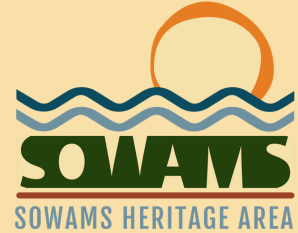


SOWAMS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA FEASIBILITY STUDY

Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc.



Developed by:



POINT
HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING

June 2026

sowams.org

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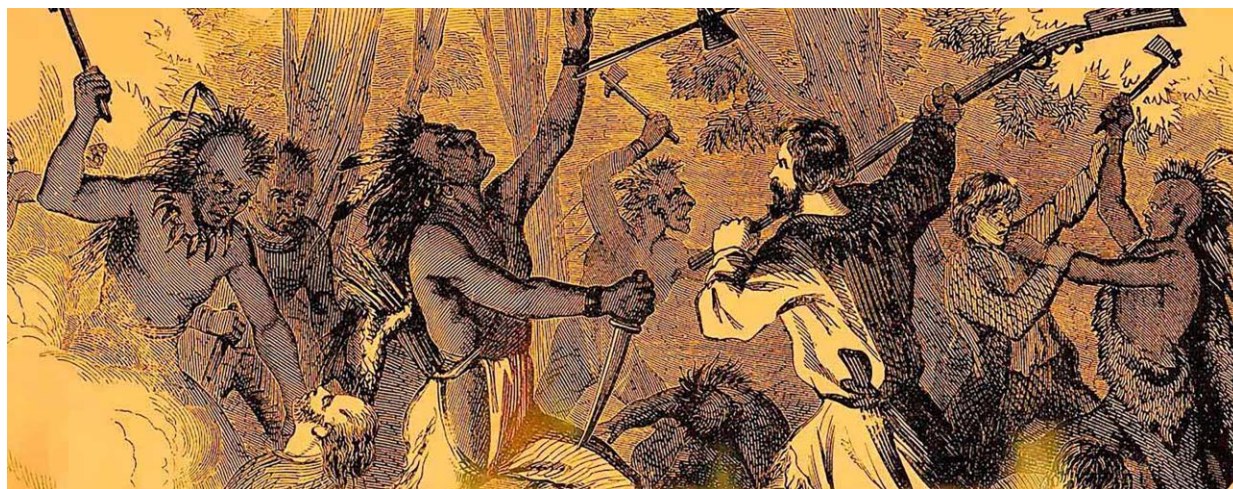
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – SOWAMS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA FEASIBILITY STUDY

A Significant Place

The *Sowams National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* examines whether nine closely linked Rhode Island and Massachusetts communities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay should be federally designated to preserve and share a landscape of national consequence. Spanning 140 square miles and anchored by the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe, Sowams is where two worlds converged, creating and then shattering a 50-year alliance that shaped American history. Five chapters synthesize three years of research and public outreach; their essential findings are distilled below.

The *Sowams National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* explains why this compact landscape – nine Rhode Island and Massachusetts communities bound by water, memory, and more than 12,000 years of human presence – merits a place in the National Park Service system of National Heritage Areas. It documents a sweeping narrative that shifted profoundly in 1621, when the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin welcomed Plymouth’s settlers, endured through a devastating war that reshaped Indigenous-colonial relations, and reverberated in later struggles over religious liberty, the business of human enslavement, and industrial innovation. Sowams, the study concludes, “is the setting for one of our nation’s origin stories... and ground zero for the fracturing of that alliance” whose legacy has molded American political, economic, and social life.



King Philip’s War (1675-1676) ravaged colonial settlements and Native villages throughout New England, resulting in the largest per capita fatality rate in North American history.

To convey that national significance, the feasibility study frames five interwoven interpretive themes that examine this history, along with an inventory of 191 historic, cultural, and natural resources that still retain the integrity needed to bring the themes alive. Tribal sacred places, colonial homes and farmsteads, battlefields, working waterfronts, and estuarine habitats form what the National Park Service calls a “strategic assemblage,” a single heritage landscape rather than isolated points of interest.

Guiding this work is a clear sense of purpose. The proposed mission pledges to “instill a sense of stewardship and deep appreciation for the profound historical, cultural, and natural significance of the Sowams region... through preservation, regional collaboration, community development, and experiential learning.” Its companion vision imagines “a vibrant network of diverse communities sharing a deep sense of belonging... where all who experience Sowams honor this sacred place and help steward the land and water that has defined the culture of this region for millennia.” A nonprofit coordinating entity, Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc., and its partnership network provide the organizational foundation, financial roadmap, and collaborative ethos needed to translate mission and vision into lasting public benefit.



Detail of John Sellers' map of Pokanoket Country, 1675

Courtesy of McCorkle, B. *New England in Early Printed Maps, 676.5 Stevens & Tree. Comparative Cartography*, 34



The ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin is situated on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay on the border of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

About the Study

- Chapter 1 introduces Sowams, the feasibility process, and the community-led coalition that shaped the study.
- Chapter 2 offers a narrative historic context spanning 12,000 years, illuminating the region's pivotal role in American history.
- Chapter 3 articulates national significance, presents the interpretive themes, maps the proposed boundary, and summarizes the resource inventory.
- Chapter 4 sets out the mission, vision, governance model, partnership strategy, and preliminary financial plan that will guide the National Heritage Area.
- Chapter 5 evaluates Sowams against the seven requirements of the National Heritage Area Act of 2023 (Public Law 117-339) and recommends congressional designation, noting that the region's story, resources, and capacity “suggest that Sowams is well positioned for designation as a National Heritage Area.”

A Call to Action

Sowams offers the nation a rare opportunity – to experience, in one compact place, the promise and the peril that marked America's beginnings; to confront stories both triumphant and painful; and to foster renewed dialogue about belonging and stewardship. By designating Sowams National Heritage Area, Congress can elevate a landscape where diplomacy once flourished, war reshaped destinies, freedom of conscience took root, and the tide of enterprise carried New England into a global age. Designation will not only safeguard irreplaceable resources; it will invite residents and visitors alike to engage with the complex beginnings of the American story, encouraging meaningful interpretation, reconciliation, and collaborative conservation.



During the planning process, the Steering Committee of Sowams Heritage Area Project met with more than 460 individuals, organizations and stakeholders throughout the Sowams region.

CHAPTER 1 – AN INTRODUCTION TO SOWAMS

Introduction

An important chapter in our nation’s origin story is rooted in the landscape known as Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe. Today, Sowams comprises nine town/cities on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, straddling the border between Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The region’s history flows from the convergence and conflict that marked the relationship between the Pokanoket Tribe of Sowams and the Separatist Pilgrims that arrived on the Mayflower and settled in Plymouth 40 miles east. Sowams’ heritage today is steeped in the natural environment – the rivers that feed Narragansett Bay and the land that people have called home for millennia.



The Mill Gut estuary in Colt State Park, which spans 464 acres of walking paths, biking trails, and picnic grounds, overlooks Narragansett Bay in Bristol, RI.

A National Heritage Area for Sowams

The Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. commissioned Point Heritage Development Consulting, LLC (PointHDC) to assess the feasibility of creating a National Heritage Area (NHA) in Sowams – a cultural landscape of national significance grounded in the pivotal events of the contact period. The three-year project occurred in two phases. The first phase of the project was funded through the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Telling the Full History program. The second phase was supported by the Taunton River Stewardship Council and Papitto Opportunity Connection, a Rhode Island nonprofit foundation.

Interest in establishing an NHA focused on the Sowams region arose in the early 2000s, with archaeological excavations and land protections laying an important foundation for expanding understanding of the region’s history. The initiative in its current form can be traced to 2017, when

Dr. David Weed of Warren, Rhode Island, connected with the Sagamore and Sachem of the Pokanoket Tribe and early NHA advocate Helen Hersh Tjader. From that core, the nonprofit organization Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. was established in 2020, and a project steering committee was created in 2022. The 15-member Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee, which transitioned into a formal board of directors in January 2026, was a volunteer coalition of partners from Massachusetts and Rhode Island that represents a wide range of interests in the region. The steering committee included representatives of local government, tourism entities, historical societies, museums, and land trusts; Pokanoket leadership; and volunteers from the arts and education sectors (see Appendix A – Planning Participants).

The first formal step in becoming a National Heritage Area (NHA) is to develop a feasibility study. The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee has overseen the development of this draft National Heritage Area feasibility study in conjunction with the PointHDC planning team. The study serves both as an analytical assessment and a tool for garnering public support. The study entails an evaluation of the significance of a region's historical, cultural, and natural resources, determining whether these resources contribute to an important part of the nation's history. The study also assesses the region's capacity to support the plan and identifies the organizations and partners necessary to execute it. As such, it requires extensive public engagement and collaboration. The ultimate goals are to produce a comprehensive document that outlines the region's significant stories and resources and to foster a strong coalition of partners dedicated to preserving and promoting the region's heritage.

This draft feasibility study contains the following elements:

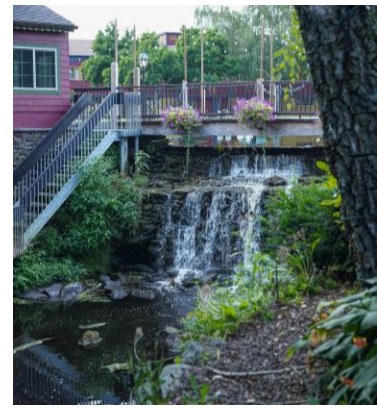
- Chapter 2 presents the history of Sowams from prehistory to the present.
- Chapter 3 provides a detailed examination of the region's national significance, its historical themes and the places associated with those themes, and a description of the proposed boundary for the NHA.
- Chapter 4 examines the long-term vision of the regional partnership, including the proposed coordinating entity and an overview of what the communities hope to accomplish through NHA designation.
- Chapter 5 evaluates the way in which the Sowams region addresses the seven legislated requirements for NHA feasibility studies, established in the National Heritage Area Act of 2023.
- Appendices include detailed information on participants, public outreach, concurrent planning efforts, existing and potential partners, and an inventory of historic, cultural, and natural resources.

The Landscape of the Sowams Heritage Area Region

The Sowams region is located on the eastern side of Narragansett Bay. The majority of the eastern shore is in Rhode Island, but small parts of the bay extend into Massachusetts. The bay forms New England's largest estuary, which functions as an expansive natural harbor and includes a small archipelago.

Bodies of water that drain into Narragansett Bay include the Sakonnet and Warren rivers, Mount Hope and Greenwich Bays, and the southern, tidal portions of the Taunton and Providence rivers. Narragansett Bay opens onto Rhode Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean.

Within Sowams there are many rivers that break up the land mass, including the Providence River, the Seekonk River, the Barrington River, the Palmer River, the Warren River, the Kickemuit River, and the Taunton River. In addition, there is a body of water called the Hundred Acre Cove that is associated with the Runnins River. The land is mostly flat, averaging less than 20 feet in elevation with a few higher hills, but none more than 150 feet above sea level. It is comprised of small towns (there are four in Massachusetts – Seekonk, Rehoboth, Swansea, and Somerset – and five in Rhode Island – East Providence, Bristol, Warren, Barrington, and portions of Providence) interlaced with residential areas, farmlands, and urban areas. Wooded land and wetlands are common natural areas, many of them protected. A network of two-lane roads and bridges cross the many rivers, coves, and inlets. The only major road to bisect the area is I-195, although I-95 lies directly to the north and runs east to west. Many of the region's farms are historic and are under protections such as conservation easements, including Osamequin Farm, Bridgham Farm, Chace Farm, Johannis Farm, Perry Farm, and Mount Hope Farm. Colt State Park, a 464-acre park overlooking the bay in Bristol, Rhode Island, is a popular recreational area. There are also numerous protected landscapes within the region with many accessible to the public, including conservation trust properties, wildlife refuges, and nature trails that include woods and meadows.



The Old Grist Mill Tavern,
Seekonk, MA

The Preliminary Study Area

The steering committee identified a study area in the early stages of planning, understanding that the final boundary for the NHA could change over the course of the planning project, as determined by the region's resources, public input, and how the boundary reflects the region's history, culture, existing political jurisdictions, and topographical features. Although the Pokanoket Massasoit led a loose confederation of more than 60 allied Tribes throughout southeastern New England during the 17th century, the preliminary study area was focused on Sowams, the homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe. The feasibility study includes a justification for the boundary recommended for NHA designation in

Chapter 3.



Sowams is located on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay, 40 miles west of Plymouth, MA.



The planning team considered expanding the boundary to include Plymouth and other regions where the Pokanoket had influence, however, that proved unmanageable. Apart from renaming the heritage area, it would have involved engaging hundreds of unique communities, adding complexity to the interpretive themes and confusing the public. The feasibility study expands on the justification for the boundary recommended for NHA designation in Chapter 3.

Courtesy of Mariel Sorlien, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

The Collaborative Power of National Heritage Areas

National Heritage Areas were first developed in the 1980s as a conservation strategy involving grassroots efforts and local stewardship of historically significant resources. This model marked a shift from the traditional approach of the Department of the Interior and NPS, which owns and operates such resources across the nation. NHAs unite public and private sectors, promoting conservation without requiring federal ownership. Early NHAs proved successful, leading Congress to designate more across the country, with the concept gaining traction by the mid-1990s.

In 2006, the National Park Service Advisory Board, appointed by President George W. Bush, published a report, *Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas*, in which Douglas P. Wheeler, Chairman, stated:

National Heritage Areas represent a significant advance in conservation and historic preservation: large-scale, community-centered initiatives collaborating across political jurisdictions to protect nationally-important landscapes and living cultures. Managed locally, National Heritage Areas play a vital role in preserving the physical character, memories, and stories of our country, reminding us of our national origins and destiny. This is a citizens' movement of high purpose and great benefit to the nation.¹

The National Heritage Area Act of 2023 formally incorporated the system of NHAs as a program under NPS. Today, the system includes 62 NHAs in 36 states and territories. NHAs emphasize local collaboration and community involvement, making them examples of how government and private sectors can work together. They have been recognized for their entrepreneurial approaches



On August 25, 2025, 300 people attended the dedication of the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker, which commemorates the enslaved Pokanoket and African people who were impacted by the business of slave trading from the 17th to the 19th century in Bristol, RI.

"Our Ancestors Come with Us" sculpture by Spencer Evans

to heritage conservation and their ability to bring together diverse stakeholders to address common concerns and achieve shared goals. The core goals of NHAs are to conserve historic, cultural, and natural resources; develop interpretive and recreational opportunities; stimulate heritage tourism and economic development; and build partnerships to advance regional heritage initiatives. Each NHA may prioritize these goals differently depending on the needs and characteristics of its region. NHAs aim to protect and share the unique character and history of their communities, providing a strong sense of place and identity.

¹ Douglas P. Wheeler, foreword to *Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas*, National Park Service Advisory Board, National Park Service, 2006, 1.

The National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Process and Community Engagement

An NHA is a living landscape where people and land have had a significant impact on each other over a long period of time. NPS, which administers the NHA program, initially established the criteria that are considered for designation; those criteria were included in the National Heritage Area Act. They can be summarized in three critical components of an NHA: a nationally significant story; resources that continue to be visible and utilized on the region's landscape to tell that story; and a network of partners with the capacity to create and implement a regional vision. The feasibility study process facilitates developing and evaluating these components. The seven criteria and an analysis of Sowams' achievement in meeting them are set forth in Chapter 5.

The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and PointHDC developed and carried out a comprehensive public engagement strategy for the NHA feasibility study over the course of three years. The strategy entailed a range of activities that provided important information for the development of the study and also helped increase the community's understanding of NHAs and the steering committee's cohesion and organizational capacity. The planning process included affinity group meetings; a series of community meetings; engagement of professionals with expertise in the history and cultures of the region; interviews with key stakeholders; outreach to municipal, state, and federal leaders; and discussions with Native American Tribes with connections to the study area. Over the course of the study, over 460 meetings were held concerning the proposed National Heritage Area. The strategy also included establishment of a brand identity, print media, development of a new website, electronic mailings to a list of 565 subscribers, and social media postings. Public engagement activities are described briefly below and detailed in Appendix B – Sowams Public Outreach Activities.

Meetings and Orientation Visit

Throughout the project, the steering committee held monthly meetings led by Project Coordinator Dr. David Weed and Project Advisor Andrea Rounds and attended by PointHDC consultants Dr. Nancy Morgan, August Carlino, and Peter Samuel. A planning subcommittee of the Project Coordinator and Project Advisor met regularly with the PointHDC team to advance specific elements of the project. The PointHDC team participated in an orientation visit to the Sowams region in August 2022. The orientation included site visits in six of the nine communities that comprise the study area, as well as initial meetings with the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee



During their orientation visit to Sowams, the PointHDC consulting team visited King Philip's Seat, the Pokanoket's sacred meeting place in Bristol, RI.

and several affinity groups. Specific meetings included leadership of the Pokanoket Tribe; area historic sites and organizations; arts and tourism representatives; town planners; and NPS staff from Roger Williams National Memorial and Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. The site visits and meetings provided the PointHDC team with important backgrounding in the project, helped both PointHDC and steering committee leadership engage partners in the feasibility study process, and highlighted important consider-

ations that shaped the planning project. Following the trip, the planning team shared a report with the steering committee that summarized those considerations, including:

- Expansion of inclusion of significant histories and resources in the Sowams region
- Establishment of the study area and identification of factors that might influence final boundary
- Perspective of the Pokanoket leadership
- Opportunities that can be realized if an NHA is established
- Challenges to developing an NHA

Steering Committee Survey and Internal Meetings

The orientation visit laid groundwork for the PointHDC team to further explore key considerations with the steering committee. PointHDC developed an electronic survey on the SurveyMonkey platform. Fifteen members completed a 35-question survey that asked about:

- Significant histories in the region
- Significant historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources
- Visitation
- Engagement and capacity of Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc., and its partnership network
- Outreach and communication, including messages and methods
- Purpose of and goals for an NHA
- Steering committee priorities

In addition, the Project Advisor held meetings with individual steering committee members. The purpose of the meetings was to identify potential stakeholders in the nine communities who might be interested in the project as it moves forward, and who might provide the necessary support.

Planning Subcommittees

The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee established three subcommittees comprised of steering committee members to help with the development of the feasibility study. The themes and resources committee was responsible for defining the significance and themes for the heritage area; identifying historic, cultural, and natural resources associated with the themes; overseeing the work of the subject matter experts; and reviewing the historic context. The outreach committee implemented a comprehensive outreach strategy, publicized meetings, and led rebranding for the organization. As part of the rebranding effort, a logo, website, e-newsletter, and brochures were developed, giving the initiative substantially more visibility. The governance committee crafted mission and vision statements, articulating the priorities for the NHA. In addition, the governance committee analyzed potential NHA coordinating entities and established a governance framework that would transition the steering committee into a nonprofit coordinating entity. By the end of the feasibility process, most of the recommendations of the governance committee of the steering committee had been adopted by the new board of directors. (See Chapter 4).

Stakeholder Interviews

The PointHDC team conducted interviews with 12 individuals from several sectors related to NHA development. The confidential interviews enabled the planning team to explore in depth the opportunities and challenges related to the development of an NHA. The interviews built on the information gathered through the other methods of public engagement, with many of the topics addressed in the interviews already having been broached during those activities. The interviews also provided the opportunity for stakeholders to express their support, their concerns, their priorities, and their vision for how a heritage partnership network can be created and sustained. Stakeholders that were interviewed are listed in Appendix A – Planning Participants.

Subject Matter Expert Review

National significance and themes that can support that significance are foundational elements of an NHA. As such, it is valuable to have those elements reviewed by experts in the fields of history and culture who are not otherwise directly involved in the development of the feasibility study. The experts who reviewed the work of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and PointHDC collectively have demonstrated knowledge of the region's history and culture from pre-history to the present; they are listed in Appendix A – Planning Participants. The subject matter experts reviewed the preliminary themes and significance, and their suggested revisions were incorporated into the final version. All seven subject matter experts are supportive of NHA designation based on the national significance, themes, and resources described in detail in Chapter 3.

Places of the Heart

Before the public meetings began, the steering committee launched the “Places of the Heart” campaign to raise awareness about Sowams. The campaign emphasized that many people who live within Sowams have strong connections to its cultural and natural resources. It also served to promote the upcoming public meetings and provided valuable input to inform those discussions.

As part of the campaign, a large map of the Sowams region was displayed in public spaces such as libraries, churches, municipal buildings, and community festivals. Community members were invited to mark places that held personal significance by placing heart-shaped sticky notes on the map. Steering committee members were instrumental in placing the posters and engaging people in the campaign. The input collected through this activity was then shared at the public meetings, sparking conversations about what makes Sowams special and how its important places can be preserved and celebrated.

Community Conversations

The steering committee has hosted two rounds of meetings to engage the public in the planning process. In October 2023, Community Conversations were held at the First Congregational Church in Swansea, Massachusetts, and the Hope and Main Food Incubator in Warren, Rhode Island. More than 60 participants convened to learn about NHAs and discuss the history and places found in the Sowams region that are significant to them. The second round of meetings in March 2024 drew in more than 120 participants. Those meetings took place at the Seekonk Public Library in Seekonk, Massachusetts, and Mt. Hope Farm in Bristol, Rhode Island. Attendees participated in workshops to review the statement of significance and themes and discuss priorities for a Sowams NHA.



One of the Community Conversations was held at The Barn on Mt. Hope Farm, a 127-acre property on the National Register of Historic Places, overlooking Mt. Hope Bay, Bristol, RI.

In February 2026, the draft feasibility study was posted on the Sowams website for an 8-week public comment period, culminating in the last public input session “Community Conversation” at the Newman First Congregational Church in East Providence, Rhode Island, on March 19, 2026. Over the course of these five events, two individuals expressed concern for private property rights – one during the meeting at Hope and Main in October 2023 and the other at the Newman Church in March 2026. With those exceptions, all other participants during the meetings expressed overwhelming support for NHA designation.

Tribal Engagement and Perspectives

Sowams’ national significance hinges on the creation and destruction of the relationship between the Plymouth colonists and the Pokanoket Tribe, the headship Tribe of a confederation of allied Tribes in southeastern New England. The Pokanoket leader, the Massasoit Ousamequin, was the signatory to the pivotal alliance with the Pilgrims. His son, the Massasoit Metacomet (King Philip) was a major figure in the eponymous King Philip’s War. The Pokanoket Tribe is one discrete player among several multi-directional relationships and alliances between the Indigenous people that had inhabited southeastern New England for millennia and the English settlers who sought religious freedom and economic opportunity. The history of Sowams begins with the Pokanoket Tribe, but its sphere of influence reaches other Tribes who were members of the Pokanoket confederation, unallied Tribes in the surrounding areas, and the English colonies in Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Providence.

