



NATIVE LAND CONSERVANCY



Welcome Summer 2023

Rights of Nature
NLC Land Care
Welcome Jodi!

THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

The idea that our land and natural resources are living beings and have a right to thrive is embedded in indigenous cultural knowledge. "The Earth is a 'she' and she is our mother" says Marlene Lopez, Board Member and Mashpee Wampanoag Rabbit Clan Mother. "When we humanize her it makes it more personal." Now there is a movement to establish legal rights to our threatened ecosystems and natural world, similar to human rights, called Rights of Nature or RoN. RoN has been embraced by a Mashpee Wampanoag youth group calling themselves Herring Ambassadors leading the Mashpee Wampanoag Herring Project. "It is a good place to start and it is good to see our young people stepping up to protect this resource," says Marlene. "The herring have always been sacred to us." Every spring the herring migrate from the ocean to return to the ponds of their birth to spawn. While hundreds of thousands of eggs are left, less than 1 percent of them return to spawn the following season and those few are further hindered by development, pollution,

overfishing, and obstructions on their migratory journey. RoN is a global movement that was adopted by the Bioneers to protect nature by granting legal rights to nature and advocating for nature to exist, persist, flourish, and evolve. It essentially affords the fish and their ecosystem personhood.

A nonprofit organization based in Santa Fe New Mexico, "Bioneers is inspiring and realizing a shift to live on Earth in ways that honor the web of life, each other and future generations." David Greendeer, a member of the Ho Chunk tribe and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Administrator is a member of the Bioneers who introduced the concept of RoN to the tribe last year. He said the Mashpee Wampanoag youth are in a unique position to exercise RoN on behalf of the herring as members of a federally acknowledged tribe that has never relinquished hunting and fishing rights. A lot of what they are doing is public awareness through social media about the need to rebuild the fish ladders at Santuit, Mashpee and Quashnet Rivers. "Essentially they are the stewards of the herring," David says. He added that the group is working on developing tribal legislation

that will recognize the herring as citizens and thus provide them with rights. The tribal law will be a foundation for a compact with the state for the tribe to act in an official capacity as a guardian of the herring. Bioneers will then help the tribe to support the reconstruction of the herring runs.

Marlene was glad to see the effort being made and added, "That ecosystem, those herring, they are a part of our circle of life and up to now have had no voice. They are the ones who will continue on to preserve this part of our culture. It is important for young people to be on ground zero for the herring. Understanding the herring is important because in learning about the life cycle of the herring they were learning about themselves, learning about their people."

There are so many grievances in the natural world, so many abuses of the earth she said. This is just the beginning, "We have to support it spiritually and raise awareness about Rights of Nature. Preservation is the natural right of this land and we acknowledge the right of the land by taking care of the land."

NLC Welcomes Jodi Keegan

Mashpee Wampanoag tribal member Jo-Anne Marie “Jodi” Keegan has joined the NLC staff to serve as its full-time administrative assistant. Jodi comes with more than 30 years of professional experience in fundraising, development, and managing staff and programs in banking and nonprofits. She is thrilled to be part of the NLC team. “I like the way that NLC aligns with my personal values,” she said, “and I feel like the experience I bring will help to establish a foundation for the rapid growth that I anticipate will be the future of NLC.”

Executive Director Diana Ruiz says having Jodi on board elevates the mission of the organization.

“From day one, Jodi has brought the full force of her talent, heart, and wit to her vital role at the NLC. Her wide-ranging skillset is certain to advance the NLC’s ability to rescue more land and support cultural preservation.”

Jodi sees the work being done at NLC as critical to addressing the climate crisis, polluted waters, clear-cutting of land that is a threat to Mother Earth. It is an imbalance she feels is beyond a critical tipping point.

“These and many other factors are incrementally diluting our ability to pass on the cultural knowledge that makes us who we are as people.”

In her traditional capacity Jodi is a spiritual water carrier who is often engaged in ceremony reinforcing her deep connection with the water.

Working at NLC she says is the final stop on her professional journey.

“This is an opportunity for personal growth and learning for me and connecting with the land,” she said. A life-long resident of Cape Cod and an avid outdoors woman, Jodi hopes her experience working at NLC will help make her a better caretaker of the land she loves.

“The land and waters deserve our commitment to ensure their health and well-being for generations to come.”



NLC LAND CARE

CHRONICLE VISITS THE WAMPANOAG COMMON LANDS

In June we were visited by Chandra Sangita of WCVB Channel 5 for an episode being produced for the Chronicle news magazine program about Wildlands and Conservation. We hosted Chandra and her cameraman at the Wampanoag Common Lands in Kingston where they learned about the overall mission of NLC and the ongoing work to restore the WCL to its natural condition. Staff and several volunteers were on hand as work was being done to remove invasive species including knot weed and bittersweet. An air date has not been set at this time but we will let you know as soon as it is.

Nemasket River Village Land Care

On the last day of May we welcomed a dozen volunteers to the Nemasket River Village property in Middleboro for an intensive day of invasive species removal. We focused on a region of the land where bittersweet vines had invaded profusely and overtaken many native trees. Also one of our volunteers, Russ Cohen, brought along some black birch to transplant where some multiflora rose had been removed. The weather was perfect and work was made quick with so many hands. We were able to make significant progress in wiping out the bittersweet and even had time for a quick tour of the land and a trail leading down to the Nemasket River. It was easy to see why the Wampanoag ancestors chose that place for it's natural beauty and access to water.

