaters for picnicking and camping. The trail began with 42 of the state-owned islands and within a year, three landowners had added their private islands to the trail. This agreement, based on trust and a handshake, would allow MITA members access for day trips or camping and in return, MITA agreed to monitor and help care for their islands.

Today the Trail extends 358 miles from Kittery to the Canadian border, consists of 220 sites, has over 8000 members, dozens of monitor skippers, nine trusty Lund boats, a committed fulltime staff of 10, an engaged Board of Trustees, and hundreds of volunteers who donate thousands of hours to carry out MITA's beloved mission. Remarkably, all of this growth is still based on trust and a handshake, and we remain committed to the vision outlined by our founder: combining the magic of the islands with the practical duties of care and stewardship for recreational access.

Building on this mature structure and honoring our history, the incoming Executive Director will lead MITA forward to a new and exciting chapter focused on expanding its donor base, enhancing communication with its members, promoting programs to increase access for the people who live in or visit Maine including the Wabanaki People of the Dawn, and fostering and expanding relationships with our many and varied stakeholders and partners. MITA's dedicated Board of Trustees will continue to work closely and actively with the new Executive Director and staff to support these initiatives. Member support is the heart of the organization and meeting our members is one of the joys of leading MITA. The Executive Director will be encouraged to venture out on the Trail to participate in cleanups, work alongside staff and volunteers, and meet the remarkable owners of these wild islands.

After all the work, in the end, there are the eternal wild islands whose ethos permeates our days with their beauty and their challenges. Many MITA members feel inspiration in these words by Rachel Lyman Field, "If once you have slept on an island, you'll never be quite the same." Maine has extraordinary people, spectacular scenery, and this unique organization to shepherd and lead. Come join us.

—Nancy Egan, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director will

- ensure that the organization operates in a manner consistent with its mission and vision, and the needs, both current and future, of its members, through skilled management and delegation;
- in partnership with the Board of Trustees, implement and monitor progress on the action items in MITA's [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and steward a collaborative process to develop the next strategic plan;
- increase, refine, and diversify membership opportunities across seasons, geographies, and constituencies, including visitors and residents, to broaden the organization's reach and impact;
- oversee all aspects of the organization's development plan and lead by example as a frontline fundraiser;
- enhance strategic partnerships, stewardship opportunities, and skill building opportunities with corporate groups, non-profits, camps, fishing communities, educational institutions, outfitters, tour operators, boating programs, and other potential stakeholders to increase awareness of island access opportunities;
- develop, maintain, and enhance relationships based on mutual trust with current, prospective, and future generation island owners;
- serve as a compelling spokesperson and representative of the organization and as an unimpeachable authority on the Maine coast and the Trail, representing MITA in strategic discussions about environmental, economic, or policy issues that affect the Trail;
- participate as a leader in big-picture conversations at the intersection of recreation, stewardship, conservation, and access;
- oversee communication efforts including branding and marketing to ensure a robust pipeline of new members, the retention of current members, and the engagement of other stakeholders

through effective partnerships, marketing, and customer service that maximizes revenue from members, donors, foundations, government agencies, corporations, and other philanthropic sources;

- cultivate a strong and transparent working relationship with the Board of Trustees, ensuring open communication regarding finances, programs, and performance against established metrics and milestones;
- assist the board in the identification, cultivation, and recruitment of new trustees with the goal of adding skills, experience, financial and non-financial capacities, and community connections to a diverse and inclusive board that is representative of the MITA community, engaged in the organization's success, and willing to contribute and secure financial resources;
- hire, manage, mentor, and retain talented staff able to take on increasing responsibilities and leadership, and create and promote a positive work environment that provides all staff with opportunities for professional growth and advancement;
- work with the Finance Committee to oversee the organization's finances including developing financial plans, monitoring budgetary performance, and ensuring that sound financial controls are in place;
- ensure that MITA programs and member engagement services are properly resourced for short- and long-term goals, needs, and innovation; and
- supervise proper governance including annual meeting planning and execution, governance documents, and an annual financial report.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Maine Island Trail Association is led by a mature governing Board of Trustees of 18 members (up to 20). The board is an exceptional and dedicated group representing a wide range of professions, career stages, boating experience, and coastal regions. An inspiring group with close ties to the staff, trustees are attracted to the MITA mission and retained by the activities and shared enjoyment of the group itself. The full board meets bi-monthly, and each trustee serves on at least one working committee where the bulk of work gets done. The Executive Director serves in an ad hoc capacity and staffs all board meetings, including an annual off-site retreat. Trustees serve for up to three three-year terms, and most trustees have historically completed all nine years. Officers typically serve in two-year terms. The board is currently led by Rob Nichols (Chair), Nancy Egan (Vice Chair), Jeff Skaggs (Treasurer), and Meghan Stasz (Secretary). Details are available [here](#).

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Maine Island Trail Association seeks an Executive Director with

- a commitment to the mission of the Maine Island Trail Association—to advance a model of thoughtful use and volunteer stewardship of Maine's wild islands, creating an inspiring recreational water trail that is cared for by the people who use it;
- a deep understanding of membership organizations including member engagement, expansion, investment, and retention;
- experience with the development and implementation of mission-driven strategic plans;
- excellent management skills and an ability to hire, manage, and retain high functioning teams;
- a commitment to professional development and an ability to inspire staff and nurture emerging leaders;

- fundraising experience across revenue streams including membership, major gifts, corporate sponsorship, grants, and strategic partnerships;
- an understanding of brand management and communication principles across platforms;
- an ability to serve as a compelling, trusted representative of the organization across multiple stakeholders;
- experience partnering with, building, and utilizing the talent, time, and resources of effective, engaged boards;
- financial fluency and an ability to set financial priorities and oversee the finances of a membership organization;
- an understanding of program development and oversight; and
- a genuine connection to nature and enthusiasm for outdoor recreation.

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least five years of successful leadership experience at an organization of similar or larger size and scope is preferred for this position. The Maine Island Trail Association will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to MITA, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary for this position is \$112,500 annually. Maine Island Trail Association offers a competitive package of benefits.

LOCATION

This position is in Portland, Maine.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of the Maine Island Trail Association and the responsibilities and qualifications specified in the position prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: [Executive Director, Maine Island Trail Association](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact Gregory Leet: gregoryleet@aspingleadershipgroup.com.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.