A single generation after the initial contact between Indigenous Tribes and English settlers, huge cultural shifts occurred based on evolving alliances, changing technologies, and the human penchant for wealth and power. More than 400 years after that initial contact, the relationships among descendants, and their multiple interpretations of the past, are incredibly complex. As a recent article about legislation regarding Tribal issues in Rhode Island stated, “the tribes’ goals are both conflicting and interwoven.”²

During the planning process, stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels recognized this complexity. They expressed the importance of examining history through multiple perspectives and engaging Tribes and partners from beyond Sowams’ borders, and they looked at the Sowams initiative in the larger context of Indigenous history and politics in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

² Antonia Noori Farzan, “Tribal Tensions in RI,” *Providence Journal* (USA Today Network: April 7, 2023, A01), https://providencejournal-ri.newsmemory.com/?publink=0ccdeb33_134ab2b. Accessed April 7, 2023.

Description of Tribes in the Region

The Pokanoket

In the words of the Pokanoket Sagamore Po Wauipi Neimpaug (“Winds of Thunder,” William Guy):

Sowams is the ancestral realm of the Pokanoket Tribe, the headship Tribe of the Pokanoket confederation. Sowams was the land of the Pokanoket Tribe, not the confederation – this was where the Tribe actually lived. The confederation went all the way down to Cape Cod and had connections up to the Hudson River.³

According to the Sagamore, the Pokanoket confederation included about 60 Tribes, bands, and clans when the Separatists arrived. Coastal Indigenous communities that had pledged fealty to the Pokanoket lost the majority of their population in the Great Dying, the plague that began in 1616. This left the Pokanoket vulnerable to the Narragansett, their ancestral rivals on the other side of Narragansett Bay, setting the stage for the watershed alliance between the Pokanoket and the Separatist Pilgrims.

The leadership of today’s Pokanoket Tribe includes tenth, eleventh, and twelfth generation descendants of the Massasoit Ousamequin. Having fought on the losing side in King Philip’s War, their ancestors were forced to give up their land as war reparations, hide their identities, and leave the region through enslavement, forced relocation, or integration into other Tribes. In spite of this, they still maintained their identity.

The federal recognition program, which grants funding and other benefits to federally recognized Tribes, has become divisive in Indigenous communities. This is explored further in “Contemporary Native American Tribes” in Chapter 2. Outside the Sowams boundary, there are three modern-day federally recognized Tribes: Narragansett west of Narragansett Bay, Mashpee Wampanoag to the east of Sowams, and Aquinnah on the island of Martha’s Vineyard.

One tragic and poignant story of Sowams is the Pokanoket diaspora after their violent expulsion from Sowams at the end of King Philip’s War. Although the Pokanoket did not have a strong presence in Sowams for 300 years, they kept their culture alive in oral traditions and close family ties. Since the 1990s, the Pokanoket Tribe has made great strides in raising awareness of their existence. Local support has grown stronger, especially in the last decade.

The Tribe has partnered with local historical societies, churches, neighboring Tribes, and Roger Williams University on events and interpretation, and schools have reintroduced the Pokanoket into their curriculum. Most importantly, in November 2024, Brown University transferred 255 acres of land – including Potumtuk (Mount Hope), the historic seat of the Pokanoket confederation – to a preservation trust established by the Pokanoket Tribe, recognizing the importance of the Tribe and its history, and ensuring that access to the land and waters the parcel includes extends to Tribes outside Sowams for whom the land has significance.

Today, the breadth of community engagement with the Pokanoket is evidenced by more than 55 letters of support for Sowams Heritage Area from heritage, cultural and environmental organizations, as well as from leaders from civic, tourism and economic development entities. All nine municipalities in Sowams have documented their recognition of the Pokanoket Tribe, its ancestral

³ Pokanoket Sagamore Po Wauipi Neimpaug (“Winds of Thunder,” William Guy), personal communication, January 24, 2023.

homeland of Sowams, and their support for designating Sowams as a National Heritage Area. (See Appendix I – Resolutions and Letters of Support.)

Members of the Pokanoket Tribe believe an NHA would help with preservation and cultural conservation. There are many sites significant to Pokanoket history that need protection, Potumtuk foremost among them. During planning, the Tribe voiced that it would like to play a bigger role in those efforts. They see benefit in an NHA that provides grants for preservation, cultural programming, and marketing, thereby bringing more attention to the programs and general culture of the Pokanoket.

Regional Tribes

In the 17th century, the landscape surrounding Sowams encompassed a vibrant mosaic of Tribes. Today, many descendants of those Tribes remain in the region. Some are recognized by the federal government, some by the state governments, and some have found other ways in which to organize and recognize their communities, cultures, and history. The Tribal entities that the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee invited to engage in the feasibility study are listed below:

- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (Massachusetts, recognized by state and federal governments)
- Chappaquiddic Band of Massachusetts (Massachusetts)
- Mashapaug Nahaganset Tribe (Rhode Island)
- Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (Massachusetts, recognized by state and federal gov't.)
- Mattakeeset Tribe of the Massachuset Nation (Massachusetts)
- Narragansett Indian Tribe (Rhode Island, recognized by state and federal governments)
- Pocasset Wampanoag Indian Tribe (Massachusetts)
- Quinsigamond Band of the Nipmuc (Massachusetts)
- Seaconke Wampanoag Tribe (Massachusetts and Rhode Island)
- Usquepaug-Nehantick Nahaganset Tribe (Rhode Island)

Engaging the Tribes

During the initial planning phase, the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee sent a letter by registered mail to the leadership of each Tribe inviting them to the first round of public meetings in October 2023 and offering to meet individually with each Tribe. An information sheet about the project was included with all correspondence. Although no Tribes accepted the invitation for an individual meeting with the group, several acknowledged the communication about the initiative, including representatives of the Narragansett, Mashapaug Nahaganset, Aquinnah, Mashpee Wampanoag, and Seaconke Tribes.



Pokanoket Historian Don “Strong Turtle” Brown and
Plimoth Pawtuxet Museums Deputy Executive Director
Richard Pickering, Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI.

Leadership among all Tribes was included in all public outreach. As with the first round of public meetings, all Tribes above were issued individual invitations to the second round of meetings held in March 2024 and the final meeting in March 2026. In addition to the Pokanoket, members of the Seaconke, Nipmuc, and Mashapaug Nahagansett Tribes participated in those meetings.

Steering committee members assisted with, promoted, and documented community cultural events that engaged numerous Tribes from the region. These include public events organized by the Tribes, such as Pokanoket Heritage Day,

as well as events, presentations, and lectures organized by the steering committee. An excellent example of the latter occurred when the steering committee and Roger Williams University convened partners to share history in a March 2023 presentation. Po Menuhkesu Menenok, Historian of the Pokanoket Tribe/Pokanoket Nation, and Richard Pickering, Deputy Executive Director of Plimoth-Patuxet Museums, offered reflections on the 400th anniversary of Plymouth Colony leader Edward Winslow’s second visit to Sowams in an event at Roger Williams University. At time of writing, the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee is partnering with the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, and other heritage organizations in a 14-month commemoration of the 350th anniversary of King Philip’s War, offering another avenue to engage Tribes across New England.

Throughout the feasibility process, Steering Committee representatives consistently reached out to the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers all three of the federally recognized Tribes surrounding Sowams to engage them in the planning process. However, they could not advance the conversation beyond the Tribes’ objection to the territorial claims of the Pokanoket Tribe. At issue was not National Heritage Areas per se, but the exclusive right of federally recognized Tribes to relate history from the Indigenous perspective. The meeting with the Wampanoag Consulting Group established that they do not choose to be engaged in the initiative at this time but would like to be kept informed.

Given the muted response from the federally recognized Tribes, the new board of directors of Sowams Heritage Area established a Tribal Engagement Committee, comprised of board and non-board members, to explore new ways to engage all the neighboring Tribes, including those recognized by the federal government. One of the primary tenets of the National Heritage Area initiative is to create a platform for all to tell their own stories and ultimately to have resources that enable the Tribes and other stakeholders in the region to do that. The door will remain open for future involvement. The steering committee and the coordinating entity that follows it will prioritize inclusivity while respecting Tribal sovereignty and remaining neutral in intertribal matters.

Concurrent Plans

The proposed Sowams National Heritage Area (NHA) aligns well with many existing plans and initiatives on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In developing a partnership network, the steering committee recognized the contributions of its partners in identifying the area's rich history, quality of life, economic opportunities, and the responsibilities of local communities and government agencies in preserving this cherished region. Planning documents considered encompass plans related to education, economic development, historic preservation, land use, recreation, natural resources, tourism, and transportation.



The Swansea Redevelopment Waterfront Project includes a new playground and upgrades to the town beach, Swansea, MA.

Courtesy of the Town of Swansea, MA

For example, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's 2025 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Update is a "regional call to action for shared efforts that can measurably improve the region's water quality, wildlife, and quality of life over the next decade." This aligns with the priorities of Sowams Heritage Area and its environmental partners. Goal #2 in the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Strategic Plan (2024–2026), focuses on advancing the cultural sector by building partnerships and storytelling, which mirrors the outreach strategy of Sowams NHA. As of this writing, the Town of Barrington, RI is drafting its Barrington 2050: Comprehensive Plan, which designates as a critical environmental and cultural asset Nockum Hill. The archeological projects on this site are central to interpreting the causes and consequences of King Philip's War in Sowams.

Appendix C – Concurrent Plans contains information on organizations and, where possible, links to plans. Upon Congressional designation of the Sowams NHA, these plans, along with any new initiatives, will serve as critical tools for developing the Sowams NHA management plan and building a unified vision and collaborative strategy.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Other Federal Laws

Federal funding was not used in the development of the feasibility study, and the planning project has no potential for significant adverse impacts on the many cultural and natural resources in the region within the proposed boundary of the NHA. As such, no formal declaration is needed regarding NEPA. Upon designation as an NHA, the local coordinating entity named in legislation will be responsible for ensuring that federal laws pertaining to preservation and conservation are properly applied in the NHA. Such laws include NEPA, the Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). After designation, if future projects of the NHA are developed that have a direct effect on cultural or natural resources in the region, the entity responsible for the individual project will review the project through appropriate pathways, such as the NHPA Section 106 and NEPA processes, as applicable.

Next Steps

Sowams is a storied landscape, where the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket people lies at the headwaters of a history that flows through the centuries, shaping all that follows. Here, on the nexus of what is now northeastern Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, powerful stories of diplomacy, resilience, cultural exchange, and conflict have shaped the foundations of American identity. The region includes sites of national significance – Indigenous sacred places, early colonial sites, historic town centers, and coastal ecosystems that have supported human life and economies for thousands of years.

Designating Sowams as an NHA would recognize its unique contributions to the nation's story. Across the country, NHAs have proven to support economic development, increase heritage tourism, enhance educational and recreational opportunities, and foster community pride. Federal investment in NHAs has helped share significant histories, preserve historic sites and landscapes, conserve natural resources, expand access to recreation, enhance visitors' experiences, and improve quality of life for residents. These outcomes translate into job creation, stronger local economies, and revitalized communities.

To reach national recognition, a diverse coalition of local leaders – local government and Tribal representatives, educators, nonprofit organizations, historians, and residents – has come together to explore the feasibility of establishing Sowams National Heritage Area. This study outlines the region's national significance and demonstrates the capacity of the proposed coordinating entity and its regional partners to manage an NHA effectively. With its deep cultural roots, nationally significant history, and engaged community support, Sowams is poised to join the system of National Heritage Areas. This designation would honor its past, strengthen its future, and connect people across the region and the nation to this vital chapter of American history.

CHAPTER 2 – SHIFTING CURRENTS: SOWAMS AND THE EVOLUTION OF PLACE

A Distinctive Place

During the Pleistocene Era, the Wisconsin ice sheet plowed through the bedrock of New England, foreshadowing a pattern of disruption and renewal that would define the Sowams landscape up to the present day. This glacial devastation would leave a primeval network of life-giving water and fertile soil, which, around 12,000 years ago, drew the first humans to this place.



"Sowams" oil painting by Tim Ohliger, graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

Courtesy of TimOhliger.com

For millennia, the land was stewarded by the Pokanoket people until other worlds discovered it, coveted it, fought for it, and took it. Sowams is a distinctive setting for some of America's origin stories – ground zero for what would become a traumatic pattern of exploration, colonization, and exploitation across the continent.

Sowams is also a microcosm of Americans' persistent struggle for individual freedom – the right to live on our land, protect our family, practice our faith, and build our lives. Little more than a decade after the Separatist Pilgrims escaped the Old World to find refuge and isolation in Plymouth, Massachusetts, theological reformers settled on the frontier of Plymouth Colony, preaching tolerance and freedom of conscience. A century later, while American colonists fought for "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness," speculators were fueling the local economy, building businesses that financed the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans and Indigenous people.

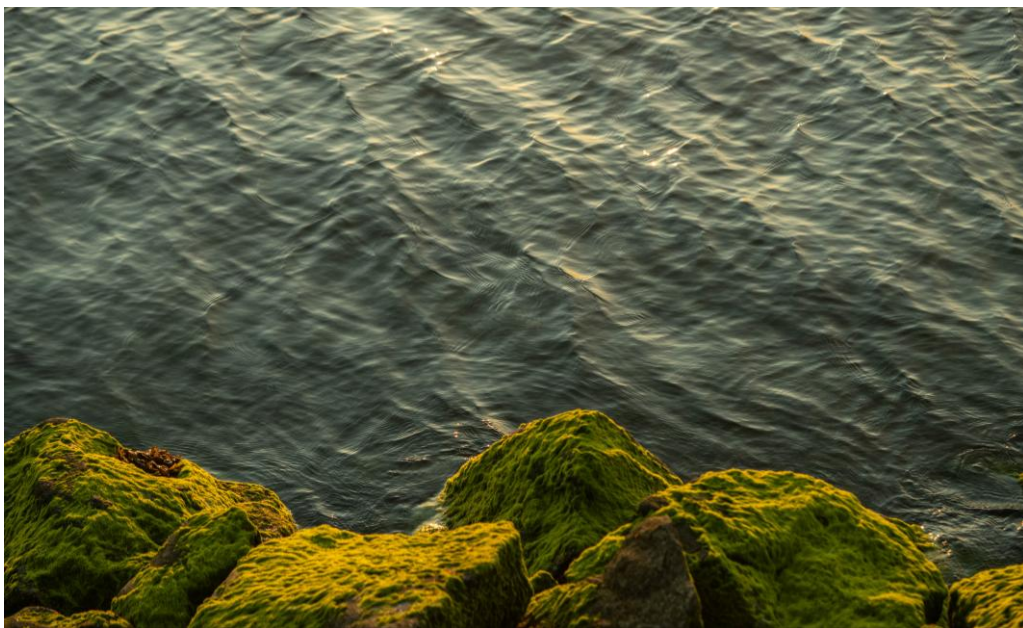
In Sowams, the clash of Indigenous and European worldviews at First Contact ignited a lasting struggle over the land and water, pitting a culture of spiritual reverence against resource exploitation. The network of rivers, streams and estuaries that empties into Narragansett Bay gave the people of Sowams the freedom to travel beyond the bounds of their own communities. Water was their connection to new worlds, products, ideas, and possibilities, which created a climate for economic freedom and innovative manufacturing. But progress came at the expense of exploiting

natural resources, amassing great wealth, and exerting power over others. Still, the immigrants who followed the Pilgrims in waves over the next 350 years were determined to create better lives and contributed to the dynamic interplay of cultures that are part of the region's success.

The 21st Century heralded the Digital Revolution, which again disrupted and liberated Sowams in ways that were inconceivable only a generation earlier. The impact of universal access to information and artificial intelligence has yet to be fully understood, but there are signs of hope. The citizens of Sowams are restoring the salt marshes. They are revitalizing 19th century factory buildings for the blue economy. And the stories of what happened on this landscape are finally being told. Throughout the centuries of upheaval in Sowams, the Pokanoket have been listening to nature's beating heart. Today they are joined by many others who cherish the land as they do and who honor those who lived and died here.

Geologic History – The Landscapes of the Narragansett Watershed and Sowams

Narragansett Bay sits within the ancient Narragansett Basin, an area lined with bedrock that dates back over 300 million years to the Pennsylvanian period. This bedrock includes sedimentary conglomerates, sandstones, and shales. The Bay itself is a classic example of a drowned river valley estuary, formed when rising seas flooded ancient river valleys, making it an estuary. It is comprised of three main drowned valleys, the East Passage, West Passage, and the Sakonnet River. The landscape of Narragansett Bay and its watershed took shape during the Pleistocene epoch,



Where land meets water on Narragansett Bay

a period of glacial activity spanning between 2.5 and 3 million years ago. The most recent glacier, the late Wisconsin ice sheet, covered the area around 18,000 years ago and retreated roughly 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, around the time that humans were beginning to populate New England. The glacier left its mark with a terminal moraine, a collection of debris at its endpoint that stretched from just south of the Bay's mouth to Long Island, Block Island, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

The retreating glaciers deposited layers of rock, sand, silt, and clay. Over time, riverine sediments covered these glacial deposits. Together, these layers reach depths from 50 to over 300 feet thick.⁴ Today, Narragansett Bay is New England's largest estuary. It includes the Sakonnet River, Mount Hope Bay, and the southern tidal portion of the Taunton River. Its watershed also features sub-drainage basins including the Providence, Seekonk, Barrington, Palmer, Ten Mile, Runnins, Warren, and Kickemuit Rivers, all of which contribute to the Bay's unique and dynamic ecosystem.

An Overview of Indigenous Prehistory in Rhode Island and Massachusetts

The precolonial archaeological history of Indigenous peoples in Rhode Island and Massachusetts reveals a rich and complex history of human habitation spanning thousands of years.⁵ These regions were home to diverse Native American cultures who adapted to their environment, developing sophisticated tools, trade networks, and cultural practices long before European colonization.

Paleo-Indian Period (12,000–9,000 BP)

The earliest known inhabitants arrived shortly after the last Ice Age, during the Paleo-Indian period. These groups were hunter-gatherers who used finely crafted stone tools, such as fluted projectile points, to hunt large game. Populations were mobile, flexible, and adaptable to a world with a changing climate. Archaeological sites from this period, though rare, provide evidence of their presence, particularly near glacial lakes and upland areas.⁶

Archaic Period (9,000–2,500 BP)

As the climate warmed, Indigenous peoples transitioned to a more diverse subsistence strategy during the Archaic period. They exploited rivers, forests, and coastal resources, hunting smaller game, fishing, and gathering plants and nuts. Sites from this era reveal the use of ground stone tools, such as axes and pestles, canoes, and the development of semi-permanent settlements. Trade networks expanded, as evidenced by the distribution of materials like rhyolite and quartzite.⁷

Woodland Period (2,500 BP – 450 years ago)

By the beginning of the Woodland Period, the coast had reached its current level, and the climate had settled into patterns similar to today. The Woodland Period marks significant cultural and technological advancements. Indigenous peoples began cultivating crops like maize, beans, and squash, supplementing their hunting and gathering activities. Native American agriculture in New England involved rotating to different fields to prevent the soil from losing its fertility, as well as using a system of slash and burn. For these methods to work efficiently and to maintain soil fertility, Indigenous farmers moved their settlements every few years. This period also saw the introduction of pottery, used for cooking and storage, and the construction of burial mounds, reflecting more complex social and spiritual practices.⁸

⁴ Kenneth B. Raposa, "Ecological Geography of the NBNERR," in *An Ecological Profile of the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve*, eds. Kenneth B. Raposa and Malia L. Schwartz (2007). <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/39325>. Accessed December 16, 2024, pg. 83.

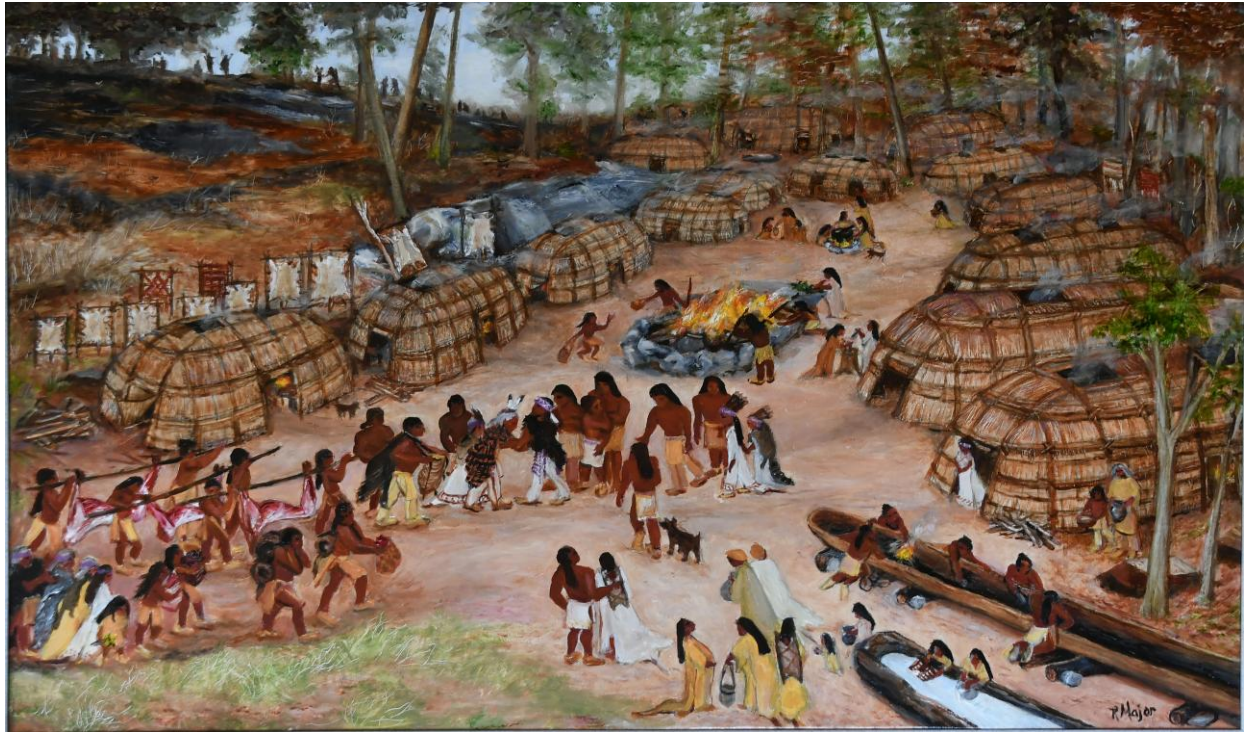
⁵ The terms "Indigenous" and "Native American" are used interchangeably in this document.