NLC partnered with the town of Middleborough and the Archaeological Conservancy to protect this 20.35 acre Middleborough property at Ja-Mar farm, now known as Nemasket River Village. An archaeological study of the site found more than 56,000 artifacts including evidence of some 73 dwellings dating back roughly 7,500 years indicating its significance as an ancient Wampanoag Village. The Nemasket River flows along the southern boundaries of this location that is spiritually, historically, and culturally important to the Wampanoag and is the only archaeologically intact village of its kind in Massachusetts. The NLC is proud to offer the highest level of protection for this significant place. This is one of the ways we honor the ancestors.



NLC LAND CARE

Students Tend to Land at WCL

On a couple of early Spring days this year, about 30 plus students from MIT, Harvard, and Brandeis, MIT leaders, and friends of the Wampanoag Common Lands (WCL) at Muddy Pond in Kingston gathered with the NLC to learn about the return of ancestral homelands to the Wampanoag Nation. In January 2022 the deed to 32.4 acres was transferred to the NLC by the Muddy Pond Trust and has since been under NLC's conservation care. Students listened to Conservation Ecologist, Tim Simmons, share on the land and pond, its history, the flora and fauna, and what's been returning since the demolition of over 15 camp buildings.

Other NLC friends who participated included: Raquel Halsey, Exec. Director of the North American Indian Center of Boston, John Walkey, Director of Waterfront and Climate Justice Initiatives, GreenRoots, Pete Westover, Founder, ConservationWorks, and Peter Crawley, Principal, Satoria Sustainability Consulting.

Over the past 3 years, MIT's Dept of Urban Studies and Planning has been engaging students in an innovative course, named Indigenous Environmental Planning taught by Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes and co-advised by 4 indigenous environmental justice activists including NLC Board Officer, Leslie Jonas.

Each Spring, we invite the class to join us for land care projects in the interest of helping Muddy Pond to heal and regain the eco system balance from which she once thrived. The two days made for a truly rewarding experience for all, and the students began to learn some of the ways in which traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) can support threatened species and rebalance the site.



UPCOMING EVENTS!

Brewster Conservation Day

Look for NLC at the Brewster Conservation Day 2023 on Saturday July 8 at Drummer Boy Park in Brewster, from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm and learn the art of making a corn husk doll. In keeping with the theme of this year's event "Native Plants – Healthy Habitats" we will be demonstrating how to make biodegradable dolls from all natural native materials - corn husks. The NLC table will be one of more than 30 unique displays including exhibits about native plant gardening and pollinators and interactive activities on aquaculture, recycling, and alternative septic systems. Plus, learn about our aquifer, ocean resources, coastal erosion, herring migration, whale rescue, and alternative energy. Tour the blacksmith shop and the windmill, see a weed harvester and taste some Brewster oysters! NLC is excited to bring the indigenous tradition of corn husk dolls to this event sponsored by the Brewster Conservation Trust, the Town of Brewster-Natural Resources Department, the Brewster Historical Society and the Brewster Ponds Coalition.

Land Care Day at WCL

Pack a lunch and join us for a special day of land care and invasive plant removal at the Wampanoag Common Lands, 266 Bishops Hwy, Kingston on July 6th from 10 am to 2 pm.

The 32 acre parcel is bordered by Muddy Pond and over 300 acres of a pristine white pine preserve. This beautiful site is also recognized as having historic, and cultural significance, and is home to state listed endangered species.

Bring gloves, bug spray, and hand tools. Light refreshments will be provided.

RSVP to paula@nativelandconservancy.org.

*A rain date will be the following day, July 7



NLC SPOTLIGHT PAULA PETERS



PAULA PETERS MASHPEE WAMPANOAG NATIVE LAND CONSERVANCY



Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Member, Paula Peters, joined the NLC staff in March of 2023 as NLC's first Communications and Programs Coordinator. Paula was a member of the founding board of NLC. With an impressive background in journalism, marketing, and film production, Paula graduated from Bridgewater State College with a BA in Communications in 1986. For more than a decade she worked as a journalist for the Cape Cod Times and is now co-owner of SmokeSignals, a Native owned and operated creative production agency. As an independent scholar and writer of Native and Wampanoag history, Paula produced the traveling exhibit "Our" Story: 400 Years of Wampanoag History and The Wampum Belt Project documenting the art



and tradition of wampum in the contemporary Wampanoag community. is the executive producer of the highly acclaimed 2016 documentary film, *Mashpee Nine*, and author of the companion book, *a story of law enforcement abuse of power and cultural justice in the Wampanoag community in 1976*. As a well-respected, politically, socially and culturally active citizen of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and NLC's new Communications and Programs Coordinator, we not only honor the excellent commitment to Wampanoag history and culture that Paula so inimitably practices, but we also celebrate her dedication to NLC's vision of Land Rescue in our 11th edition, 2023 Summer Solstice e-newsletter.