



Town of Bristol, Rhode Island

Department of Community Development

10 Court Street
Bristol, RI 02809
bristolri.gov
401-253-7000

September 21, 2023

TO: Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk
FROM: Diane M. Williamson, Director
RE: **Press Release for Sowams Heritage Area Project – Community Conversations
Consent Agenda**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Diane M. Williamson", is written over the "FROM:" line of the memo.

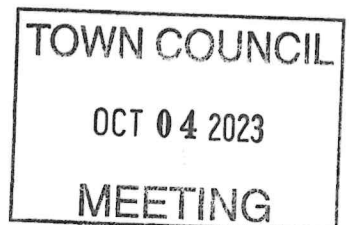
Attached, for the Town Council's information, is a press release from the Sowams Heritage Area Project announcing upcoming Community Conversations. These sessions are open to the public and participants can discuss the proposal to request designation of a National Heritage Area and share perspectives.

Please place this on the October 4, 2023 Town Council agenda as a Consent Agenda Item.

Thank you.

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

2023 SEP 21 PM 4:57



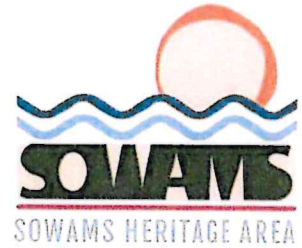
Sowams Heritage Area Project

Contact:

David Weed, Project Coordinator

Warren, Rhode Island

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Legacy of Sowams:

Community Conversations about designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area

The Sowams Heritage Area Project invites members of the community to participate in a community conversation to discuss the significance of Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621, and the feasibility of designating the region as a National Heritage Area.

The conversation will be held twice: Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 3:00pm at the First Christian Congregational Church in Swansea, MA and Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at 7:00pm at Hope and Main, in Warren, RI.

Sowams is the setting of one of America's origin stories, the critical alliance that established 50 years of peace between the Indigenous Tribes that had fished, farmed and hunted the region for millennia and the English settlers arriving on the Mayflower. Sowams is also ground zero for the fracturing of that alliance during the devastating King Philip's War. The legacy of those events and the way in which people have valued and used the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay has shaped the complex history of the region from prehistory to the present.

"The Sowams Project is not just about what happened here in the 17th Century," says Project Coordinator, Dr. David S. Weed. "It's also about what happened on this landscape over the last 400 years, and how our heritage informs our lives today and can shape our future as a community."

A program of the National Park Service, National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are living, working, landscapes, which are designated by Congress to honor the important role of a region in our country's development and celebrate its contributions to American history and culture. Through dynamic public-private partnerships, NHAs provide a way to recognize, share, and conserve a region's significant history and outstanding qualities.

The participants will discuss why Sowams is important to our nation's origin story, learn about the benefits of the National Heritage Area program, and share their perspectives on how they can collaborate as a regional coalition to advance our communities. Says Weed, "It will take many voices to tell the story of Sowams. We want to hear yours!"

The Community Conversations are free. The public is invited to reserve a seat at the [Tuesday event](#) or [Wednesday event](#).

About the Sowams Heritage Area Project:

Led by a regional coalition of town planners, tourism entities, historical societies, environmentalists, Tribal leaders, and other volunteers, the Sowams Heritage Area Project is undertaking an initiative to develop a National Heritage Area (NHA) in Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621. NHAs protect and promote a region's history, heritage and culture and use those assets to advance local economies through tourism, recreation and community development. For more information, go to <https://sowams.org>.