⁶ Christoph Strobel, *Native Americans of New England* (New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc., 2024).

⁷ "12,000 Years of Local History," Natick Historical Society. <https://www.natickhistoricalsociety.org/12000-years>. Accessed December 16, 2024.

⁸ "12,000 Years of Local History."

Trade and interaction among regional groups flourished during this time, with materials such as copper, shell beads, and exotic stones being exchanged over long distances. Ancestors of Tribes present during the colonial era began to develop distinct cultural identities, including those who occupied well-defined territories in what would become Rhode Island and Massachusetts.



A contemporary artist's historical interpretation of a Pokanoket village: "A Visit to Massasoit's Village, Pokanoket at Sowams, c.1620" by Ruth Wilde-Major.

By the Late Woodland Period, the final six centuries of this archaeological era, Native American communities had established semi-permanent villages and seasonal camps. Coastal and riverine environments were particularly important for fishing, shell fishing, and transportation. Archaeological evidence, such as shell middens, fishing weirs, and storage pits, highlights the importance of coastal resources. Ceremonial sites and rock carvings also reflect sophisticated spiritual traditions.⁹

The Late Woodland Period is most closely aligned with how Native Americans were living when the first traders and settlers arrived on the shores of North America. The Pokanoket and the Narragansett were among the prominent Tribes on either side of Narragansett Bay, each with complex political structures, spiritual beliefs, and a deep connection to their ancestral lands. At the time of European contact, these Tribes and those who paid tribute to them were thriving, with well-established trade networks and a deep understanding of their environment.

⁹ Alan Leveillee, Joseph Waller, Jr., and Donna Ingham, "Dispersed Villages in Late Woodland Period South-Coastal Rhode Island" in *Archaeology of Eastern North America*, Vol. 34 (2006), 74.

Listening to the Past, Reading the Landscape

In addition to the archaeological record, Tribes have passed down their own histories across generations. These include creation stories that include the physical landscape and establish their presence on ancestral lands from time immemorial. Many Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples in the northeastern part of North America call the continent “Turtle Island.” In various Indigenous origin stories, the turtle is said to support the world and is an icon of life itself. Turtle Island, therefore, speaks to various spiritual beliefs about creation. Moreover, for some the turtle is a marker of identity, culture, autonomy and a deeply-held respect for the environment.”¹⁰



The name "Weypoyset" (often spelled "Waypoyset") is derived from the Algonquian language and roughly translates to "the place at the river" or "the head of the river." An archeological survey of Weypoyset Preserve in Bristol, RI, determined that humans used this shoreline and estuary for the last 7,000 years.

Language is a window into Native American worldviews. An important source of information about the past and the places associated with it is oral tradition and storytelling. Through the spoken word, Tribes communicate creation stories, cultural beliefs, and personal, family, or Tribal history and experiences.¹¹ Lisa Brooks, in her book *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*, observes, "The land itself is an archive that demands interpretation... These ancient and ongoing places all have stories attached to them – features that evoke memories,

¹⁰ The Canadian Encyclopedia, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/turtle-island>. Accessed December 30, 2024.

¹¹ Lisa Brooks. *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 7. "One of the most crucial lenses to viewing history anew is Indigenous language, a vastly underutilized archive of place names and concepts... being able to understand the nuances of language has at times shed remarkable light on the historical landscape."

embed oral traditions, and map subsistence and survival, and that can reveal acute insight into a historical document.”¹² Her landscape analysis and interpretations informed by Tribal history offer a model for understanding significant places. Sowams, like much of New England, abounds with Indigenous place names that still exist. The names provide context about Native American beliefs and daily practices and strongly contradict the idea that the land was empty when Europeans arrived.

Indigenous Cultures at European Contact

Forty years before Christopher Columbus’ voyage forever linked two hemispheres, a papal bull laid the foundation for European colonization. The first version of the Doctrine of Discovery was



Pope Alexander VI issued the 1493 Doctrine of Discovery, a papal bull, which asserted that lands inhabited by non-Christians were terra nullius, or virtually empty, and therefore could be claimed by explorers, irrespective of the sovereignty of the Indigenous people who lived there.

clearing” in the Massachusetts language.¹⁵ Demographers estimate between 70,000 and 100,000 Native Americans were living in New England at the beginning of the 17th century.¹⁶ The Indigenous population density around Narragansett Bay at this time was far greater than any other place in southern New England.¹⁷ In 1524, the explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano, an Italian sailing for the

issued in 1452, reiterated in 1455, and expanded in 1493, after Columbus encountered the Taino people in the West Indies. The doctrine claimed the right of Christian nations to take possession of the lands of non-Christians, converting them to Christianity.¹³ It established centuries of precedent that would be first considered by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1823 and as recently as 2005. In 2023, Pope Francis finally repudiated the doctrine.¹⁴

In the region that would become New England, Native American communities were part of the Algonquian people and shared a similar language and culture. There were many different groups – among them were the Abenaki, Micmac, Pennacook, Pequot, Mohegan, Nauset, Narragansett, Nipmuc, Woronoco, and the Pokanoket. Sowams, which means “south land,” is the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket, whose name refers to the “place of

the cleared land” or “land at the



Explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano (1485-1528) was the first European to record contact with the Indigenous communities around Mt. Hope Bay.

¹² Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 13.

¹³ “Doctrine of Discovery,” World History Encyclopedia. https://www.worldhistory.org/Doctrine_of_Discovery/. Accessed January 20, 2025.

¹⁴ “The Vatican repudiates ‘Doctrine of Discovery,’ which was used to justify colonialism,” Religion, NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/30/1167056438/vatican-doctrine-of-discovery-colonialism-indigenous>. Accessed January 20, 2025.

¹⁵ “History,” The Pokanoket Tribe. <https://www.pokanokettribe.org/history>. Accessed April 12, 2025.

¹⁶ “Native Voices: Native Peoples’ Concepts of Health and Illness,” National Institute of Health, National Library of Medicine. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/198.html>. Accessed December 16, 2024.

¹⁷ James A. Warren. Personal communication based on the content of his book *God, War, and Providence* (2018), March 16, 2024.

French, traveled the coastline of Rhode Island, observing a “highly populated” region marked by villages and agricultural fields.¹⁸

Algonquian-speaking peoples have lived in what is now eastern Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts for at least 12,000 years. From Potumtuk, also known as “Montaup” or “Mt. Hope,” the Pokanoket Massasoit presided over a loose confederation with vast geographical reach.¹⁹ Verrazzano mentioned people residing in Mt. Hope Bay on the northeastern edge of Narragansett Bay, although his records do not provide the exact details of his route, anchorages, or the name of the people he encountered.²⁰ Verrazzano called Narragansett Bay “Refugio” (meaning “refuge”) because it had several entrances from the ocean.

From Trade to Colonization

Beginning in the 16th century, frequent contact with Europeans placed immense pressure on the Native ways of life that had developed over thousands of years. Early interactions were primarily based on trade, as French, Dutch, and English traders sought beaver pelts in exchange for goods like metal tools, glass items, and cloth. By 1600, these traders regularly visited the northeast coast of North America, fostering initial trade relationships built on reciprocity. While these exchanges mirrored Native peoples' preexisting trade networks on the surface, they lacked the deep social and cultural frameworks that had traditionally governed Native American trading practices.

The arrival of European traders brought notable changes. Native groups participating in the fur trade altered their lifestyles to accommodate and maintain access to European goods. Hunting for valuable beaver pelts began to overshadow traditional subsistence practices, and competition for these resources intensified as the beaver population dwindled. Those with direct access to European goods gained an economic and political edge, disrupting established power balances and creating divisions among Native American groups. Over time, Native people grew increasingly dependent on European materials, incorporating them into their daily lives while sacrificing some of their traditional autonomy.²¹

The consequences of trade among Indigenous and European peoples extended beyond economic and political shifts, triggering devastating demographic impacts. Tribes used their established trade routes to procure the pelts desired by European traders and, in return, received textiles, firearms, metal tools, and other items. These goods, however, often carried with them Old World diseases like smallpox and measles, which swept through Native communities with catastrophic effects. Lacking immunity to these illnesses, Indigenous populations experienced epidemics that reduced their numbers by as much as 90 percent in some areas. This “demographic catastrophe” not only decimated populations but also disrupted societal structures, eroded leadership, and compromised the transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions.²²

¹⁸ Leveillee, Waller, and Ingham, “Dispersed Villages in Late Woodland Period South-Coastal Rhode Island,” 74.

¹⁹ Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025. “Potumtuk” is an amalgamation of “Po” a reference to “Pokanoket,” and “Tumtuk,” a variation of the word “Montaup.” “Montaup,” which has been anglicized to “Mount Hope” from the Massachusetts language, translates to “Lookout Mountain.” The term “Massasoit” is an inherited title for a great leader.

²⁰ Giovanni da Verrazzano. *The Voyage of Verrazzano, 1524*. National Humanities Center, 2006. nationalhumanities-center.org/pds/amerbegin/contact/text4/verrazzano.pdf. Accessed April 11, 2025.

²¹ Angela Goebel Bain, Lynne Manring, and Barbara Mathews, “Native Peoples in New England,” American Centuries, Memorial Hall Museum. http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/classroom/curriculum_6th/lesson2/bkgdessay.html. Accessed December 16, 2024.

²² Strobel, *Native Americans of New England*, 73.

These devastating epidemics weakened many coastal Native nations long before Europeans arrived in significant numbers to settle the land. The cultural and social fragmentation caused by high mortality rates left many communities vulnerable to encroachment by European settlers. Thus, the early interactions between European traders and Native peoples set the stage for far-reaching transformations in the region's Native American societies, laying the groundwork for future colonization.



It is estimated that 80-90 percent of Indigenous communities in New England were decimated in “The Great Dying,” which may have been caused by a combination of diseases, including small pox and leptospirosis, a bacterial infection spread by rats on European ships.

In 1614, Dutch navigator Adriaen Block, for whom Block Island is named, explored and mapped Narragansett Bay. Just two years later, an epidemic referred to as “The Great Dying” broke out, resulting in the deaths of most of the inhabitants of the southeastern shore of modern-day Massachusetts. There is no definitive answer regarding the disease that caused the epidemic that raged from 1616 through 1619. New research suggests rats from European ships carried leptospirosis complicated by Weil syndrome, contaminating fresh water sources.²³ Regardless of the specific cause, this horrific event facilitated the successful colonization of the Massachusetts Bay area; the English settlers who reached the coast on the Mayflower in 1620 encountered a region that, despite signs of previous inhabitation, had no living communities.

When the Mayflower passengers arrived in Massachusetts, they introduced a new dynamic to European-Indigenous relationships: colonization. Like the trading ventures that preceded them, colonization was heavily driven by economic motives. The companies that backed early settlement aimed to build profitable trade relationships with Indigenous communities, using North American resources to finance their exploration and expansion efforts. Unlike previous interactions in

²³ John S. Marr and John T. Cathey, “New Hypothesis for Cause of Epidemic Among Native Americans, New England, 1616-1619,” *Emerg Infect Dis* [serial on the Internet], (February 2010). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid1602.090276>. Accessed December 16, 2024.

New England, colonization set the stage for competition for land.²⁴ The geopolitical landscape shifted amongst the New England Tribes, as some capitalized on and benefitted from the challenges and opportunities brought by European trade and settlement, while others were weakened by it and were compelled to find new ways to survive. The impacts of trade, disease, population pressure, and widely divergent worldviews among Europeans and Native American people ultimately changed the historical trajectory of not only Native people in New England, but also Native people across North America.

New Colony, New World(s)

Arrival of the Mayflower and the Contract with the Pokanoket

In the fall of 1620, 102 English passengers boarded the Mayflower to journey to North America. Some of them were merchants and craftsmen, but for half of the passengers, the voyage marked the second attempt to settle in a foreign land in pursuit of religious freedom. Dissatisfied with what they saw as the corruptions of Christianity since the early church, they followed a strict interpretation of the Bible. They rejected church hierarchy, elaborate ceremonies, and even traditions like celebrating Christmas, which they saw as influenced by paganism. As “Separatists,” they made the difficult decision to leave England rather than try to reform the Church of England from within.²⁵

The religious pilgrims had established a close-knit community in Leiden, a Dutch university town known for its tolerance. Over time, however, they saw their children adopting Dutch customs and losing their English identity. This led them to the decision to create a colony in North America where they could uphold their culture and build a community based on their Separatist Christian principles. A London merchant gathered investors for the colony and hired the aging merchant ship, the Mayflower, to transport the Separatists and the other English emigrants on the journey.

Negotiations caused them to miss the summer sailing season, leading to an autumn departure. They were headed towards the upper part of the Virginia Colony, but after a grueling journey and an unexpected turn northward, they arrived in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in early November. Recognizing the challenges ahead, the men on board drafted the Mayflower Compact, an agreement that laid the foundation for a self-governing community. This first act of governance on foreign soil set a significant precedent for democratic principles in the New World.

The Mayflower passengers sent scouting expeditions along the coast, ultimately finding safe harbor at a place they called “Plymouth” in December of 1620. Among their leaders were William Bradford, who became the first governor of Plymouth Colony, Edward Winslow, a subsequent governor and London agent, and Miles Standish, an English military officer hired as an advisor for the colony. Their writings offer a window into the Separatists’ lives and their interaction with their native neighbors.

²⁴ Bain, Manring, and Mathews. “Native Peoples in New England.”

²⁵ The Separatists from the Church of England are also known as “Pilgrims,” although this term was not made popular until the 1800s. The terms “Separatists” and “Pilgrims” are used interchangeably in this narrative to refer to these initial English settlers.



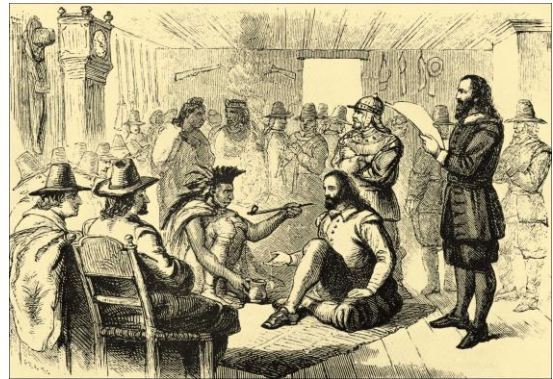
Mayflower passenger Elizabeth Tilley-Howland is thought to be an inspiration for Henry Hudson Kitson's sculpture "The Pilgrim Maiden." Although she was the only one in her family to survive the first winter in Plimoth, she left 10 children and 88 grandchildren when she was buried in Ancient Little Neck Cemetery, East Providence, RI.

The Great Dying had left the land the Separatists encountered uninhabited, despite clear evidence of villages. Standish's men found caches of corn, and Bradford observed "skulls and bones were found in many places lying still above the ground."²⁶ Throughout that first winter, the Separatists battled the elements, disease, and a lack of food and shelter. They stole the buried corn reserves they found, an action that would anger surrounding Tribes. By spring, only 52 of the original 102 passengers were still alive.

Although the Separatists saw some Native Americans at a distance, it was not until March of 1621 that true contact was made. An Eastern Abenaki man named Samoset walked into Plymouth Colony, saying "Welcome, Englishmen."²⁷ Samoset had learned English from traders and fishermen in Pemaquid Point, Maine. He informed the settlers that the Native name of Plymouth was "Patuxet," and that the leader of the Tribal confederation was the Pokanoket Massasoit, who lived 40 miles west in a place called "Sowams" on the northeast coast of Narragansett Bay.

The Massasoit had been watching the Separatists with interest and trepidation since they landed. The Great Dying had weakened the Pokanoket and the tributary Tribes, leaving them vulnerable to the Narragansett Tribe on the western side of Narragansett Bay. The Pokanoket had been reduced to about 300 warriors, markedly less than the 3,000 warriors the Massasoit could muster prior to the Great Dying.²⁸ Samoset arranged a meeting between the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin and the Separatists with the help of Tisquantum, or Squanto, a Patuxet man who also spoke English. Squanto, who had been kidnapped years earlier by European traders and taken to England, acted as Ousamequin's translator. This meeting between the Pokanoket leader and the settlers from the Mayflower became a critical and significant moment in the history of what eventually became the United States. On March 22, 1621, William Bradford and other men from the Mayflower signed a treaty of mutual protection with the Pokanoket leader Ousamequin. Part of the language in the agreement stated, "If any did unjustly war against him, we would aid him; if did war against us, he should aid us."²⁹

For the Massasoit, one of the primary objectives of the alliance was to establish a defense against the Narragansett, who had not suffered as much population loss in the Great Dying. The Massasoit had found a way to give the Pokanoket some military equality with their rivals. Likewise, the Pokanoket soon began to provide help to the Separatists to teach them survival in North America. The Massasoit instructed some Indigenous families to show the settlers their



In March 1621, the Separatists Pilgrims and the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin forged a mutual protection alliance that lasted more than 50 years.

²⁶ Nathaniel Philbrick. *The Mayflower*, (New York, Penguin 2008), 82.

²⁷ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 92.

²⁸ Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

²⁹ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 105.

methods for growing corn, squash, and beans and for fertilizing the soil by burying fish. The Massasoit's influence and the terms of the alliance also protected the English from the animosity of the surrounding Tribes, many of whom preferred armed resistance against the colonists.

The Origins of America's Thanksgiving Holiday

In the fall of 1621, the Separatists hosted a harvest feast that is the origin story for the American holiday of Thanksgiving.³⁰ The Massasoit and his retinue attended, greatly outnumbering their English hosts despite their losses in the recent epidemic. What actually transpired more than 400 years ago and how that was perceived by the individuals involved is open to historical interpretation. The Tribe may have been alerted by the sound of celebratory gunfire and came expecting battle – a logical reason for the Pokanoket contingent consisting of 90 warriors – or they may have been invited as a Biblical allusion to the stranger at the harvest feast (Deuteronomy 16:13–14).³¹ The Pokanoket may also have seen the occasion as one of reciprocity, as they likely had previously shared one of their 13 “moons” or thanksgivings with the people of Plymouth Colony.³² The feast lasted for several days and included a variety of fish, deer, fowl, and dishes made from corn meal. Plymouth leader Edward Winslow recorded the event in *Mourt's Relation*, an account of the Separatist's first year published in London in 1622. The myth of this event is sometimes interpreted as the Indians gifting their country bloodlessly to Europeans and their descendants to launch the United States as a great Christian nation blessed by God.³³ In reality, however, this event – initiated by the English, carrying both religious and military overtones, and similar to traditional harvest feasts they had experienced in their home country – provided an opportunity for the Pokanoket and the Separatists to confirm their agreement to not wage war on one another and to assure mutual protection.



Native farming practices followed seasonal cycles and were celebrated in ceremonies like harvest festivals.

The early cooperation between the Separatist pilgrims and the Pokanoket is often symbolized by the 1621 harvest feast, remembered today as the First Thanksgiving. While this event represented a moment of shared success, it also highlighted the fragile nature of peace. Cultural differences and divergent goals lingered beneath the surface, seeds of the ultimate destruction of this alliance. Moreover, the story of survival and the roots of a nation for one people is the story of loss of life, land, and the beginning of centuries of betrayal for another. On Thanksgiving in 1970, Frank “Wamsutta” James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag man, gave a protest speech on Thanksgiving in front of Plymouth's statue of the Massasoit Ousamequin after his invitation to speak at a state celebration was rescinded.

³⁰ Thanksgiving as a national holiday was established by President Lincoln in 1863.

³¹ Jeremy D. Bangs, “Thanksgiving – A Usable Feast,” Leiden American Pilgrim Museum. <https://leidenamericanpilgrimuseum.org/en/page/thanksgiving>. Accessed December 18, 2024; and

David J. Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, (New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 171.

³² Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

³³ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 171.

The speech described the welcome that Native peoples gave Europeans, as well as the mistreatment of Native Americans and the theft of land that followed. In part of the speech, James stated:

This is a time of celebration for you – celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People.

James' protest led to the establishment of the United American Indians of New England and the National Day of Mourning, commemorated annually on the fourth Thursday of November.³⁴

The Pokanoket Alliance with the Colonists

Over the next few decades, the alliance between the Separatists and the Pokanoket faced numerous challenges, driven by internal conflicts, growing tensions with neighboring Tribes, and the increasing pressures of colonial expansion.

In the early years, Squanto played a divisive role, spreading rumors among both the English and local Tribes in a bid for power. His actions strained relations, nearly inciting a war when he falsely claimed the Pokanoket planned to attack Plymouth. The Massasoit demanded Squanto be turned over for questioning, but Governor William Bradford refused because he relied heavily on Squanto's interpreting skills. Because the terms of the alliance dictated that the Massasoit would exercise legal jurisdiction over their own people, this action nearly broke the alliance. Shortly after, Squanto fell gravely ill on a trading mission with Bradford and died, fueling suspicions that the Massasoit or Corbitant had orchestrated his demise. Had he not perished, hostilities may have erupted much earlier than King Philip's War.

Around the same time, new settlers arrived in Massachusetts, many of whom were secular young men unlike the devout Separatists. Establishing a fur trading post in Wessagusset (modern Weymouth), they provoked local Tribes by stealing food and occupying Native lands. News of a massacre at Jamestown in 1622 heightened the colonists' fears, prompting Miles Standish to advocate for stronger defenses and more aggressive action.

A series of 1623 occurrences reinforced the alliance. First, the Massasoit fell gravely ill, possibly with typhus brought by Dutch traders whose ship had just left the Massasoit's settlement. Edward Winslow led a small group to Sowams on a political and compassionate mission. Winslow provided medical aid, and his care saved the Massasoit's life along with the lives of several others in the community. This occasion cemented a friendship that underpinned the alliance between the Pokanoket and the Separatists; without the strength of this personal relationship, the alliance may have crumbled. In the days following the Massasoit's recovery, the Pokanoket informed the English that the Massachusetts and other northern Tribes were planning an attack on Plymouth and Wessagusset. Standish led the response, in which the Native leaders were brutally assassinated, and many others died in battle. Standish's attack on the warriors from the north intimidated the Tribes located close to Plymouth,



Frank "Wamsutta" James' protest speech in Plymouth, MA, 1970, led to the National Day of Mourning

Courtesy of the United American Indians of New England (UAIINE)

³⁴ "Frank James (Wamsutta, 1923–2001) National Day of Mourning," in *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, ed. Siobhan Senior, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 455-458.

discouraging them from allying with the Narragansett. It also gave the English a reputation for brutality.³⁵ Thus, healing and conflict strengthened the alliance between the Pokanoket and the Plymouth settlers. Both events also contributed to the idea that the fate of the Pokanoket was increasingly tied to that of the English.



