

The Burnt Coat Harbor Light on Swans Island's Hockamock Head will get some significant repairs thanks to an $85,000 National Maritime Heritage grant. PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF SWAN'S ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

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Grant to help Burnt Coat Tower to be open this summer

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SWANS ISLAND — Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station will undergo some much needed repairs thanks to an $85,000 grant and matching funds.

The National Maritime Heritage Grant was awarded recently to the town of Swans Island for repairs to the exterior of the lighthouse. Because the $85,000 does not cover all costs of the restoration work, matching funds will be provided by the town. These additional funds were raised through donations and the work of the Friends of Swan's Island Lighthouse.

"We've had a major restoration project going on with that lighthouse," said Project Manager Eric Chetwynd, who is a member of the island's Lighthouse Committee.

In 1994, the town of Swans Island took over the lighthouse at the request of the United States Coast Guard. A professional plan and assessment for restoration work was published in 2007, according to Chetwynd.

Since then, repairs and restoration have included the roof, exterior, windows and floors of the keeper's house, as well as windows in the light tower.

Upcoming repairs will be focused on the exterior masonry of the light tower and the metal catwalk surrounding the lantern.

"We will start right away," said Chetwynd, who lives on Swans Island five months of the year.

This summer, the committee will have contractors come out to get their ducks in a row, Chetwynd said. Construction work on the project is expected to begin in spring 2019.

Located at the tip of Hockamock Head on Swans Island, Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station is approximately 150 years old. It is part of a 20-acre park that contains 1.8 miles of hiking trails. During the summer season, the lighthouse and the keeper's house are open to visitors. They are expected to remain open during the 2018 summer season, including the second story apartment that rents for $1,000 per week.

Maine's State Historic Preservation Office will oversee the work made possible by the NMHG grant.

"They will pay us money on a reimbursement basis," Chetwynd said about disbursement of the grant funds.

The NMHG program is administered by the National Park Service. It is funded through a percentage of the proceeds from the sale or scrapping of obsolete vessels of the National Defense Reserve Fleet.

This year, the amount available for historic preservation projects was $2.6 million. Competition for the grants was fierce. The NMHG received funding requests totaling more than $8 million.

Visit www.burntcoatharborlight.com/restoration-project/