



## Maine Right-of-Way Discovery Grant Program

Town: **Stockton Springs**

Grant Year: **2006**

With a Maine Right-of-Way Discovery Grant, the Town of Stockton Springs defended its rights regarding lands at the end of Middle Street and secured public access to Stockton Harbor.

In the 1970s, the Town of Stockton Springs received a gift of property that provided public water access on the Stockton Village side of Stockton Harbor. Located on Middle Street, the land was bisected by the Bangor and Aroostock Railroad.

Thirty years later, creditors forced the B&A Railroad into bankruptcy. The railroad's land in Stockton Springs was sold in 2004 to the land development company Mid Coast Ventures. When the new owner had the lands surveyed in 2006, it found that it apparently had an ownership interest in the Town's parcels on Middle Street.



The situation created a dilemma for the Town because numerous people relied on the Middle Street property as a way to access the water for various uses. Townspeople organized an effort to preserve the Town's right to the shore, urging the Selectmen to take action. While maps and historical pictures seemed to provide evidence of the Town's right to the land, legal research was necessary to clarify ownership.

To help resolve the situation, the Town of Stockton Springs applied for and received a Maine Right-of-Way Discovery Grant that supported legal research in the registry of deeds. With the grant, the Town paid an attorney who reviewed factual data and survey information, conducted historical research, and performed a deed and title search. The attorney also advised the Town during settlement negotiations with Mid Coast Ventures.

As a result of the work supported by the Right-of-Way Discovery Grant, the Town was able to reach a settlement agreement with the land developer. The town negotiated the acquisition of the property rights that it did not hold using state Land for Maine's Future funds and federal Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program funds. Public access is now secured, and the Town is sprucing the place up, building a kiosk, placing a sign, and installing a picnic table.