The Massasoit Ousamequin was given a red horseman's coat by Mayflower passengers Stephen Hopkins and Edward Winslow, who wrote, "In his person he is a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare of speech. In his attire...a great chain of white bone beads about his neck, and at it behind his neck hangs a little bag of tobacco...in his bosom hanging in a string, a great long knife."

Pilgrim Emmanuel Altham described the Massasoset wearing a "black wolf skin" on his shoulder and beads "about his middle," observing, "....He is as proper a man as ever was seen in this country, and very courageous."

Gifts for Massasoit, 1621 by Ruth De-Wilde-Major

By the 1630s, new waves of settlers across Massachusetts Bay escalated tensions. Unlike the Separatists, the newly arrived colonists were not reliant on Native assistance for their initial survival. Furthermore, they brought livestock that needed pastures. The colonists began to consume vast tracts of land that appeared empty, but in reality, were the fallow fields of the crop rotation common among the Native American population.

Many Indigenous leaders, the Massasoit Ousamequin among them, initially responded by selling their lands to maintain peace. Into the 1640s, Ousamequin sold off large tracts of property to promote "a loving and just carriage" with Plymouth.³⁶ This included lands that become the towns of Taunton, Rehoboth, and Swansea. Furthermore, as the fur trade declined in New England, Native Americans had fewer items to trade that the English wanted – land was the great exception. To the Pokanoket and their neighbors, land contracts meant shared use, and in early instances, this was occasionally written into the deeds. To the English, however, the agreements signified exclusive ownership. This cultural divide, coupled with the lack of settlers' fences and livestock damaging Indigenous crops, led to disputes. Furthermore, the documents were executed in English, putting Native speakers at a disadvantage regarding their contents. While many of the land agreements were legal, at least by English standards, as colonists' greed for land escalated over time, so did the manipulation and outright fraud to obtain it.

Disease and war exacerbated the shift in the balance of power. In 1633, a smallpox epidemic raced through the region, weakening the Narragansett and Pokanoket Tribes. Three years

³⁵ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 199.

³⁶ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 231.

later, the Pequot War began in nearby Connecticut Colony in retaliation for the killing of an English trader. In spring of 1637, English settlers, joined by Mohegan and Narragansett allies, attacked a Pequot fort on the Mystic River, killing between 400 and 700 Pequots, including women, children, and the elderly.³⁷ In many ways, the Pequot War was a harbinger of King Philip's War that would occur three decades later.

Between 1630 and 1640, more than 20,000 English people arrived in New England. In 1643, the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies realized that the Tribes were becoming increasingly hostile and discontent with land deals. In response to rising tensions with the Tribes and competition from the Dutch Colony of New Netherland, English colonists established the United Colonies of New England, also known as the New England Confederation. This colonial government included the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven. Each colony had a vote through an elected commissioner. The intent of the alliance was to bind the members of the confederation to each other if war occurred. If any member of the confederation came under attack, the other members agreed to come to their aid without delay. The alliance would prove to be critically important during King Philip's War, but would ultimately dissolve in the 1680s.³⁸



The Village Dam in Old Rehoboth, MA, which Plimoth Colony purchased from the Massasoit for "ten fathoms o wampum and a coat" in 1641.

Another transformative influence during this period was English settlers' attempts to convert Native people to Christianity. While some Tribes saw Christianity as a potential source of protection against the devastating plagues, the Massasoit Ousamequin resisted and discouraged his people from adopting the colonists' religion. Tribes that converted became known as "Praying Indians" and formed separate communities. This caused tensions with traditional sachems, as converts stopped paying tribute and abandoned their cultural practices. Late in his life, Ousamequin even tried to include in a land transfer the stipulation that missionaries stop converting his people. The English refused its inclusion, and Ousamequin retracted it.³⁹

If the English had maintained their original small numbers, the Massasoit Ousamequin's agreement with the colonists might have continued to be of benefit to the Tribe, but as more settlers sought opportunity in New England, things changed for the worse for all Indigenous peoples. By the late 1650s, Ousamequin was able to see that his agreement with the English, his "experiment," was not going to continue to provide the benefits he originally envisioned.⁴⁰

While the Separatists viewed the Massasoit as a staunch ally until his death, other Tribes likely resented the leader whose "personal prosperity depended on the systematic dismantling of their homeland."⁴¹ With a final land contract in 1657, the man who had struck an alliance that changed

³⁷ "1637 – The Pequot War," The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut. <https://www.colonialwarsct.org/1637.htm>. Accessed December 18, 2024.

³⁸ "New England Confederation," Britannica Encyclopedia. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/new-england-confederation>. Accessed December 18, 2024.

³⁹ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 192.

⁴⁰ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 250.

⁴¹ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 172.

the course of history in the Western hemisphere disappeared from historical records.⁴² Ousamequin is presumed to have died in 1660 in Brookfield, Massachusetts.⁴³ In 2017, his body was returned to the Royal Burial Ground at Burr's Hill in today's Warren, Rhode Island.

King Philip's War – Causes and Consequences

King Philip's War, which began in 1675, was one of the most devastating conflicts in early American history. Rooted in long-standing tensions between Native American Tribes and English settlers in New England, the war was driven by issues of land encroachment, the erosion of Native American sovereignty, economic pressures, internal Tribal divisions, and specific triggering events. Together,



King Philip's War (1675-1676) shifted the balance of power to the English and changed the course of history.

these factors culminated in a brutal conflict that permanently shifted the balance of power to the English and devastated Native and English communities. The Pokanoket homeland of Sowams, and Metacom, the Massasoit Ousamequin's second son, lay at the heart of the conflict.

The Massasoit Ousamequin's leadership had preserved peace for nearly half a century. His diplomacy ensured a period of coexistence, during which the Pokanoket and the Separatists of Plymouth Colony avoided major conflicts despite their significant cultural differences. However, after the deaths of the Massasoit and the first generation of Plymouth leaders, the fragile alliance unraveled. The Massasoit's sons struggled to maintain the relationship amid increasing colonial encroachment and hostility.

The Massasoit Ousamequin's sons requested English names for themselves for their dealings with the colonists. Wamsutta was called Alexander by the English, and Metacom was called Philip.⁴⁴ The English gave a subtle insult in choosing the names of pagan Greek leaders.⁴⁵

⁴² Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 195.

⁴³ Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025; Richard Pickering, Deputy Executive Director of Plimoth-Patuxet Museums, March 17, 2024. At this later stage of life, the Massasoit Ousamequin was married to the daughter of the Quabog Nipmuc sachem. Although his death is not recorded, by June 1660, the Massasoit is mentioned as deceased in the record of the Plymouth General Court that describes Wamsutta and Metacom taking English names.

⁴⁴ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 196.

⁴⁵ Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

Wamsutta, who was older, took over as Massasoit of the Pokanoket and its tributary Tribes after the death of his father. The sons were married to Weetamoo and Wootonakanuske, the daughters of the Pocasset Sachem Corbitant; these marriages cemented an alliance that would prove important in the war a decade later.⁴⁶ Such intermarriages were common among Indigenous families in leadership, contributing to the strength of alliances and the cohesion of the confederacy.

As Massasoit, Wamsutta had the respect of other sachems in the region and showed promise of being a strong, capable, and assertive leader who may have been considered a threat by colonial authorities.⁴⁷ Among his most notable accomplishments was pressing for and receiving compensation for the Pokanoket for Moshassuck, a contested area in Providence, Rhode Island. In 1662, Wamsutta appeared before the Plymouth colonial court, accused of independently negotiating land sales to colonists other than those of the Plymouth Colony in violation of the Pokanoket agreement with the Separatists. He became very ill in Plymouth and was allowed to go home with promises to return. On the journey to Potumtuk in Sowams, Wamsutta died, raising suspicions about his cause of death.⁴⁸

Metacom was only 24 years old when he succeeded his brother as the Massasoit of the Pokanoket. The English gave him the name “King Philip” as a gesture of sarcastic disdain. Metacom rose to power in challenging times, and his people were anxious for him to demonstrate leadership. He believed his brother had been murdered by the Plymouth authorities; Pokanoket land was regularly being sold and occupied by the English; and the Narragansett continued to be a threat to the west. For Metacom and his people, these are the factors that tipped the balance from peace to war.

Erosion of Indigenous Sovereignty

The English’s imposition of their legal and cultural systems challenged the autonomy of Native American Tribes. Colonists insisted that Tribal leaders adhere to English laws, diminishing their ability to govern their own people. For Metacom, these efforts represented an existential threat to his people’s sovereignty. His brother’s trial in Plymouth and unexplained death were symptoms of this erosion.

Another symptom was the Taunton Agreement of 1671. Hugh Cole, one of the founders of Swansea, warned Plymouth authorities of a rumored alliance between the Pokanoket and Narragansett to attack the colonists. To address this, Metacom met with colonial leaders in Taunton and, under pressure, signed the Taunton Agreement, in which he admitted to plotting an attack and agreed to surrender weapons. Metacom, humiliated and forced to surrender his sovereignty under threat of war, outwardly complied with English demands while covertly preparing for conflict. He failed to turn over weapons, keeping his people armed and leading to a fine later that year. His strategy of buying time through land sales and submission allowed for quiet mobilization, but it also weakened his standing, leading some sachems and allies to distance themselves from the Pokanoket and reject his leadership.⁴⁹ In the months that followed the agreement, Plymouth Colony required that Indigenous leaders all along

⁴⁶ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 4.

⁴⁷ Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025. “We, just as our Pokanoket ancestors such as Weetamoo and Metacom, unquestionably believe that he was poisoned by the English, who had all the motive to eliminate a perceived threat, as it is too convenient for such an illness to have occurred within these circumstances.”

⁴⁸ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 50–52.

⁴⁹ Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

the coast sign documents affirming their loyalty to the colony. The subsequent years saw increasing unease and arms buildup on both sides.⁵⁰

Wamsutta's trial and death and the Taunton Agreement exemplified the increasing loss of Indigenous self-determination. Over time, the colonists' refusal to respect Native American governance deepened mistrust, with Metacom and other leaders striving to preserve their independence in the face of mounting pressures.

In addition, the English legal system was based on *couverture*, in which women's possessions became their husbands' upon marriage; this undermined the sovereignty of Native women like the Pocasset Sachem Weetamoo, who were powerful in their own right.⁵¹

Encroachment on Native Lands

The decline of Tribal sovereignty was not the only threat to Indigenous peoples' way of life. Across New England, the rapid expansion of English settlements placed immense pressure on the Tribes' ancestral lands. Colonists continually pushed westward, acquiring territory through a mix of deceptive treaties, coerced agreements, and outright seizure. English livestock played a major role in transforming and taking over the Indigenous landscape; their uncontrolled grazing was the vanguard of English settlement. This encroachment disrupted traditional ways of life, undermining the Tribes' ability to



Today Rehoboth has a vibrant agriculture community, including Homestead Farm, which raises Scottish Highland beef.

hunt, fish, and farm as they had for generations.⁵² The settlers' aggressive expansion was driven by a growing population and the colonists' belief in their right to claim the land for their own use. Algonquian languages used pronouns like "our," "my," and "his" to evoke responsibilities and shared histories, not sole possession, complicating interpretation of legal language on land deeds.⁵³ For the Tribes, including the Pokanoket, these losses were devastating, creating food shortages and sparking tensions over resource access. The gradual loss of their ancestral lands fueled resentment and set the stage for violent resistance.

Economic Pressures

Evolving trade dynamics in the region further exacerbated tensions. Early in the colonial period, trade between Native peoples and settlers had been mutually beneficial, with Tribes supplying furs, wampum, and other goods in exchange for European tools, weapons, and textiles. However, as settlers grew more self-reliant and fur-bearing animals became scarce, Tribes found themselves increasingly excluded from the colonial economy. They became economically marginalized and dependent on the settlers for essential supplies, with little to pay for the goods they needed or the debts that they had accrued except land.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 215–218.

⁵¹ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 42.

⁵² Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 56.

⁵³ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 29.

⁵⁴ Jeremy D. Bangs, personal communication, January 22, 2023, reflecting content of *New Light on the Old Colony*, (Brill: Boston, 2020).

Internal Tensions Among Tribes

The rising tensions between Native Americans and English settlers were layered on historical rivalries among the Tribes that stretched back centuries. These ancient alliances and disputes played a significant role in the growing conflict. Tribes like the Mohegan and Pequot had long-standing animosities with the Pokanoket and Narragansett, which the English cleverly exploited. The Pokanoket and Narragansett had long fought each other in maintaining sovereignty – trust was slow to build between them as they recognized a common threat in colonial settlement. Some Tribes allied with the colonists, seeing them as a means to gain an advantage over rival groups. As such, Native American unity against the colonists proved elusive, undermining Native resistance efforts. The English's ability to exploit these internal tensions highlights the strategic challenges faced by Metacom and his allies.

The Final Straw

Wamsutta's death and the Taunton Agreement set the stage for the war, but the final spark came in 1675, when English authorities executed three Pokanoket men. The men were accused of murdering John Sassamon, a Praying Indian who had left English service and become Metacom's translator. Though Sassamon was instrumental in land negotiations, Metacom ultimately lost trust in him, accusing him of fraud and favoring the English. By 1674, Metacom had dismissed Sassamon, suspecting him of being a spy, a plausible assumption given Sassamon's relationship with Rev. John Eliot, who hoped to convert Metacom to Christianity. In January 1675, Sassamon traveled to Plymouth and warned Governor Josiah Winslow that Metacom was planning a coordinated attack on the colonists. In February, Sassamon's body was found in Assawompset Pond. The English suspected Metacom, but he denied any involvement, suggesting the matter should be resolved within the Tribe. When the Plymouth General Court executed the three Pokanoket men, Metacom viewed this as the enforcement of English law on a Tribal matter. Under the terms of the 1621 alliance, Metacom had the right to administer justice to his people; Sassamon had been killed for betraying the Pokanoket. With this event, Metacom perceived that English dominance over his people had reached an intolerable level. The execution not only shattered any remaining faith in the alliance between the Pokanoket and Plymouth Colony, but also galvanized the Tribe to resist further English encroachment on their lands and lives.⁵⁵



John Sassamon, a Praying Indian who had left English service and become Metacom's translator, was murdered on Assawompset Pond, Lakeville and Middleborough, MA.

The War

The battle lines were drawn in 1675. Metacom created a coalition that included the Pokanoket, Pocassets, Nemaskets, and Nipmuks. Later in the war, the Narragansett and some of the Sakonnetts also aligned with the Pokanoket. In many ways, this was a civil war, as some of the tributary Tribes and even some of his own people believed their best option for survival was to side with the English.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Metacom succeeded in creating a pan-Indigenous force with the strength to oppose the English. On the other side, the Massachusetts Tribe

⁵⁵ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 220–223.

⁵⁶ Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

and the Tribes of Cape Cod supported the English due to existing relationships and the influence of Christian missionaries. Eventually, the Mohegans and remnants of the Pequots in Connecticut Colony also sided with the English.⁵⁷

In the summer of 1675, the Pokanoket and their allies gathered at Potumtuk. Colonists left their farms to join their neighbors in garrisons for safety. Plymouth Governor Josiah Winslow, son of Edward Winslow, called up militias and requested help from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Although Metacom preferred to wait and continue to build his forces, tensions on both sides reached a boiling point and spilled over into war. In the third week of June 1675, the Pokanoket and their allies looted and burned settlers' homes, but killed no one. In retaliation for the destruction, a 12-year-old colonial boy fatally shot one of the warriors looting the farm of Job Winslow near the Myles Garrison in Swansea. The garrison was close to a meeting house that had been established in 1663 by a group of Baptists who had broken off from the Newman congregation in Rehoboth. With first blood drawn by the English, the Native American warriors attacked the meeting house, shooting at worshipers who had gathered for a day of prayer. By the end of the day on June 24, 1675, ten Swansea residents were dead, and King Philip's War had begun.⁵⁸

Shortly after the attack, the Pokanoket left Potumtuk for Pocasset where Metacom joined forces with his sister-in-law, the Sachem Weetamoo. While most of the English saw this as proof of an English victory, instead it was a shrewd move that expanded the scope of the war to include Tribes and territory beyond the Pokanoket Tribe's homeland of Sowams. Massachusetts Bay sent a militia to aid Plymouth, presenting a unified English front.⁵⁹ These tactical moves on both sides pushed the conflict from a local battle to the war that eventually reached across New England.

Early victories by the allied Native forces devastated towns and caused widespread panic among the settlers. The Tribes held a great advantage because of their familiarity with the terrain. Warriors were particularly adept at using swamps as places to reconvene, as well as to launch ambushes. On multiple occasions, Metacom was almost captured but used his knowledge of the landscape to escape unharmed. However, the English's superior resources and their ability to recruit Indigenous allies of their own eventually turned the tide of the war.

By late 1675, the United Colonies of New England had gathered the largest army ever assembled in the region, consisting of 1,000 soldiers – about five percent of the adult male population. At this time, the Narragansett Tribe, rumored to be at least 2,000 warriors strong, was considering an alliance with Metacom. The widowed Weetamoo, the Pocasset sachem, sought refuge for her people among the Narragansett and married one of Narragansett sachems, Quiapen, who emerged as war leader.⁶⁰ With this alliance, the Pocasset sachem helped bridge the relationship between the Pokanoket and the Narragansett, and Metacom began sending Pokanoket women and children to safety in Narragansett territory. The Narragansett Sachem and war leader Canonchet made his decision to fight the English when colonial forces attacked a Narragansett fort located on an island surrounded by swampland in present-day South Kingstown, Rhode Island. The Great Swamp Massacre was one of the war's most pivotal and devastating battles. The

⁵⁷ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 219–220.

⁵⁸ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 237–238.

⁵⁹ Philbrick, *The Mayflower*, 244–245.

⁶⁰ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 332–333.

colonists and their Pequot and Mohegan allies suffered 70 casualties, about a third of their soldiers at the battle. Tribal losses among the Narragansett and their allies included 300 men and nearly 400 women and children, including the Pokanoket non-combatants.⁶¹ In a tragic conclusion, the English forces set fire to the fort, destroying the homes inside and leaving no survivors. The war spread to New York and Connecticut, and Metacom was able to secure some assistance from the French in Canada. By the spring of 1676, however, the war was turning in favor of the English, who had augmented their militias with Indigenous allies of their own. In early April, warriors from the Mohegan, Pequot, and Niantic Tribes joined the English and went in search of Canonchet, who they eventually captured and executed.⁶² Metacom's own forces were dwindling, running out of food and ammunition. English adversaries under the leadership of Benjamin Church made progress against them throughout the spring and summer.

In August 1676, Church learned that Metacom was hiding near Potumtuk in Sowams with a small group of family and loyal warriors. John Alderman, an Indigenous Christian convert whose brother died at Metacom's hands, betrayed Metacom's location and ultimately tracked him through the swamps, killing him.⁶³ Days later, Metacom's trusted ally Anawan, the last warrior who had also served his father, Ousamequin, was captured in Rehoboth and executed in Plymouth, officially ending King Philip's War in southern New England.⁶⁴

The Aftermath

Fourteen months after the first shots were fired, King Philip's War ended in Sowams, a few miles from where it had begun. Its consequences, however, were felt throughout the region and across time. With a per capita casualty rate higher than any other war in North America, the war ended Indigenous sovereignty in southern New England, and the balance of power shifted decisively and permanently in favor of the settlers. Conflicts persisted until 1678 in the north, where five Tribes in Acadia formed the Wabanaki Confederacy, allying with New France to resist New England's expansion onto their lands.⁶⁵

The loss of life and property was staggering. During the fourteen-month conflict, Native American forces struck 52 English communities, destroying 17 of them. Of Plymouth's 14 towns, six were razed or suffered substantial damage, with only those on Cape Cod remaining safe.⁶⁶ Two of Plymouth Colony's towns were in Sowams – Swansea (Barrington, Somerset, Swansea and Warren) and Rehoboth (Seekonk and East Providence) – and both were razed during the war. Providence, which was outside Plymouth Colony, was also destroyed. Plymouth Colony lost 8 percent of its men.⁶⁷ These losses pale in comparison to Native American losses. Assuming the Native population was approximately 20,000 in the early 1670s, between 60 and 80 percent were gone by the end of the war. This included Native people who were killed, died of sickness or starvation, were shipped out of the country to be slaves, or fled to join other Tribes such as the Iroquois and the Abenakis in the north.⁶⁸

⁶¹ "Roger Williams: King Philip's War," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service.

<https://home.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/philipswar.htm>. Accessed December 26, 2024; and Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

⁶² Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 304.

⁶³ Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 328–330.

⁶⁴ Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 343.

⁶⁵ Acadia consisted of current day Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire.

⁶⁶ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 334.

⁶⁷ Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 332.

⁶⁸ Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 332.

While the war was devastating for the Tribes and the English colonists, the English quickly recovered, their numbers continuing to grow as more settlers immigrated from across the Atlantic. Yet victory for the English came at a steep price. Entire towns were destroyed, and the economic toll was severe. Despite these hardships, the shared struggle fostered unity among the colonies and contributed to their eventual growth and resilience. In Rehoboth, recovery included the development of a public education system in 1674. One of the earliest communities to prioritize education, the establishment of a school reflected residents' belief that an informed citizenry was vital for the well-being of the town.⁶⁹

While Native American Tribes fought on both sides of the conflict, the colonists had presented a united front, all without aid from the British crown or army. This success would be remembered a century later, when the colonists threw off the yoke of English government for American Independence. In a historical side note, Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, an account published in 1682 of her life as a captive in a Native village, became the American colonies' first best seller.⁷⁰ The book is the most widely read captivity narrative ever published, helping to establish many of the genre's key elements.

The Pokanoket population, however, was subjected to “damnatio memoriae” (meaning “condemnation of memory”) – the deliberate attempt to erase their reputation and memory of their existence. They were systematically pushed from their lands, killed outright, or sold into slavery. Despite some Native people's efforts to convince the English that they were not involved in the war, more than 1,000 men were indiscriminately rounded up and sold off to plantation owners in Barbados and other islands in the West Indies.⁷¹ Many women and children became slaves in New England households.

In the Sowams region, English laws were enacted to displace the Pokanoket from their land and suppress their identity and culture, forbidding them from speaking their language or identifying as Pokanoket. To avoid enslavement or execution in the aftermath of King Philip's War, many went into hiding or were absorbed into other Tribes. Metacom's surviving relatives were exiled to the Shetucket reservation in Connecticut under the supervision of Mohegan leader Uncas – an enemy of the Pokanoket – and Reverend James Fitch. Pokanoket descendants lived in Connecticut for several generations before some returned to Rhode Island in the late 19th century.⁷²

The colonies seized nearly all the territory of the Tribes they had defeated. Confiscated Pokanoket lands were distributed to English soldiers as payment for their service during the war. The Pocasset's land known as Shawomet was seized by Plymouth Colony and sold to individuals. Known as the “Shawomet Purchase,” the land was made part of Swansea; it kept its Indigenous identity in colonial records. In 1677, this land was split into three sections that encompass today's Somerset.⁷³ Those Tribes who had sided with the English were not treated well, but were relocated or allowed to stay on part of their ancestral homeland designated as a reservation. The aftermath of

⁶⁹ “A Journey through Rehoboth, Massachusetts History,” The Boston Day Book. <https://thebostondaybook.com/rehoboth-massachusetts-history/>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

⁷⁰ Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 288.

⁷¹ Phibrick, *The Mayflower*, 345.

⁷² Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

⁷³ Austin, George. “Copies of Historic Documents Presented to Town,” *The Standard-Times*, September 30, 2015. <https://www.southcoasttoday.com/story/special/2015/09/30/copies-historic-documents-presented-to/33386556007/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

the war, especially the differences in treatment of various Tribes, resulted in the complex post-colonization Indigenous communities that exist today.

Culturally, the war left deep scars. Relations between Native American Tribes and European settlers were permanently strained, marked by mistrust and hostility. Indigenous cultures and traditions faced steady decline, as Tribes were increasingly marginalized or pressured into assimilation. The death of Metacom in 1676 was a symbolic and brutal conclusion to the conflict. His body was desecrated, and his head was displayed on a pike in Plymouth for twenty years as a warning that underscored the consequences of resistance. Over the next 150 years, towns were laid out in what was once Sowams. What followed were years of continual development and the gradual loss of much of the original natural abundance that sustained the Pokanoket Tribe and that the colonists first encountered.



The Somerset Historical Society's James E. Bradbury Museum displays the works of "Pottersville" potters, a major local industry in Somerset for two centuries starting in 1705.

King Philip's War remains one of the deadliest conflicts in American history relative to population size. It reshaped New England's cultural and political landscape, paving the way for further colonial expansion at the expense of Native Americans, while leaving a legacy of loss and transformation. The war also laid the foundation for centuries of relations between North America's Indigenous population and European Americans. It was the first war that focused on irresolvable differences between Native American and colonial claims to sovereignty. Many of the patterns established leading up to and during the war played out time and again in Native communities across the continent over the next three centuries. These include the colonists' insistence that all disagreements be settled using their system of laws and courts, the taking of ancestral lands, the trail of broken alliances, the general unwillingness of colonists to tolerate Tribal cultures, and armed resistance when no options remained.

The Lively Experiment – Roger Williams and the Tenets of Religious Freedom

One of the towering figures of the colonial era was Rhode Island's founder, Roger Williams. In helping define the tenets of religious freedom, he laid groundwork for one of the pillars of democracy, the separation of church and state. His initial commitment to the fair treatment of Indigenous peoples was also important, although in the wake of King Philip's War he followed his countrymen in the enslavement of Native peoples.

Williams was born in 1603 in London, where he grew up. He studied to be a minister in the Church of England at Pembroke College of Cambridge, where he excelled with languages and acquired the learning that came to define his beliefs.⁷⁴ He was greatly influenced by his mentor, Sir Edward Coke, and the teachings of Francis Bacon.⁷⁵ Like others of his time, he eventually rejected the authority of

⁷⁴ "Frequently Asked Questions," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/rowi/faqs.htm>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

⁷⁵ John M. Barry. "Roger Williams's Opening Argument: Church, State and the Birth of Liberty," Small State, Big History, The Online Review of Rhode Island History. <https://smallstatebighistory.com/roger-williamss-opening-argument-church-state-birth-liberty>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

the Church of England. In addition to his belief in the separation from the established church, Williams also believed religion should remain independent of civil government. He saw human governance as imperfect, believing it would corrupt the church. Williams advocated for religious freedom, or “soul liberty;” he saw this “liberty of conscience” as the freedom to follow one’s own conscience in matters of God and religion, stating that “forced worship stincks in the nostrils of God.”⁷⁶ These tenets – separation from the Church of England, separation of church and state, and liberty of conscience – were foundational in the establishment of Rhode Island, which Williams referred to as “a lively experiment.”⁷⁷ The latter two remain important elements of religious freedom in the United States today.



Illustration (c. 1862) of Roger Williams, who died in Providence in the winter of 1683

While Roger Williams shared some beliefs with Protestant theologian John Calvin, he disagreed with Calvin’s idea that politics should enforce religious behavior. Calvin maintained that governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed, with their power being a gift from God. However, Williams believed the Church needed to distance itself from these Protestant principles, advocating for a separation between religious and political authority. Put simply, when religion and politics are mixed, the result is politics.⁷⁸

The Puritans that settled Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s had a distinct belief system from the Separatists of Plymouth Colony. They sought to bring their reformed belief system to the New England colonies, aiming to purify their interpretation of the Church of England while remaining connected to their homeland. Once in New England, they established congregational churches adhering to reformed theology. This approach differed from the Separatists in Plymouth, who believed the only way to practice their faith was to completely separate from the Church of England, despite retaining their English identity. Although Roger Williams emigrated with the Puritans, like the Separatists, he believed religion needed to distinguish itself from the Church of England entirely.

In February 1631, Roger Williams and his wife Mary Barnard arrived in Nantasket and were welcomed into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in Boston. All six of their children would be born in New England.⁷⁹ Williams declined an invitation to minister at a Puritan Congregational Church, believing it was still too closely tied to the Church of England. Williams then moved to Salem, where he began preaching at a church more in line with his beliefs, but the congregation’s concerns about the colonial government’s disapproval prevented the church from officially hiring him.⁸⁰

Seeking greater religious freedom, Williams moved to Plymouth Colony, where he lived among the Separatists. There, he engaged in trade with Native American Tribes, including the Pokanoket and their leader, the Massasoit Ousamequin. During this time, Williams developed a deep understanding of Indigenous culture, learned the Algonquian language, and came to the belief that colonists

⁷⁶ John M. Barry, “Good, Government and Roger Williams’ Big Idea,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2012. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/god-government-and-roger-williams-big-idea-6291280>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

⁷⁷ “Royal Charter (1644-1663),” Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/charter.htm>. Accessed December 21, 2024.

⁷⁸ Barry, “Good, Government and Roger Williams’ Big Idea.”

⁷⁹ “Frequently Asked Questions,” Roger Williams National Memorial, National Park Service.

⁸⁰ “Life in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth (1631–1636),” Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/rowi/faqs.htm>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

had no right to claim Tribal lands based on the English king's authority. After a few years, he returned to Salem, where his insistence on separating church and state and challenging English laws led to his trial in 1635. Convicted and ordered to leave the colony, Williams fled in January 1636, avoiding deportation to England and temporarily leaving his family behind.⁸¹

During that harsh winter, Williams found temporary refuge in Sowams, where he was welcomed by the Massasoit Ousamequin and nursed back to health following his winter trek. That spring, Ousamequin directed him to a place just east of the Seekonk River in today's East Providence. When Plymouth Colony authorities learned of Williams' efforts to establish a settlement, they informed him that the area lay within their jurisdiction and instructed him to relocate. Williams complied, crossing the river to what is now Fox Point, placing him beyond Plymouth's boundaries. There, Williams met Canonicus and Miantonomi, Narragansett sachems, who sold land to Williams. Claim to that land was contested by both the Pokanoket and Narragansett. In 1638, the Massasoit Ousamequin complained to Williams that he had not been compensated; in 1661, his son Wamsutta successfully pressed this claim until payment was made.⁸²

Williams shared the tract with his followers and named their new settlement "Providence," as he "desired it might be a shelter for persons distressed for conscience."⁸³ This set in motion the decisions that eventually defined the border between the colonies – and eventually the states – of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Over time, Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies would unite as Massachusetts, and Rhode Island would be granted a royal charter.

Each household in Providence was given a six-acre strip of land that stretched from the cove, over Towne Street (today's Main Street) and up the hill. This distribution of land established Providence as a community founded on principles of equality. This differed from Massachusetts, where land was distributed by the General Court of Proprietors in each colony, who established settlement patterns and determined who would be freeholders.



Shunning overt displays of worship, the early Baptists, like Roger Williams, met in people's homes.

In 1637, the Providence settlers formalized their commitment to governance and mutual respect by signing the Providence Agreement. This document declared that the settlement would operate under majority rule for civil matters while guaranteeing freedom of conscience in religious affairs. Unlike other English colonies, Providence had no upper class, no taxes were collected to support the church, and voting rights extended to all heads of households, regardless of gender or church membership.⁸⁴

The community's commitment to individual liberty was tested in the 1638 case of Joshua and Jane Verin. Joshua, who refused to attend religious services, attempted to prevent his wife

⁸¹ "Life in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth," Roger Williams National Memorial, National Park Service.

⁸² Donald "Strong Turtle" Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

⁸³ Barry, "Good, Government and Roger Williams' Big Idea."

⁸⁴ "Providence (1636–1638)," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/inpvd.htm>. Accessed December 21, 2024.

from participating in church meetings held at Roger Williams' home. When Jane defied him, he resorted to physical violence. The town responded by reprimanding Joshua and banishing him from Providence. Importantly, Joshua's punishment was not for the physical abuse of his wife, but for infringing on her freedom of conscience. This case underscored Providence's dedication to protecting individual rights and the principles of the 1637 Agreement.⁸⁵

Rhode Island, known as Providence Plantations, became a refuge for those seeking liberty of conscience. Williams advocated not for protecting the state from the church but for freeing religion and personal belief from all government interference. He believed the state had no role in spiritual matters, which he considered vital to an individual's soul.⁸⁶

Williams' views aligned more closely with Baptist principles than with Puritan or Separatist beliefs. He rejected the idea of being born into a religion or paying taxes to support a church, insisting that religion should be a personal, voluntary commitment. His congregation in Providence is regarded as the first Baptist Church in America though a meeting house was not established until 1700.⁸⁷ However, within months, Williams questioned the legitimacy of any church, deeming them all corrupt. By the summer of 1639, he resigned from the church but upheld its foundation on biblical scripture. Though he stepped away from religious leadership, he remained active in advocating for religious freedom and civil governance.

During the 1640s, Williams operated a trading post on land sold to him by Canonibus along the western shore of Narragansett Bay, in what is now Wickford. This trading post became a vital meeting point between the English and the Narragansett and served as a key source of income for Williams.

In 1643, Williams traveled to England to secure a parliamentary charter for Rhode Island as an independent colony. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Plymouth were competing to claim the territory, but Williams sought to establish a colony based on his principles of religious liberty and a clear separation of church and state. He envisioned a democratic government deriving authority from the consent of its citizens rather than divine mandate, a sharp departure from the prevailing Calvinist belief that all power came from God. When Roger Williams arrived in England, he found the country embroiled in a civil war between King Charles I and Parliament. Despite the turmoil, Williams secured a Parliamentary Patent for "the Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay," uniting Providence, Newport, and Portsmouth into a single colony.⁸⁸

During this time, Williams also arranged for the publication of two books. The first, *A Key into the Language of America*, was published in November 1643. The book served as a guide to the Algonquian language, offering Algonquian phrases alongside English translations, as well as detailed descriptions of Indigenous culture. At its core, the book was groundbreaking for its respectful portrayal of Native Americans. It emphasized their culture, governance, spirituality, and humanity, challenging the common colonial view of Native American communities. One contemporary reviewer praised Williams's work, noting it depicted Native Americans as "members of a civil,

⁸⁵ "Providence (1636–1638)," Roger Williams National Memorial, National Park Service.

⁸⁶ Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island's Founders*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 34.

⁸⁷ "The Prophet of Religious Freedom," The First Baptist Church in America. <https://www.firstbaptistchurchinamerica.org/history/the-prophet-of-religious-freedom>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

⁸⁸ "Back to England (1637–1644)," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service. <https://home.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/patent.htm>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

humane, and well-ordered society.”⁸⁹ This perspective sharply contrasted with the prevailing English belief, rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery, that Native Americans needed to be converted to Christianity and assimilated as part of colonization efforts.⁹⁰ Williams’s observations demonstrated his belief that individuals could lead spiritual lives outside the structure of traditional churches, a belief strengthened in his years of trading with and living near the region’s Tribes. Recently, the argument has been made by a Narragansett scholar that Williams’ belief in religious freedom can be traced directly to his experience with the Narragansett.⁹¹ By documenting how the Tribes lived harmoniously without Christianity, Williams provided further validation for his advocacy of religious liberty.

Williams’ second book, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, set forth his argument for the separation of church and state. However, English authorities banned this book for its radical views on religion and politics.⁹² Despite Williams’ success in obtaining a patent, some leaders, like William Coddington of Newport, opposed the broad reach of the patent’s authority. In 1651, Coddington received a commission granting him lifetime governance over Aquidneck (Middletown, Newport, and Portsmouth) and Conanicut Island. In response, Williams and John Clarke, an ally from Newport, returned to England to have Coddington’s commission revoked and to seek a formal charter for the colony. However, England’s political instability delayed progress. After the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the rise of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector in 1654, securing a Charter was not a priority for the English government.⁹³



Royal Charter of Rhode Island, Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI

By 1654, Williams had returned to Providence, where he served as chief officer until 1658, while Clarke remained in England to continue advocating for a charter. Finally, in 1663, after the restoration of King Charles II, Clarke succeeded in obtaining a Royal Charter. This charter granted Rhode Island unprecedented religious freedom, making it a haven for those persecuted for their beliefs. It also allowed the colony to elect its own government, including its governor, independent of royal appointment.⁹⁴ Even though Williams attacked the teachings of Quakers, Puritans, and other religious denominations, the tenets by which the colony had been established held true. In the colo-

onial era, Rhode Island included congregations of Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Congregationalists, Puritans, Quakers, and radicals who fled the Antinomian Controversy that erupted in Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s. The region, specifically Newport, also included one of the first communities of Jews in North America.

⁸⁹ James A. Warren. *God, War, and Providence*. (New York: Scribner, 2018), 131.

⁹⁰ Edwin S. Gaustad. *Roger Williams*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 30.

⁹¹ Mack Scott. "I Pledge Allegiance: Sanctuary and Sovereignty in the Dawnland," lecture presented to The Partnership for Historic Bostons, November 18, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGJQSUVQ0dw&t=3s>. Accessed January 21, 2025.

⁹² "Providence (1637–1644)," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/patent.htm>. Accessed December 21, 2024.

⁹³ "Royal Charter (1644–1663)," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/charter.htm>. Accessed December 21, 2024.

⁹⁴ "Royal Charter (1644–1663)," Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island, National Park Service.

Roger Williams During and After King Philip's War

As described previously, by the 1670s, colonial-Tribal relationships in the region were becoming less stable. The Pokanoket were increasingly dissatisfied with the colonists who bought large plots of their land and imposed English laws that ensured that Indigenous people were continually indebted to them. Williams was contacted by the Plymouth Colony to intercede with Metacom on several occasions. Both cultures relied on him because of his ability to speak the Algonquian language. In 1675, when Metacom's interpreter Sassamon informed Plymouth authorities that the Pokanoket were contemplating war, the Massachusetts Bay Colony asked Williams to obtain assurances from the Narragansett Tribe that they were not in league with the Pokanoket. Early in the war, he succeeded in keeping the Narragansett neutral.

However, Williams's negotiating skills proved to be diminished once the war began. After the Great Swamp Massacre, the Narragansett felt they had no choice but to enter the war. Canonchet's army attacked towns in Central Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including Providence. Even as Providence burned, Williams went out to meet the Narragansett and ask why. They refused this final attempt at diplomacy, but directed him along a safe path home, avoiding young warriors who may have caused him harm.⁹⁵

King Philip's War forever changed Williams' relationship with the Narragansett. After the war, Williams and other colonists in Providence assisted in selling Native American prisoners and their families into indentured servitude, believing that this was better than sentencing them to death.⁹⁶ This was a shocking reversal for a man who was known to support Indigenous culture and land rights. Williams' change in attitude is an example of one of the war's major consequences – a shift toward racial and cultural hostilities that would mark English and American interactions with Native American populations for centuries.

Early Development of the Baptist Church in Sowams

Williams was not the only religious reformer in New England in the 1630s and 1640s. Among those who came to the lands around Narragansett Bay to escape the confines of religious traditionalists were the early Baptist leaders William Coddington and John Clarke and religious radicals Anne Hutchinson and Samuel Gorton. All believed in an alternative to the religious structure in England, and some even shared Williams' belief in absolute religious liberty.

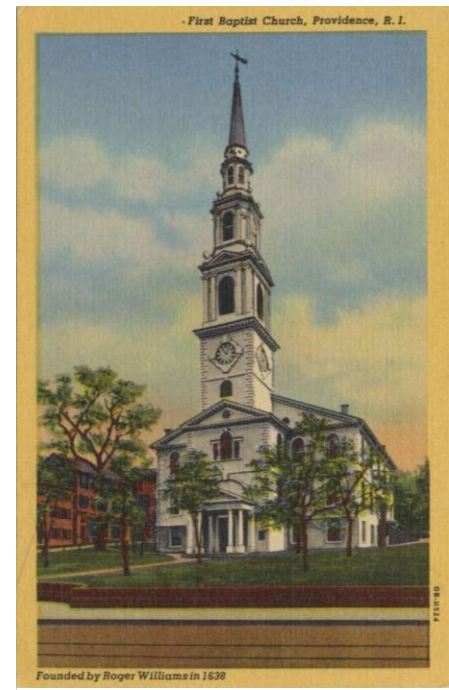
From 1636 to 1638, the Antinomian Controversy, or Free Will Controversy, boiled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This political and religious conflict centered on where authority in the church rested, with individuals or with the Bible and those leaders who preached it. Anne Hutchinson was among the Antinomian leaders espousing the radical tenet that individuals were the recipients of God's grace independent of their good works and church leadership. Her influence on the colony's women was significant. In the end, the Antinomian leaders, including Hutchinson, were tried and banished from the colony. Many sought religious freedom in Providence and other communities in what would become the colony of Rhode Island.

⁹⁵ "Old Roger Williams Tries to Stop King Philip's War," New England Historical Society. <https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/old-roger-williams-tries-stop-king-philips-war>. Accessed December 26, 2024.

⁹⁶ "Our Hidden History: Roger Williams and Slavery's Origins," *The Providence Journal* (August 29, 2020). www.providencejournal.com/story/opinion/2020/08/29/our-hidden-history-roger-williams-and-slaverys-origins/42468467. Accessed December 26, 2024.

Samuel Gorton inspired free religious thinking along the shores of Narragansett Bay. Seeking a place where he could practice his divergent understanding of religion, he arrived in Boston in 1637, at the height of the Antinomian Controversy. Gorton's beliefs were grounded in Puritanism but considered radical by Puritan leaders, whose authority they challenged. He left Boston quickly, sharing his theology in Portsmouth, Plymouth, Providence, and England over the next decade. Eventually, he established a settlement southwest of Providence where he served in political positions until the community was devastated during King Philip's War.

Gorton emphasized the inherent divinity in every individual, stemming from the presence of the Holy Spirit within all people. He rejected the conventional distinction between saint and sinner, arguing that true religious conversion involved adhering to this inner divine guidance, even if it meant defying human authorities. He criticized reliance on external religious rituals, believing they subordinated individuals to human laws rather than Christ's teachings. His theology influenced movements like the Seekers and Ranters, and later the Quakers, though Gorton did not formally associate with these groups.



First Baptist Church in America stands in the historic College Hill district in Providence, RI.

William Coddington, who would later compete for Rhode Island's charter with Roger Williams, was another reformer tied to the Antinomian Controversy in Boston. He, too, was compelled to leave Massachusetts Bay Colony because of differences over religious beliefs. In March 1638, Coddington and John Clarke, who also had arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the height of the controversy, drafted the Portsmouth Compact, which was intended to form a "Bodie Politick" based on Christian principles. Both men brought Antinomian exiles to settle on Narragansett Bay on the advice of Roger Williams and went on to play influential roles in the founding of Rhode Island Colony.⁹⁷ Coddington eventually became the first Governor of Rhode Island Colony. John Clarke helped Roger Williams obtain the 1663 Charter for the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations and established the Baptist church in Newport, the second to be created in the colonies.

In order to find land that was not already under the jurisdiction of colonial government, Clarke led a delegation of three men to Plymouth Colony. Like Williams before him, he was informed that Sowams was under Plymouth's authority. However, Aquidneck Island was not. This suited Clarke, whose desire for his followers was to "get clear of all and be ourselves".⁹⁸

The Swansea congregation holds a unique position in Baptist history. The first Baptist church to be established in what would become Massachusetts, the Swansea church separated itself publicly from the earlier Rhode Island Baptist churches. The organizers of the Swansea congregation were persuaded by John Clarke and Mark Lukar, a Welsh Baptist reformist who helped establish

⁹⁷ Thomas Williams Bicknell. *The Story of Dr. John Clarke*. Little Rock, Arkansas: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc. 2005, archived from the original PDF on 6 November 2014.

⁹⁸ Louis Franklin Asher. *John Clarke (1609–1676): Pioneer in American Medicine, Democratic Ideals, and Champion of Religious Liberty*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance Publishing Company, 1997).

the Newport church, to take an antipedobaptist position, meaning they were against baptizing children at birth. Clarke and Lukar brought baptism by immersion to Swansea from England, a rite for adults who could profess their own faith. In 1663, the same year the colony was established, they called John Myles to lead the Swansea church.

Myles had arrived in the Plymouth Colony from Wales in the early 1660s, fleeing the newly restored English monarchy. He brought with him the historic *Illston Book*, which is the earliest register of a Baptist church in Wales; the book is now located at Brown University. In the colonies, Myles first worked with the Congregationalist church in Rehoboth, which had been established in 1643 by Reverend Samuel Newman, a Puritan Congregationalist and leader of the Rehoboth settlement. After his group was expelled for its Baptist views, Myles served as pastor in Swansea for 20 years. His church represented not just a commitment to religious freedom in the abstract, but a deliberate effort to safeguard specific Baptist beliefs and practices.

The Baptists were primarily concerned with securing a space where their congregational autonomy, beliefs, and church governance could thrive, rather than fostering a multi-faith pluralism. While the legal and social frameworks of religious freedom in Swansea echoed Williams' influence, the Baptists in Swansea were more invested in protecting their community from external pressures – particularly from the Puritan authorities who had driven them out of Massachusetts Bay Colony – than in promoting religious diversity. In the period from 1692 to the religious revival of the Great Awakening in the first half of the 18th century, the Quakers and Anglicans each fought for exemption from compulsory religious taxes supporting Congregational churches. The Baptists played a secondary role, fighting mainly for the preservation of their privileged position in the town of Swansea.⁹⁹

Under Myles' leadership, the Swansea Baptists developed an academically inclined church that produced the Baptist Church in Warren and the College of Rhode Island, which later became Brown University. A century later, John Leland, leader of a congregation descended from the Swansea church, would preach the importance of religious freedom to President Thomas Jefferson and the United States Congress.¹⁰⁰

The ideals of religious freedom and the separation of church and state preached by religious reformers along the shores of Narragansett Bay, had a ripple effect on later colonies established in North America. Maryland was founded as a refuge for Catholics by the Calvert family. The Maryland Tolerance Act of 1649 was open to all denominations but allowed a state church and could be tempered by the Governor. When King Charles II granted a charter to Carolina in 1665, the charter stressed that inhabitants would not be punished for practicing different forms of religion. Pennsylvania, which



Department of Africana Studies/Rites and Reason Theatre, Brown University, Providence, RI develops new works and supports emerging artists blending scholarship and creativity on stage.

Courtesy of Rites and Reason Theatre

⁹⁹ William G. McLoughlin. *New England Dissent, 1630–1833, The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 197.

¹⁰⁰ "John Leland," Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/john-leland/>. Accessed December 13, 2024.

was formed by a grant to its founder William Penn, was a haven for Quakers who had been persecuted in England and Ireland for their beliefs. The stream of influence from the Particular Baptist congregations in London and Wales, who settled in Sowams in the 1640s, spawned offshoots in Pennsylvania a century later.¹⁰¹ By the end of the 17th century, religious freedom had become a consistent policy in the colonies.

Religious freedom was enshrined in the early laws in Virginia by founding fathers James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, known formally as “Bill No. 82: A Bill for establishing religious freedom,” was drafted in 1779. The act says that “no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinion or beliefs.”¹⁰² Bill No. 82 was a critical precursor to rights enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. As James Madison explained, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom “is a true standard of Religious liberty: its principle is the great barrier against usurpations on the rights of conscience. As long as it is respected & no longer, these will be safe.”¹⁰³

The Revolutionary War and Its Aftermath

Massachusetts, considered one of the major pillars in the founding of the United States, plays an outsized role in the history of the Revolutionary War. Americans are familiar with the Boston Tea Party and the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere. In Rehoboth and Swansea, many men from local militias answered the call of the Lexington Alarm, the document that spread the word the American Revolution had begun with the Battle of Lexington. Town records document approxi-



The USS Constitution 1812 Marine Guard participated in the “History Through the Ages” historical timeline event at Redway Plain in Rehoboth, MA.

Courtesy of USS Constitution 1812 Marine Guard

mately 1,400 men from Rehoboth served the Continental Army at various points in the war.¹⁰⁴ Many members served with General George Washington’s forces in the 13th Continental Regiment.¹⁰⁵ Men from southeastern Massachusetts also participated in action in Rhode Island that stretched from Newport to Providence in 1777 and 1778.¹⁰⁶ Yet the celebrated founding father from Massachusetts, John Adams, took a measured approach to opposing the Crown, cleaving to the rule of law in his defense of the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre and other actions.

Rhode Island, on the other hand, had the most independent streak of the Thirteen Colonies, being one of the first to actively and decisively resist British rule. In 1764, Governor Stephen Hopkins carried to London a “Remonstrance” that decried the new taxes levied against the colonies. The Rhode Island Remonstrance lifted up principles of liberty and self-government, while also defending Americans’ right to engage in and profit from slavery and the slave

¹⁰¹ Walker, J Brent. Church State Matters. Mercer University Press, Macon, 2008, pg. 34ff.

¹⁰² “Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom,” Thomas Jefferson Monticello. <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/virginia-statute-religious-freedom>. Accessed December 13, 2024.

¹⁰³ “Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom”

¹⁰⁴ “Stories of Rehoboth Soldiers in the American Revolution,” Reporter Today, February 27, 2024. <https://reportertoday.com/stories/stories-of-rehoboth-soldiers-in-the-american-revolution,44139>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

¹⁰⁵ “Unit History,” 13th Continental Regiment. <https://sites.google.com/view/13thcontlregt/unit-history>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

¹⁰⁶ Herbert T. Wade. “Colonel Wade and his Massachusetts State Troops in Rhode Island, 1777–1778.” Essex Institute, Historical Collections, 89 (1953), 357-375.

trade.¹⁰⁷ In 1772, Rhode Islanders captured and burned the HMS Gaspee, a British customs schooner in Narragansett Bay, an important naval event that moved the Thirteen Colonies toward the American Revolution; John Brown of Providence's well-known merchant family participated in the event. The colony was the first to call for a continental congress in 1774, and in 1776, the first to eliminate an oath of allegiance to the British crown that had been required of colonial officials. On May 4, 1776, a full two months before the United States' Declaration of Independence, Rhode Island declared independence from England.

Once the Revolutionary War began in earnest, the state of Rhode Island suffered considerably. The British occupied Newport for more than three years from 1776 to 1779. Due to this occupation, the town of Bristol saw extensive action. Bristol was bombarded by the British and served as a point of command to control the large number of loyalists in Newport. The British then attacked Warren and burned dozens of colonial boats that had been moved to the Kickemuit River.

Rhode Island's quest for independence did not end with the war. Rural resistance to the new United States Constitution was strong in Rhode Island, and the anti-federalist Country Party controlled the General Assembly from 1786 to 1790. In 1788, anti-federalist politician and Revolutionary War General William West led an armed force of 1,000 troops to Providence to oppose a Fourth of July event that celebrated nine states' ratification of the Constitution. Civil war was narrowly averted through a compromise limiting the Fourth of July celebration. The State of Rhode Island became the last of the 13 states to ratify the United States Constitution on May 29, 1790. This was accomplished once assurances were made that a Bill of Rights would become part of the Constitution, in addition to the other states threatening that Rhode Island's exports could be taxed as a foreign nation.



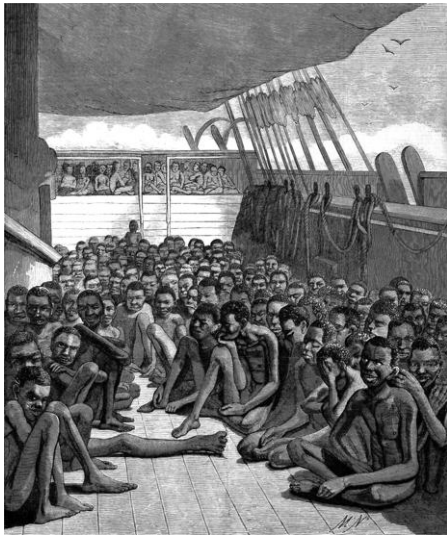
The Fourth of July parade is part of the oldest, continually running Independence Day celebration in America, Bristol, RI.

¹⁰⁷ *Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*, Brown University. <https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/sites/default/files/reports/SlaveryAndJustice2006.pdf>. Accessed November 25, 2024, 12.

Ironically, the town of Bristol in Sowams has the oldest continuously celebrated Independence Day festivities in the United States. The first mention of a celebration comes from July 1777, when a British officer noted sounds coming from across Narragansett Bay, writing “This being the first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the Rebel Colonies, they ushered in the morning by firing 13 cannons, one for each colony. At sunset, the rebel frigates fired another round of 13 guns.” The Bristol Fourth of July Celebration, originally called the “Patriotic Exercises,” was founded in 1785, and the Fourth of July has been celebrated every year in Bristol since that date. The Military, Civic and Firemen’s Parade is an event that today draws over 50,000 people from Rhode Island and around the world. These elaborate celebrations give Bristol its nickname, “America’s most patriotic town”.¹⁰⁸

An Overview of the Industry of Enslavement in Rhode Island and Massachusetts

The history of slavery in New England stretches back to the early 1600s. In the 17th century, the majority of enslaved people in colonial New England were Native Americans. New Englanders began to import enslaved Africans in 1638, exchanging Native Americans captured in the Pequot War for enslaved Africans from the West Indies.¹⁰⁹



Cargo of enslaved people, part of the Triangle Trade for sugar, molasses, rum, and manufactured goods around the turn of the 18th century

Four decades later, the end of King Philip’s War saw many Native Americans who fought against the English enslaved in the region or sent to the Caribbean. Enslaved people in the colonies worked on small farms and a few larger plantations, as well as in homes, shipyards, and workshops.

By the beginning of the 18th century, colonists gained access to the African slave markets and were intent on displacing Native people from their traditional homelands in order to free up agricultural land for settlement. In the early 1700s, about one-quarter of the enslaved people in Rhode Island lived in the port cities of Newport, Bristol, and Providence, where they performed the skilled and unskilled labor that enabled busy ports to operate efficiently and economically, transporting goods to and from manufactories to the wharves, loading and unloading boats. Some enslaved people also worked in Rhode Island’s 30 distilleries in 1764, of which Newport, alone, had 22.¹¹⁰

In 1652, the Rhode Island General Court passed a statute limiting the enslavement of Africans and Native people. The legislature acted again in 1659, banning the importation of African captives. Both laws went unenforced, and the enslaved population grew. By 1680, the colonial census records 175 enslaved people in Rhode Island, including both Native and Black people.¹¹¹

In 1703, the Rhode Island General Assembly reversed the anti-slavery laws by supplanting the statutes with new laws codifying the enslavement of African and Native peoples. By 1750, the Colony of Rhode Island had more enslaved people per capita than all other New England colonies. Enslaved

¹⁰⁸ “Bristol Fourth of July Parade,” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Fourth_of_July_Parade. Accessed December 13, 2024.

¹⁰⁹ *Slavery and Justice*, 9.

¹¹⁰ *Slavery and Justice*, 10.

¹¹¹ *Slavery and Justice*, 9.

laborers constituted nearly one-third of the total population in certain Rhode Island cities and towns, and by then, the towns of Bristol, Providence, and Newport had become dominant players in the global slave trade.

During the colonial period, it became increasingly common for New England settlers who moved from the coast into smaller towns and outlying farms on the colonial frontier to bring with them one or two enslaved laborers. These enslaved people performed domestic tasks and farm work, often alongside the family members who enslaved them.



Patience Brayton was the third minister of the Swansea Friends Meeting House, the oldest extant Quaker meeting house in Massachusetts, Somerset, MA.

Credit: Colin Furze, Courtesy of South Coast Today.Pa

Although slavery was legal in Massachusetts throughout the colonial period, the institution never held the economic power it had in neighboring Rhode Island. Moreover, Massachusetts courts recognized that enslaved individuals possessed certain legal rights. They could, in some cases, own and manage property, retain wages earned outside of their enslavers' control, and initiate legal proceedings. They were also entitled to jury trials, legal representation, and limited legal protections. Although they were generally taxed as property, the legal system nonetheless acknowledged their status as persons under the law.¹¹²

Over time, Boston had the largest number of enslaved individuals in Massachusetts. In Sowams, the southeastern Massachusetts towns of Rehoboth and Swansea had enslaved populations that averaged between eight and 12 people, with Rehoboth topping 20 only one year.¹¹³ The enslaved population in these towns was significantly smaller than that in the Rhode Island communities in Sowams.

In Somerset, Massachusetts, Patience Greene Brayton used the autonomy afforded to Quaker women to become an early and outspoken critic of slavery. She was born on the west side of Narragansett Bay, and in 1758 married a farmer whose land was near Somerset and Rehoboth. Her husband held workers in bondage, but the couple freed them – a decision that sparked Brayton's lifelong commitment to abolition. She was deeply unsettled by slavery; she helped end the practice in Somerset, then traveled as far as Georgia to speak out against it. Her journey through the American South exposed her to the harsh realities of slavery. After the Revolutionary War, she represented the Society of Friends in Great Britain, where she wrote an address on slavery to King George III.¹¹⁴ Brayton's courage and persistence made her a powerful moral force in an era when slavery was widely accepted, and she helped shift public awareness at great personal cost.

In Rhode Island on the eve of the American Revolution in 1774, the enslaved population was substantial for the small colony. This was due, in part, to the many farms in Washington County, located along the western side of Narragansett Bay. Bristol, alone, counted 132 enslaved people, including

¹¹² "African Americans and the End of Slavery in Massachusetts," Massachusetts Historical Society. <https://www.masshist.org/features/endofslavery>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

¹¹³ Northeastern Slavery Records Index, City University of New York Academic Commons. <https://nesri.commonsc.gc.cuny.edu/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

¹¹⁴ Patterson, Leslie. "The Life of Patience Greene Brayton," *Somerset Historical Society*, reprinted from *Rehoboth Now*. July 2015.

115 of African descent and 17 of Native descent. This comprised 11 percent of the town's population. Five enslaved men fought in the American Revolution – two received honorable discharges at the war's end, while three were killed in the service of a country that would not ban the enslavement of human beings for almost another century.¹¹⁵

After the American Revolution, Rhode Island became the first state to pass an anti-slavery law. In 1774, Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, owner of enslaved people, and Rhode Island Assemblyman, introduced a bill prohibiting the importation of slaves into the colony. Massachusetts did not move to legally end slavery as early as Rhode Island, but it terminated the institution before its neighbor. The state's constitution adopted in 1780 decreed that "all men are born free and equal and have... the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties."¹¹⁶ Over the next three years, legal challenges brought by enslaved individuals brought the institution to an end in the young state.

A decade later, the Rhode Island legislature passed the Gradual Emancipation Act, noting that slavery was incompatible with the "Rights of Man." Gradual emancipation specified that enslaved people between the ages of 15 and 25 would become indentured servants after seven years, while those over that age would remain enslaved. In addition, all female children born to enslaved women after March 1, 1784, would be free at 18 years of age, and all male children at 21 years of age.

This groundbreaking bill put the institution of slavery on the road to extinction in Rhode Island, but left enslavers with significant benefits.¹¹⁷ The original bill required towns to support enslaved children until they reached the age of freedom, with the assumption that the towns would recoup the expense by binding them out to service. The towns objected strenuously, however, and the bill was amended eight months later to give the owners of enslaved mothers the responsibility for supporting children, as well as entitlement to the children's labor until they reached maturity and were eligible for manumission.¹¹⁸

Although Rhode Island's political leadership began calling Rhode Island a "free state" after March 1, 1784, little changed. Enslaved people remained enslaved, and any children born to them remained in enforced servitude for 18 to 21 years. The only immediate change introduced by the 1784 bill was to incentivize individual manumission. It relieved owners of financial responsibility for freed people, aged 21 to 40 (later amended to 30), if they became destitute.

The Revolutionary era rhetoric of natural rights moved public opinion slowly toward emancipation. In 1789, an Abolition Society was organized to secure enforcement of existing laws against the slave trade, which was ultimately abolished in 1807. By the mid-19th century, many citizens of Rhode Island and Massachusetts were active in the abolitionist movement, particularly the Quakers in Newport and Providence. The nation's first Black mutual aid society was established in Newport, followed by its sister organization, the Providence African Society.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ "The Triangle Trade in New England and Bristol, RI," Research BIPOC History. <https://www.researchbipochistory.org/history>. Accessed January 22, 2025.

¹¹⁶ "Massachusetts Constitution and the Abolition of Slavery," Mass.gov, an official website of the Massachusetts Commonwealth. <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-constitution-and-the-abolition-of-slavery>. Access March 28, 2025.

¹¹⁷ *Slavery and Justice*, 9.

¹¹⁸ Irving Berdine Richman, *Rhode Island: A Study in Separatism*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1905), 191.

¹¹⁹ *Slavery and Justice*, 18.

Following the American Revolution, the decline of slavery in Rhode Island can be attributed to a complex mix of social, economic, and semantic factors, rather than a single cause. Census data from the late 18th and early 19th centuries reflects a notable decrease in the number of enslaved individuals in the state, though interpreting this data requires caution.

The 1774 census in Rhode Island counted Black residents without distinguishing between those who were enslaved and those who were free. As a result, it is difficult to make a definitive comparison of enslaved populations across states or to determine the exact rate of decline between 1774 and the first federal census in 1790. By 1790, however, the number of enslaved individuals in Rhode Island had dropped to 948.¹²⁰ Though the 1810 census data is less readily available, estimates suggest a continued decline to around 100 enslaved individuals – an indication of a dramatic reduction over two decades, during a time when ideas of freedom and human rights were reshaping public consciousness.¹²¹

Several developments contributed to this trend. During the American Revolution, many enslaved people secured freedom by enlisting in the military on both the American and British sides. Others saw the disruption of war as an opportunity for self-emancipation, choosing to flee or otherwise escape bondage. This period also marked a shift in the importation of enslaved individuals to New England. As agricultural production in the South expanded with the rise of cotton and tobacco, the economic rationale for slavery in the North began to weaken. In Rhode Island, especially in towns like Bristol, enslaved people were most often employed in domestic roles rather than plantation labor. Consequently, the economic incentive to maintain slavery in the region diminished.

At the same time, changes in language further complicate the understanding of slavery's decline. Terminology in legal and personal records shifted during this era, with individuals who were previously labeled as "slaves" now referred to as "servants" or simply as "Negro man" or "Negro woman." This linguistic shift may have been an attempt to obscure the reality of bondage while avoiding direct acknowledgment of moral or legal responsibility. In effect, some portion of the decline in reported slave numbers may reflect changes in how individuals were described rather than actual changes in their condition.



The staircase of the Allin house (1769), recently added to the National Register of Historic Places, in the home of General Thomas Allin, his wife, 12 children, and five slaves, Barrington, RI.

Courtesy of NPS Form 10-900, National Register of Historic Places

Another indicator of changing attitudes can be seen in the way enslaved individuals were referenced in records. After the Revolution, names began to appear more frequently in documentation, replacing anonymous descriptors. This change reflects a growing recognition of the individuality and humanity of people who were enslaved. As their identities were more fully acknowledged, it may have become increasingly difficult – socially and legally – to continue treating enslaved people as property.

¹²⁰ First Census of the United States, 1790 – Rhode Island. Available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t3ws8zq90&seq=15>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

¹²¹ Christy Clark-Pujara. *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*, (New York, NY, 2016; online edition, NYU Press Scholarship Online, 19 Jan. 2017), <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479870424.003.0005>. Accessed January 22, 2025, 86-109.

While Rhode Island's Gradual Emancipation laws were in place, their practical impact appears to have been limited. As argued by Joanne Pope Melish in her book *Disowning Slavery; Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England 1780–1860*, the legal and economic structures of slavery were slowly being reconstituted and replaced by societal forms of repression, such as, shifting responsibility for slavery to the South and transferring prejudice based on bondage to discrimination based on race.¹²² The broader decline in slavery was likely driven more by a combination of Revolutionary-era upheaval, shifting economic conditions, and evolving public attitudes – both in how people lived and in how they were recorded in the historical record. Whatever the cause, fifty-eight years after the inception of the gradual emancipation law that made Rhode Island a “free state,” all enslaved people in Rhode Island were officially and legally free.

Narragansett Bay Traders of Enslaved People

The slave trade that connected Europe, Africa, and the American and Caribbean colonies was begun by Europeans in the 17th century. Ships from England, Spain, France, and Portugal regularly traveled to the west coast of Africa to purchase people to work sugar and tobacco plantations in the Caribbean. A century later, as the demand for sugar exploded in Europe, Europeans opened trade to private carriers. While most of these were still European-based, merchants in Boston, New York, Charleston, and Philadelphia began to send ships to Africa. With distilleries that produced rum with a high alcohol content and with deepwater ports in the protection of Narragansett Bay, Newport, Providence, and Bristol, Rhode Island came to anchor the American slave trade by the mid-18th century. At that time, Rhode Island merchants controlled between 60 and 90 percent of the American trade of enslaved African people. By the 1770s, however, the slave trade declined to only a minor portion of the region's maritime industries. In that century, Rhode Islanders had carried out a thousand transatlantic slaving voyages, consigning over 100,000 Africans into enslavement in the Americas.¹²³

As the young United States was passing laws to make slavery and slave trading illegal, Rhode Island merchants built immense wealth and power through the triangle trade. From the late 17th



DeWolf warehouse on the historic waterfront, where the Triangle Trade drove much of the economy at the turn of the 18th century, Bristol, RI.

Courtesy of NewEngland.com, Yankee

century until 1807, when slave trading was banned in the United States, New England's economy was tied to the transatlantic triangle trade. New England, West Africa, and plantations in the Caribbean and the southern colonies and states formed three points of the trade built on manufacturing, plantation agriculture, and the enslavement of African people.

The first side of the triangle was the trip from Rhode Island and other American and European ports to the west coast of Africa. Cargoes of rum from Rhode Island distilleries, guns, textiles, and other

¹²² Joanne Pope Melish. *Disowning Slavery; Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England 1780–1860*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

¹²³ *Slavery and Justice*, 10.

manufactured goods were sent to the Gulf of Guinea in the country of Ghana or further west to Guinea-Bissau. After merchants traded these items for enslaved Africans, their ships would sail back across the Atlantic Ocean.

The second leg of the triangle took the ships to the hundreds of sugar plantations in South America and on the Caribbean islands in the West Indies, or to the cotton plantations in the American South. This voyage, known as the Middle Passage, is infamous for the horrific conditions in which humans were treated as cargo with little regard for their suffering or their lives. The time it would take to sail through the middle passage was dependent on the time of year and the winds. There were often storms, rough seas, and unbearable heat, and the trip could last eight to ten weeks. The average mortality rate on slave ships was 15 percent of the enslaved people being transported. Harsh labor practices and high mortality necessitated a constant flow of enslaved workers to the plantations.

Once the enslaved people were unloaded and sold, and ships were loaded with sugar cane and cotton, they sailed along the third side of the triangle, back to Rhode Island or other American and European ports. They carried sugar cane and cotton to distilleries and textile mills, where rum and cloth would be manufactured to begin the trading cycle anew. In addition to the triangle trade, Rhode Island dominated the bilateral trade with the Caribbean sugar plantations. Rhode Island operated “as the commissary of the Atlantic plantation complex,” carrying horses, lumber, iron, tobacco, and food, especially salt cod, or “Jamaica fish,” the staple protein for people enslaved in the West Indies.¹²⁴

The history of slave trading in Rhode Island is deeply entwined with the stories of two families – the DeWolf family of Bristol and the Brown family of Providence. Both families owned ships that imported slaves first to the sugar plantations in the Caribbean and later to the cotton plantations in the southern states. Both also owned distilleries that made rum from the sugar cane they purchased in the Caribbean.

Trade with the slave-based economies of the Caribbean and the American South strengthened the commercial maritime development of all of Rhode Island. Almost every commercial and agricultural enterprise was in some way connected with the slave trade. The rum distilled locally and rum distilled by other manufacturers were critical parts of the exchange for African captives and part of Rhode Island’s extensive maritime commerce. Banking and insurance, shipbuilding and ship outfitting, and the production of manufactured goods such as iron, cloth, spermaceti candles, barrels, and rope connected Rhode Island to the transatlantic slave trade. As stated in the Brown University *Report on Slavery and Justice*, “slavery was not a distinct enterprise, but rather an institution that permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island, the Americas, and indeed the Atlantic World.”¹²⁵

While the purchase, transportation, and sale of enslaved Africans was the principal occupation of some businessmen like James DeWolf and John Brown, for others it was just one of many commercial ventures linked in some other way to the slave trade. Even for artisans, shopkeepers, and other skilled laborers and tradesmen, purchasing a few shares of a slaving voyage was a common investment. The trade even extended to agriculture, as farmers raised onions for seafaring trips because vitamin D helped treat scurvy.

¹²⁴ *Slavery and Justice*, 11.

¹²⁵ *Slavery and Justice*, 13.

The Brown Family of Providence

The first member of the Brown family to be engaged in the trade was James Brown, father to four brothers, Nicholas, Joseph, John, and Moses. James Brown was a successful ship owner who traded along the coast of North America and across the Atlantic. After James' death, his brother, Obadiah, took charge of the business, and by the mid-1700s owned more than 60 vessels, many of which sailed to Africa.

Nicholas led the establishment of the family business, Nicholas Brown and Company, and the four Brown brothers became heavily involved in the shipping industry. By 1765, when John and Moses were not yet 30, they were overseeing a fleet of 85 vessels. This included legal trade with the British, French, and Dutch, as well as illegal smuggling and privateering. The Brown brothers had grown up with enslaved servants in their homes, and as they reached adulthood, they perpetuated the practice of enslaving people.

The Brown brothers' first foray into the slave trade in 1764 was a disaster marked by disease, death, and a slave revolt. On its voyage from the Guinea Coast to St. John in the West Indies, their ship, *Sally*, lost 109 of the 196 enslaved people it carried – some to a failed insurrection, the rest to disease, suicide, and starvation. The ship was captained by Stephen Hopkins' brother Esek. This endeavor led to a split in the business dealings of the Brown family, as Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses never again trafficked humans after this event. Their decision was not wholly altruistic – they wrote of the economic risk of slaving ventures, but they continued to produce rum and supply other merchants' slave ships.¹²⁶



Splitting with his brothers, John Brown (1736 –1803) continued to invest in trading enslaved people until he stood trial in 1797 under the U.S. Slave Trade Act.

Courtesy of New York Historical Society
1948-469

John Brown continued to invest in slave voyages, causing his brothers to dissolve the business partnership. Moses Brown, who would go on to play a significant role in textile manufacturing, eventually became a Quaker and an abolitionist. He manumitted the enslaved people in his household and supported the publication of anti-slavery essays in the Providence press. John Brown vocally opposed his brother's stance, and their debate over the morality of slavery became public, reflecting a deep division in Rhode Island in the late 18th century.

On August 5, 1797, John Brown, a premier merchant and prominent citizen of Providence reluctantly appeared before the Federal District Court in his hometown and became the first American to be tried under the U.S. Slave Trade Act of 1794. After months of out-of-court wrangling with the plaintiffs and officers of a state abolition society, Brown stood trial for outfitting his ship, the *Hope*, for the African slave trade, transporting 229 enslaved people to be sold in Havana, Cuba. Prosecution was brought, in part, by his brother, Moses. John Brown emerged victorious, resulting in the decline of the abolition movement in

Providence. The next decade of the transatlantic trade was the peak for Rhode Island, with up to 50 ships a year leaving Narragansett Bay to seek captive Africans.¹²⁷ In 1807, the United States Congress finally abolished the terrible trade.

¹²⁶ *Slavery and Justice*, 17.

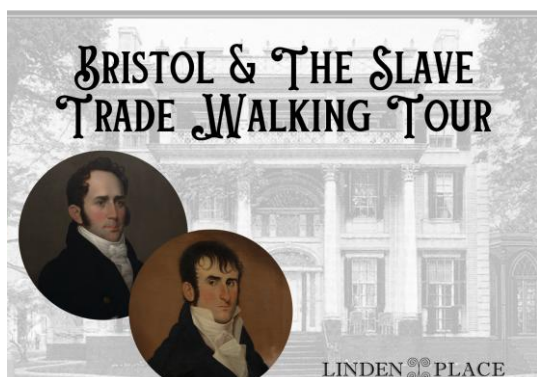
¹²⁷ *Slavery and Justice*, 22.

The history of Brown University is inextricably tied to the Brown family, who supported it financially and by serving in leadership roles at the institution. In 2006, the University created a steering committee of scholars, students, and alumni to examine and acknowledge the institution's complicity in and benefit from the transatlantic slave trade, and to highlight questions that can inform the public discussion over slavery and its legacy in society today.¹²⁸

The DeWolf Family of Bristol

Many of Bristol's elite families embarked on an intensely profitable period of human trafficking after the Revolutionary War. Ships sailing to Africa required captains and agents, as well as goods and provisions purchased from merchants, blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters, tradesmen, and farmers. Almost everyone in Bristol found ways to profit from the transatlantic trade, including through investments in financial institutions or through the purchase of slave-produced commodities. The impact of trade was so great that Bristol remained a central hub of trading activities long after the 1807 embargo outlawed the trafficking of enslaved people.¹²⁹

The town of Bristol and much of the state became economically dependent on the DeWolf family's success in the transatlantic triangle trade. Over fifty years and three generations, the DeWolf family transported about 12,000 enslaved Africans in 103 slave voyages across the Middle Passage, making the DeWolfs one of the most profitable slave-trading families in the nation.¹³⁰ In addition, they owned



The Friends of Linden Place, the 1810 mansion of General George DeWolf, offer walking tours about the trade of enslaved persons in Bristol, RI.

Courtesy of Linden Place Historic Estate Museum and Arts Center

a rum distillery, set up their own insurance company to support trading, and also established sugar and coffee plantations in Cuba. In the early 1800s, the DeWolfs began selling enslaved people in Charleston, South Carolina, where the anti-slaving law had been repealed and where the need for labor on cotton plantations had accelerated.

James DeWolf leveraged his economic and political influence to circumvent laws against the slave trade, ensuring his business thrived despite increasing legal restrictions. After Rhode Island's 1787 law aimed to regulate the slave trade, DeWolf exploited Spain's lack of enforcement by registering his ships under the Spanish flag and operating out of Cuba, a Spanish colony where

his family-owned property. Elected to the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1797, he shaped legislation to favor his interests and opposed anti-slavery measures.

When the U.S. Congress strengthened anti-slavery laws in 1800 and 1808, DeWolf continued his activities unimpeded. His political connections, including ties to President Thomas Jefferson, facilitated his appointment of a compliant customs inspector, his son-in-law, Charles Collins, who overlooked DeWolf's illegal slave-trading operations. During Collins's tenure, DeWolf's ships completed 42 voyages without interference.

¹²⁸ *Slavery and Justice*, 5–6.

¹²⁹ Catherine W. Zipf, "The Early Years of Slavery in Bristol," Rhode Island Slave History Medallions. <https://rism.org/bristol-county-bristol-dewolfe-tavern-bristol-dewolf-warehouse-and-wharf-the-early-years-of-slavery-in-bristol>. Accessed December 13, 2024.

¹³⁰ "James Dewolf and the DeWolf Family," Tracing Center, www.tracingcenter.org/resources/background/james-dewolf/. Accessed November 26, 2024.

DeWolf's influence extended to the federal level when he became a U.S. Senator in 1820, where he supported the institution of slavery. Although he left the Senate before his term ended, he remained politically active, later serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. DeWolf's manipulation of political systems allowed him to evade accountability and sustain his role as one of America's most notorious slave traders until his death in 1837.

The Brown and DeWolf families were not the only families to actively engage in the transportation of slaves in Sowams. Merchants in Bristol and Providence played outsized roles in the triangle trade, including the Wilson, Fale, Usher, Wardwell, and Monro families, among others. Between 1705 and 1807, 167 voyages engaged in the transport of enslaved Africans originated in Bristol, and 71 left from Providence – this accounted for about 30% of the 934 voyages from Rhode Island, with the balance leaving from Newport.¹³¹

Although the United States government continued to pass laws to inhibit slavery and slave trading, including the revised Federal Slave Trade Act of 1808 and President James Madison's efforts in 1809, laws were often loosely enforced. The continuation of the slave trade into the mid-1800s is not only a reflection of the ineffectiveness of the government to enforce laws, but also an indication of how people in positions of prominence in the United States could bypass those laws and continue to build wealth illegally.¹³²

The Dynamic Interplay of Land and Water in Sowams

In Sowams, the clash of Indigenous and European worldviews at First Contact ignited a lasting struggle over control of land and water. The Pokanoket believed, and still believe, that their homeland is sacred, a gift of the Creator who entrusted them to steward it with reverence and respect. Living in balance with nature, the Tribe moved across the land with the seasons, setting up portable dwellings, rotating their crops, and following the migrations of fish and game. The English settlers viewed land as property to be owned exclusively and permanently. Fleeing economic hardship and religious persecution in Europe, the early colonists cleaved to their plot of land, a powerful symbol of their freedom in the New World.

For both the Pokanoket and the English, Narragansett Bay and the rivers, streams and estuaries in its watershed provided a network of waterways for travel, trade, and communication. Water was not only a source of sustenance, but also a resource and a conveyance. This had enormous implications as Indigenous communities lost their land and the Massachusetts and Rhode Island colonies became more established. Americans in Sowams harnessed water to power lumber, grist, and textile mills and build ships on the tidal rivers that would transport products for international trade and carry waves of immigrants seeking better lives here. The fertile nexus of land and water that has drawn people to Sowams for millennia has left a legacy of both tragedy and triumph. While the Pokanoket felt a kinship with their environment, Americans maximized its potential. Sowams' thriving maritime industries and their contribution to industrial innovation are a source of national pride, but that progress has come with a cost. Today the communities of Sowams share a deep conservation ethic and are collaborating to restore the natural balance of their living environment.

¹³¹ "The Triangle Trade in New England and Bristol, RI," Research BIPOC History. <https://www.researchbipochistory.org/history>. Accessed January 22, 2025.

¹³² Zillian, Fred. "Rhode Island Dominates North American Slave Trade in 18th Century," Small State, Big History. <https://small-statebighistory.com/rhode-island-dominates-north-american-slave-trade-in-18th-century>. Accessed December 13, 2024.



View from the East Bay Bike Path of Brickyard Pond, formed from the clay pits that supplied a thriving brickmaking industry for 300 years in Barrington, RI

Photo by George Ostertag/ Alamy

Maritime Heritage

Shipbuilding and Whaling

In the 19th century, shipbuilding and whaling were central to Warren, Rhode Island's economy. Local shipyards, such as Chace and Davis, Sylvester Child's, Captain Rufus Trink's, and James J. Cady's, constructed vessels that often sailed from larger ports like Nantucket and New Bedford. Whaling ships required both speed and durability to navigate distant Pacific and Indian Ocean hunting grounds, as Atlantic whale populations had been depleted by the late 18th century.

Whaling in Warren saw a revival in 1821 when Joseph Smith outfitted the *Rosalie* for a Pacific voyage. Despite an unsuccessful first trip, the ship's second journey, led by Captain Joseph Gardner, yielded 101 whales and sparked a whaling boom lasting about 40 years. By 1845, Warren became Narragansett Bay's leading whaling hub, with 22 vessels engaged in the trade. Among these were the *Sea-Shell*, the world's largest whaling ship, and the *Dolphin*, renowned as the fastest of Warren's "Clipper" whalers.¹³³

In Massachusetts, Barneyville, a section of northern Swansea, became a shipbuilding hub in the 1770s after Jonathan Barney opened a shipyard. His son Mason grew the business in the 19th century, garnering an international reputation. The shipyard produced 137 wooden ships before closing in 1860 due to the rise of metal-hulled, steam-powered vessels. Skilled shipwrights also constructed Mason Barney's home, once the most prominent in the area.

The legacy of shipbuilding in the region contributed to the development of contemporary industry and mass production. For more than a century, starting in 1878, the Bristol-based Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, built state-of-the-art steam ships, torpedo boats, and high-quality yachts. Herreshoff built five consecutive America's Cup Defenders between 1893 and 1920, with a total of eight over time. Another boat-building family, the Blounts, established Blount Boats, Inc. in Warren in the 1940s and is still active today. Blount Boats' most famous ship is Miss Liberty, a 600-passenger ferry that carried more than 60 million passengers to visit the Statue of Liberty on the Circle Line out of Manhattan. On the Taunton River in Somerset, the Gladding-Hearn shipyard has built more than 430 tugs and aluminum commercial vessels over the past 65 years. In 2012, Gladding-Hearn built the catamaran the Yankee Freedom III, which carries passengers to Dry

¹³³ Elizabeth S. Warren. *A History of Warren*, (Warren, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, April 1975), 15.



In the 1903 America's Cup Race, 64 people crewed the "Reliance," designed by Nathanael Green Herreshoff and built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, the largest America's Cup Defender ever built, Bristol, RI.

Tortugas National Park off the Florida Keys, and is currently building the Yankee Freedom IV, with an expected delivery in 2026.¹³⁴ Fortier Boats, another family-owned business in Somerset, has been custom-building cabin-cruisers on the Taunton River for more than 30 years.¹³⁵

Today, there are a number of companies manufacturing composite carbon-based materials that are related to the town's historical innovations in boat building. Besides the use of these materials for ships and racing boats, these companies work with market-leading aerospace and defense contractors as well as providing solutions for architectural projects, vanes for wind turbines, and deep-water experimental vehicles.

Seafood

People of Sowams have relied upon the abundant fish and mollusk populations on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay for millennia. The rich oyster beds around the Weybosset crossing in Providence attracted Indigenous Tribes from throughout southern New England. By 1766, the oyster harvest was intense enough that the Colonial Assembly passed a law against overfishing. Thirty years later, the state of Rhode Island mandated seasonal closures of oyster beds in a continued attempt to prevent overharvesting of the beds. In the 19th century, the state was able to manage the Bay's floor sustainably, encouraging shellfish aquaculture by developing and leasing public oyster beds to private firms. Pollution in Long Island Sound resulted in the decline of beds there by the 1880s, spurring the industry in Narragansett Bay.

Initially, men in small skiffs would use oyster tongs to bring up the catch, then transfer it to a larger boat, which would carry it to one of many oyster houses in the region. Warren alone had ten on the Warren River and two on the Kickemuit River. The introduction of the mechanical dredge in the early 20th century increased production. By 1912, the peak year of oyster farming in the Bay, oysters made up sixty percent of Rhode Island's fishery income and there were more than 20,000 acres of oyster beds in cultivation.¹³⁶ After 1915, pollution in the Bay led to a decline in the industry. Cold winters in the 1930s, along with the Hurricane of 1938, damaged around 80 percent of the remaining beds, forcing a shift away from oystering.

Narragansett Bay's quahog clams provided the next seafood boom. Like oysters, clams were a common Indigenous food – clambakes and chowder both have roots in Native American food traditions. Quahog shells were also the source of wampum, used for trade. Wild clams were harvested

¹³⁴ "History," Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding. <https://gladding-hearn.com/about/history/>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

¹³⁵ "About," Fortier Boats. <https://fortierboats.com/fortier-33/>. Accessed March 29, 2025.

¹³⁶ The Oyster Industry, Warren Historic Site. HMdb.org, The Historical Marker Database. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=222991>. Accessed December 3, 2024.

by treading or raking the muddy bottom of the estuary. In the 20th century, wild harvests gave way to shellfish farms that supplied everything from local restaurants to Campbell's Soup Corporation's clam chowder.¹³⁷



Oyster harvesting has been a part of the Sowams economy for millennia.

Courtesy of Blount Fine Foods

The Blount family epitomizes the seafood industry on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay. In 1880, Eddie Blount established an oyster packing firm in Barrington. His grandson, Nelson Blount, made the transition from oystering to clams. In 1938, Nelson persuaded Senator Theodore Green to put quahogs on the War Department's approved list, creating a huge market for quahoggers. A decade later, he established the lucrative relationship with Campbell's Soup and established Blount's Clam Shack on the Warren waterfront, a seasonal favorite. The fifth generation of the Blount family continues to operate the seafood business, now known as Blount Fine Foods. With production facilities in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Texas, the company is the largest fresh soup manufacturer in the country.¹³⁸

The Blounts are among many multigenerational seafood families and longstanding seafood restaurants and markets. Tony's Seafood, with establishments in Warren and Seekonk, traces its roots to Angelo Pirri, a Sicilian fisherman who settled in Bristol in the early 1900s.¹³⁹

Restaurants like the Lobster Pot and Quito's, established in Bristol in 1929 and 1954 respectively, and family-run seafood markets like Andrade's Catch, carry forward important, living traditions in Sowams. In addition, many communities still hold clam bakes, including Rehoboth, in which the Town Committee hosts an annual Old Tyme Clam Bake each August.

Industrial Revolution

An important development in the region's economic history was the rise of textile manufacturing, which in New England was another cog in the wheel of transatlantic trade. Moses Brown helped bring water-powered technology to manufacturing in the United States, hiring English immigrant Samuel Slater to replicate the machinery in Pawtucket, north of Providence, in 1793. The adoption of this technology, regarded as a state secret in England, sparked the American Industrial Revolution. By 1815, the tiny state of Rhode Island had more than 167 textile mills, most of them within 30 miles of Providence.¹⁴⁰

In Warren, the Warren Manufacturing Company built the town's first cotton mill along the Warren River in 1847. After a fire destroyed much of the complex in 1895, the company rebuilt a massive complex along the waterfront. At its peak, the company ran 50,000 spindles and employed up to 500 people. Company housing filled the adjacent streets.¹⁴¹

137 "How the Quahog Became a Rhode Island Icon," New England Historical Society. <https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/how-the-quahog-became-a-rhode-island-icon/>. Accessed December 3, 2024.

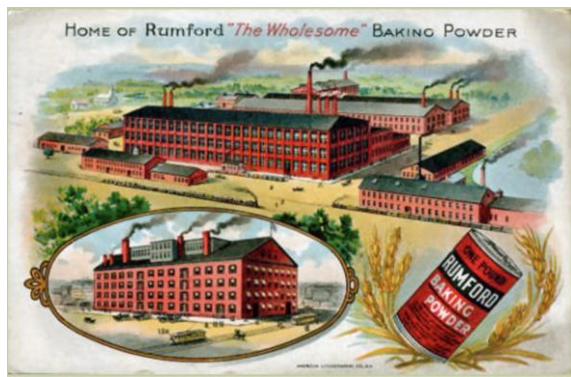
138 From Sea to Soup: The Evolution of Blount Fine Foods, est. 1946. Blount Fine Foods. <https://blountfinefoods.com/sea-to-soup>. Accessed December 3, 2024.

139 "Our History," Tony's Seafood. <https://tonysfreshseafood.com/wholesale/tonys-seafood-history/>. Accessed December 3, 2024.

140 Hillary Brown. "Innovation or Bust! The Surprising Story of New England's Textile Heyday," *Frederic Magazine*, April 28, 2020. <https://fredericmagazine.com/2020/04/new-england-textile-industry-history/>. Accessed December 5, 2024.

141 "Warren Manufacturing Co. Mill/1896," Buildings of New England. <https://buildingsofnewengland.com/2020/06/05/warren-manufacturing-co-mill-1896/>. Accessed December 5, 2024.

Textile mills in other communities in the Sowams region produced lace, yarn, and imitation leather. Textiles led to the development of other manufacturing. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, manufacturing dominated Providence's economy, including cotton textiles, woolen items, jewelry, and silver. By the 1890s, Providence and its surroundings boasted more than 1,500 factories. Providence was home to the world's largest tool factory (Brown & Sharpe), file factory (Nicholson File), engine factory (Corliss Steam Engine), screw factory (American Screw), and silver factory (Gorham Silver). The city led the nation in manufacturing jewelry and producing woolen and worsted goods.¹⁴²



Founded in 1856, Rumford Chemical Works manufactured the iconic Rumford Baking Powder for more than 100 years in East Providence, RI.



Rumford Center is a thriving adaptive reuse enterprise in the original Rumford Chemical Works factory complex, East Providence, RI.

Courtesy of Rumford Center

From the late 17th century through the 19th century, water-powered mills and factories were established along the Palmer River in Rehoboth, driving economic growth in the town. Industries like textile manufacturing and ironworks shaped the local landscape and provided essential employment opportunities.

All the cities in Sowams had an industrial presence. Bristol focused primarily on marine trades and machining. Brickmaking and textiles were important in Barrington. Textiles also dominated Warren, Seekonk, and Rehoboth. Swansea had jewelry manufacturing, and Somerset's primary industry was a cannery.

Industrial innovation catalyzed educational innovation in a state that had become well-known for radical ideas. In 1877, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) was established in Providence by the Rhode Island Women's Centennial Commission under the capable leadership of Helen Adelia Rowe Metcalf. The organization used surplus funds raised for Rhode Island's contribution to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition to start the school – a far more impactful idea than others on the table, such as building a fountain. The school was intended to support the textile and jewelry industries. Primary courses of study included Freehand Drawing and Painting and Mechanical Drawing and Design. The coeducational institution has included a museum throughout its 150-year history.¹⁴³

¹⁴² "History," Rising Sun Mills. <https://risingsunmill.com/about/history>. Accessed December 5, 2024.

¹⁴³ "History and Tradition," Rhode Island School of Design. <https://www.risd.edu/about/history-and-tradition>. Accessed January 22, 2025.

In the 20th century, Rhode Island's industrial strength diminished as the textile industry shifted to the South. The migration of manufacturing accelerated during the 1920s and worsened during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Although World War II brought a temporary resurgence, the decline resumed steadily by the mid-20th century, as other industries responded to global economic trends and moved out of state or out of the country. The exception was costume jewelry, which stayed strong through the 1990s, until global competition led to a decline in that industry.¹⁴⁴

Immigration

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants, particularly as they fueled the rise of industry from the mid-19th century into the 1920s. A second peak began in the last quarter of the 20th century and remains strong today, with immigrants originating from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.¹⁴⁵

The Sowams region of eastern Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts has followed these national trends, with thousands of French Canadian, Italian, Irish, Polish, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean immigrants making their lives and livelihoods here in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most immigrants came to escape poverty in their homelands and to seek opportunity in the textile mills and other emerging industries. They established ethnic enclaves in the communities in which they settled, the legacy of which is often still evident today.

Many of these immigrants were Catholic, a vastly different religious background than the Protestant Separatist and Puritan ideology that had taken root in both religion and politics more than two centuries in the past. By the turn of the 20th century, Rhode Island became the nation's first state with a Catholic majority. As the largest city and the main port, the history of immigration is most visible in Providence, although the entire Sowams region experienced the patterns described below.

The Irish were among the early immigrants, initially coming to work on public construction projects. The Dorr Rebellion of the early 1840s attempted to expand voting rights to all white men in Rhode Island, with the Irish being an important segment of that. The movement failed, and in 1842 the editor of the *Providence Journal*, also a U.S. Senator, observed it was not possible to assimilate Irish Catholics because they were foreigners and vassals of the Catholic Church. Irish immigration increased significantly when the potato blight caused the Great Famine, beginning in 1845. Growing numbers of poor and unskilled Irish led to increased prejudice, which in turn contributed to unemployment, poverty, and alcoholism. The tenements in Providence's Federal Hill neighborhood were established as an Irish enclave. Eventually, Irish immigrants and their children



Helen Adelia Rowe Metcalf, co-founder of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

Courtesy of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum

¹⁴⁴ "Manufacturing in Rhode Island," Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Rhode-Island-state/Manufacturing>. Accessed December 5, 2024.

¹⁴⁵ United States, Department of Homeland Security, 2021 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2022).

overcame these difficult beginnings, and in 1906, Providence elected its first and only immigrant Mayor, famine refugee Patrick J. McCarthy.¹⁴⁶

Providence and East Providence both experienced significant Italian immigrations beginning in the 1870s. Because people followed relatives and friends, many Italian communities reflected regional differences in Italy. By 1920, there were more Italian immigrants in Rhode Island than any other foreign-born ethnicity, making up 19 percent of the state's foreign-born population.¹⁴⁷ Irish and Italian immigrants were predominately Catholic, but the Irish controlled the church hierarchy, often disdaining Italian practices as a folk religion. Italians quickly established their own churches, which served as the political, social, and philanthropic heart of communities.



Golrick and Cottrell, Irish grocers in 1910 on Federal Hill, Providence, RI

At the turn of the 20th century, Federal Hill was home to large numbers of both Irish and Italian immigrants. Over the following two decades, the neighborhood became the center of the city's Italian American population. It retained this status until the 1960s, by which time housing conditions had deteriorated, and many children of immigrants had built on their parents' hard work, moving to more affluent neighborhoods.¹⁴⁸ The neighborhood still retains its Little Italy feel, with Italian restaurants and annual cultural celebrations continuing this legacy.

The largest of migration of French Canadians to Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts occurred in the 1860s. The economic boom the Civil War created drew immigrants to the textile mills. They arrived by train, unlike European immigrants, resulting in more opportunity for people to work temporarily and return to Canada. Language was central to religion and culture for French Canadians. The expression "la survivance," meaning "survival," came to refer to the way in which French Canadian mill workers held onto their francophone culture in the face of anglicization in 19th century New England.¹⁴⁹ Many French Canadians settled in Barrington to work at the Rhode Island Lace works, to which they brought a tradition of lace-making skills.¹⁵⁰

While much of the region's immigration patterns mirror other parts of New England, Portuguese and Cape Verdean immigration stands out in Sowams. Despite distinct cultural differences and the vast physical distance that separates Cape Verde and Portugal, the history of both peoples is connected because Cape Verde was a Portuguese colony until it gained independence in 1975.

¹⁴⁶ "The History of the Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial," Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial. <https://rifaminememorial.org/about/>, Accessed December 28, 2024.

¹⁴⁷ Carmela E. Santoro. *The Italians in Rhode Island: The Age of Exploration to the Present, 1524–1989*, Rhode Island Pamphlet Series, (Providence: The Rhode Island Heritage Commission and the Rhode Island Publications Society, 1990), 3.

¹⁴⁸ Santoro, *The Italians in Rhode Island*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ "The Little Canadas of New England," New England Historical Society. <https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/the-little-canadas-of-new-england/>. Accessed December 10, 2024.

¹⁵⁰ "Barrington's Industrial Past," Barrington Preservation Society, Barringtonpreservation.org. Accessed December 8, 2024.



St. Elizabeth Church in Bristol, RI celebrates the Santo Cristo dos Milagres Feast, featuring traditional Portuguese music, cuisine, and a dazzling procession through the neighborhood.

Photo by Shawn Viveiros - Digitalvivo.com

The earliest Portuguese immigrants were Sephardic Jews that settled in Newport in the 17th and 18th centuries. The next phase of Portuguese immigration, which also included the first Cape Verdean immigrants, was tied to the whaling industry that flourished from the 1860s to the 1880s. Whaling ships out of Warren, Rhode Island and New Bedford, Massachusetts frequently took on Portuguese mariners in the Azores and in Cape Verde on regular stops in these island outposts. After the decline of the whaling industry, many Portuguese chose to stay in Providence, working in the maritime and textile industries. Their settlement spurred another wave of immigration, as employment opportunities in textile mills drew their families and friends to Rhode Island through the 1920s.

Immigration in the United States slowed to a trickle with the U.S. Congress' passage of the 1924 National Origins Quota Act, which limited the number of newly arriving immigrants to 2 percent of the existing immigrant populations. Legislation was lifted briefly to allow for Portuguese refugees fleeing a volcanic eruption in the Azores in 1950. The Quota Act was lifted in 1965, and 100,000 Portuguese immigrants arrived in the country over the next decade, many settling in communities with a strong Portuguese presence in Rhode Island. In Sowams, the towns of Bristol, Warren, East Providence, and the Fox Point and Washington Park sections of Providence are notable for their Portuguese populations.¹⁵¹ The Catholic church and strong patriarchal families formed the central tenets of community. Annual parish festas, or "feast days," continue to carry the Portuguese legacy, most importantly the Feast of the Holy Ghost. In addition, many Portuguese cultural societies help maintain living traditions.

The Cape Verde archipelago is situated 350 miles off the west coast of Africa. A crossroads in the middle of the Atlantic, its isolation and its connections to both Africa and Portugal situated it in the midst of the transatlantic slave trade and the whaling industry. A creole culture was born of these ethnic influences, and by the late 19th century that culture was dominant in Cape Verde as well as the immigrant population that settled in Sowams. As with Portuguese immigrants, many Cape Verdeans worked aboard ships that had passed through the islands, and found their way to new lives in the United States. After the end of the whaling era, many found employment in the marine industries and the mills. However, societal racism in the 19th and 20th centuries limited opportunities for many Cape Verdeans with darker skin tones, despite their reputation for hard work, while immigrants from lighter-skinned ethnic groups often faced fewer barriers to advancement.

Vessels no longer needed for whaling were put into service as packet ships, transporting freight, mail, and passengers back and forth between Providence and Cape Verde. Until the packet trade ended around 1965, it was instrumental in keeping Cape Verdean immigrants connected to their homeland, providing remittances of money earned in the United States, and bringing new Cape

¹⁵¹ Rachel M. Cunha, Susan A Pacheco, and Beth Pereira Wolfson. *The Portuguese in Rhode Island: A History*. Rhode Island Pamphlet Series, (Providence: The Rhode Island Heritage Commission and the Rhode Island Publications Society, 1985), 7–10.

Verdeans to Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. By the 1980s, the population of people with Cape Verdean ancestry in the United States exceeded the population of the Republic of Cabo Verde, and the remittances that immigrants continued to send home comprised one-third of the tiny nation's annual budget of \$75 million. The largest populations were in New Bedford, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island.¹⁵²

In the early 20th century, the cultural heart of the Cape Verdean community was Providence's Fox Point neighborhood. By the 1950s, however, major transportation projects, including the construction of Interstate 95, cut the community off from the waterfront and forced residents elsewhere. East Providence, Rhode Island and Seekonk, Massachusetts saw increases in Cape Verdean residents, as did other areas of Providence.¹⁵³ Churches, strong interfamilial relationships, and mutual aid societies that provided assistance and social opportunities were the main pillars of the community. Today, all three have a role in overseeing the conservation of cultural traditions in music, arts, and foods, as well as the annual July 5th celebration of Cape Verdean independence.

Sowams Today

Regional Economy

Sowams today has a diverse economy based on health services and biomedicine, tourism, defense shipbuilding and maritime trades, and manufacturing, most of which are tied to the region's past and its location on Narragansett Bay.

Tourism is also connected to the region's cultural and natural heritage – Narragansett Bay, the historic waterfronts and neighborhoods, and the rivers and open spaces. Visitor data is tracked differently in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and the Sowams communities in Rhode Island are grouped into three different regions. As such, only broad generalizations are included here.

On both sides of the state line in 2023, visitation in Sowams communities surpassed pre-Covid numbers. In Rhode Island, dining and recreation are the leading categories for visitor spending in the regions that contain Sowams communities. In Barrington, Bristol, and Warren, arts, entertainment, and recreation comprised the leading category, accounting for 28 percent, or \$9 million, of the communities' \$31 million tourism revenue in 2023.¹⁵⁴ While those three towns have a much smaller tourism industry than industry giants like Providence and Newport, the data speaks to the importance of Narragansett Bay, Sowams' cultural



Kyle Dufur, captain of the fully restored 1938 Black Watch ocean racing yacht in Somerset Boatyard of Bristol Marine, Somerset, MA

Courtesy of Bristol Marine

¹⁵² Waltraud Berger Coli and Richard A. Lobban. *The Cape Verdeans in Rhode Island: A Brief History*. Rhode Island Pamphlet Series, (Providence: The Rhode Island Heritage Commission and the Rhode Island Publications Society, 1990), 3-8.

¹⁵³ Coli and Lobban, *The Cape Verdeans in Rhode Island*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Tourism Economics. *The Economic Impact of Visitors in Rhode Island 2023*, October 2024. https://commercieri-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/p/donna_graham/EdMOCS6b25xEmhXzly5TyWABwaU2o3Yye3-WN0ujr_R32g?rttime=0d_7ebUc3Ug. Accessed December 14, 2024, 23.

and natural resources. In southeastern Massachusetts, the category of arts, entertainment, and recreation does not rank as highly in visitor spending as its Rhode Island counterparts, but tourism revenue is up more than 25% over pre-COVID earnings.¹⁵⁵

Land and Water Conservation

The watershed of Narragansett Bay has sustained the people of Sowams for 12,000 years. Robust conservation organizations are among the many partners documented in the feasibility study (see Appendix D – Sowams Partners). In Massachusetts and Rhode Island, conservation organizations work collaboratively to protect the land and the rivers, streams, and estuaries that flow into the Bay. In the second half of the 20th century, grassroots environmental efforts in the U.S. grew significantly, with watershed associations, land trusts, and conservation commissions working to protect scenic, recreational, and ecological resources. These efforts have evolved from single-objective conservation goals to recognizing the diverse uses and benefits of healthy environments, open spaces, and water access.

Today, the Sowams region is defined by a deep-rooted conservation ethic that brings together state agencies, regional planners, land trusts, and grassroots advocates in a shared effort to safeguard land, water, and wildlife. Partnerships between statewide conservation groups and local districts have protected thousands of acres, restored critical habitats, and advanced policies that balance recreation, farming, and ecological health. Coordinated initiatives along the Bay and its tributaries – from innovative storm-water projects in urban neighborhoods to watershed stewardship programs on rural rivers – demonstrate how science, education, and community action reinforce one another. Municipal land trusts and citizen coalitions complement these efforts by maintaining trails, monitoring water quality, and championing public access. Together, these overlapping networks of public and private actors sustain the environmental integrity and cultural character of Sowams while fostering broad public engagement with the landscape.



The Town of Barrington, the State of Rhode Island, and the Barrington Land Conservation Trust collaborated to restore the salt marsh on the Walker Farm Preserve, Barrington, RI.

Courtesy of East Bay Media Group

¹⁵⁵ DRA, The Economic Impact of Visitors: Massachusetts 2023 State, Regional, & County Impacts, October 2024. https://www.visitma.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Economic-Impact-of-Travel-Report_MA_10.30.24.pdf. Accessed December 14, 2024, 65.

Contemporary Native American Tribes

The Complexity of Identity

Tribal identity is complex, involving issues of land, religious background, and intertribal and intercultural mixing. Identity is an obstacle for many of the Tribes across New England, especially in light of the common narrative that Tribes were eradicated in the colonial era. A Tribal leader challenged this narrative, stating, “they took away our culture, took away our language, and told us to ‘prove who we are,’ but they know who we are.”

According to an article on the Pokanoket diaspora, “In the times following the [King Philip’s] war, Tribal identity became more fluid, and Tribal members would associate with whatever Tribe gave them the most protection. By the 1720s, some New England Indians and their offspring were mixed race, and this trend only increased during succeeding decades.”¹⁵⁶

An important but often divisive element of identity is the recognition of Tribal sovereignty by state governments or the United States government. The recognition process relies in large part on treaties, census records, land deeds, and other historical documentation that often forms an imperfect picture of identity. Furthermore, recognition may provide autonomy and bring access to resources to some Tribes that non-recognized Tribes lack. State and federal governments, as well as some Tribes, are often exclusionary in their approach to Tribal identity, inadvertently or intentionally preventing political and financial gains for non-recognized Tribes.

Census records are often used to identify race in the past, and while they may be helpful if they include specific information on Tribes, they can also prove adverse. Scholar Jeremy Bangs observed that census descriptions were based on the perceptions of the census workers, so despite being of Native American descent, a person could be categorized as “Black” or “White” based solely on the observation of the census-taker. In the present, these records can be used to deny Tribes their ancestry.¹⁵⁷ In the midst of this complexity, modern Indigenous groups are recreating their identity, studying history, and emphasizing their “chosen” ancestry. Dr. Bangs emphasized “chosen” as most Tribal descendants in New England today have mixed ancestry among the Tribes, possibly including European and African ancestors. He acknowledged that the Pokanoket have done this and sees the approach as valid. “They have demonstrated ancestral connections, are tied to the place, and are working to reclaim their history and traditions. Those who continue to maintain connection to the past, and are reviving it, are legitimate.”



Pokanoket Protest (2017) at Burr’s Hill in Warren, RI

In the present, as in the past, land is often central to Tribal identity. For Tribes, it is important to retain a connection to place, as well as to have somewhere to gather people and catalyze their action. Land acknowledgements, which have become increasingly common for universities, his-

¹⁵⁶ Po Menuhkesu Menenok. “The History of the Pokanoket Tribal Diaspora,” Pokanoket Diaspora History, July 2022, 1–2, [Sowams Heritage Area Project - Google Drive](#). Accessed April 12, 2023.

¹⁵⁷ Jeremy D. Bangs, personal communication, January 22, 2023.

toric sites, and local government, are important tools in identity politics. However, some Indigenous scholars and leaders point out that land acknowledgements are “imperfect tools” that oversimplify complex issues, obscure history, and burden the Tribes they aim to help.¹⁵⁸

Identity can prove problematic for projects involving Tribal history when federal recognition is invoked, often to the exclusion of other Tribes. This has happened twice in the Sowams region in recent years. First, during the reburial of Ousamequin in Warren, where the Mashpee Wampanoag of Massachusetts were invited to participate, but the Pokanoket – direct descendants living in Sowams were excluded. Second, an NPS American Battlefield Protection Grant on the Sowams site of the first battle of King Philip’s War required input from three federally recognized Tribes, but the Pokanoket and other non-federally recognized Tribes were excluded despite being the closest Native American groups to the project area. Local organizations and government have tended to be more inclusive and open to the complexities of Tribal identity than state and federal entities.

What’s In a Name?

Understanding the distinction between pre-colonial identities like the Pokanoket and the post-colonial “Wampanoag” identity is crucial for honoring the true history and diversity of Indigenous peoples in New England. In the 17th century, “Wampanoag” was a local geographical description for the “dawn” in the Algonquin language. It was commonly described to mean “easterner.” “Wampanoag” was not used during the contact period; rather it came into usage during King Philip’s War, gaining popularity in the 1820s due to a play entitled “Metamora; or The Last of the Wampanoag,” a fictionalized account based very loosely on the relationship between Native American Tribes and Puritan settlers. Today, the federally recognized Mashpee Wampanoag and six other Tribes include the term in their name.

The Pokanoket Tribe was formerly known as the Pokanoket Tribe/Wampanoag Nation, but gave up the “Wampanoag” portion of their name in 2015 because they believe that name was forced upon them during the King Philip’s War by the English and their Tribal allies. Instead, the Pokanoket have chosen to exclusively use the name their ancestors used before the English arrived. According to Pokanoket Tribal Historian Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr.:

We took a long look at our history and started asking questions. We came to the conclusion that this was a word forced upon us by our conquerors, and used by our ancestors as a means of survival in a hostile environment. We interpret removing the name as a symbolic means of decolonizing our identity.¹⁵⁹

Unfortunately, much of the recent academic scholarship about the region has not caught up with the name change. Despite scholars unanimously recognizing the Massasoit Ousamequin as the leader of the confederation who established an alliance with Plymouth’s leaders, and also recognizing Sowams as his home, recent publications still refer to Ousamequin as being “Wampanoag.” This creates confusion in the wider public, and, because of the contemporary stakes associated with identity, it also gives politicians and other Tribes a tool to challenge the legitimacy of the Pokanoket. Land acknowledgements, local education, and some scholars are beginning to turn the tide on the use of the anachronistic word “Wampanoag” in Sowams.

¹⁵⁸ Harmeet Kaur. “Land Acknowledgments are Often an Empty Gesture, Some Indigenous People Say,” CNN, November 22, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/22/us/native-americans-land-acknowledgments-cec/index.html>. Accessed April 14, 2023.

¹⁵⁹ Donald “Strong Turtle” Brown, Jr., Pokanoket Tribal Historian. Personal communication, April 7, 2025.

Potumtuk – Sowams Land Returns to Indigenous Hands

On November 15, 2024, more than 340 years after losing the property, the Pokanoket Tribe reclaimed Potumtuk, or Mount Hope, the sacred site that their ancestors had stewarded for millennia and that served as the seat of Ousamequin's and Metacom's power. Brown University transferred 255 acres of its Mount Hope property in Bristol, Rhode Island, to a preservation trust established by the Pokanoket Indian Tribe. The transfer stems from a 2017 agreement after the Pokanoket Tribe and their supporters set up an encampment to reclaim their ancestral homeland, which they argued was taken illegally centuries ago.

In preparation for the transfer, Brown University commissioned a cultural sensitivity assessment that identified Potumtuk as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), which makes it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places based on its associations with the cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, and lifeways of a living community. The study also recognized other sites on the property that hold significance for the Pokanoket Tribe. In addition, Brown sold 120 acres of the surrounding land to the Town of Bristol to serve as an open space buffer for the Pokanoket land. Bristol's land will become Mt. Hope Community Forest.¹⁶⁰

Building on this foundation, the Rhode Island Senate passed a resolution on May 7, 2025, entitled "Senate Resolution Supporting Recognition of the Pokanoket Tribe as the Ancient and Ongoing Stewards of Their Ancestral Homeland, and Acknowledging Their Central Role in Shaping the Region's Past, Present, and Future."¹⁶¹



Members of the Pokanoket Tribe return to Potumtuk (Mt. Hope) on November 15, 2024, Bristol, RI.

Courtesy of East Bay Media Group

160 "Brown Transfers Bristol Land to Tribe and Town," *Bristol Phoenix* (November 21, 2024). [eastbayri.com](https://www.eastbayri.com). Accessed November 21, 2024.

161 "Rhode Island Senate Resolution 1034," LegiScan: Bringing People to the Process. <https://legiscan.com/RI/bill/S1034/2025>. Accessed May 12, 2025.

On December 4, 2025, the Pokanoket Tribe released a statement that described their plans for the Mt. Hope Lands.

First and foremost, to state for the record, there will be no casino.

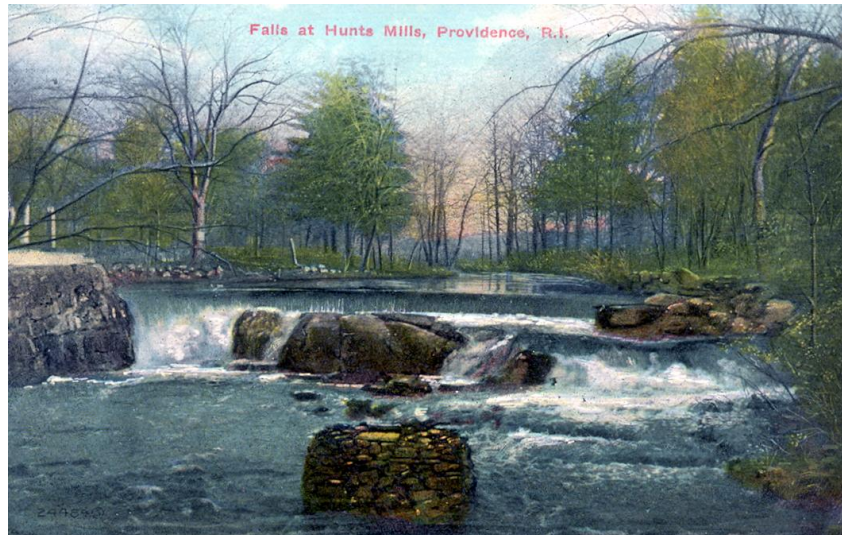
As stewards of these lands and waterways, we intend to do nothing less than to live in balance and harmony with them. Over the past year, we have been working with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services and with a forestry expert to assess the health of the forest. We are collaborating with the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District to help guide our plans on how to best restore the land and its ecosystems. We are exploring agricultural initiatives and the sustainable use of ocean resources in collaboration with support from additional agencies.

...Our intention is to share our culture, our history, and the beauty of this land with you. The reclaiming of Potumtuk by the Pokanoket Tribe and the State of Rhode Island's recognition of their homeland are seminal events that connect the past, present, and future in Sowams

CHAPTER 3 – SIGNIFICANCE, THEMES, RESOURCES, AND BOUNDARY

Significant Histories

Two of the three primary organizing elements of an NHA are a nationally significant story and the historic, cultural, and natural resources remaining on a landscape that support that story. In addition to an anchoring story and resources with national significance, an NHA also encompasses the wider experience of a living cultural landscape, past and present. Importantly, a region's history and culture form the connective tissue of an NHA. While sharing significant histories may be one of the goals of an NHA, the ultimate purpose of designating an NHA is to use that history to build regional collaboration and opportunities in historic preservation, living traditions, natural resource conservation, recreation, education, heritage tourism, and economic development.



The 10-Mile River has been a water source for local industries, such as Hunt's Mills, built in 1645 to operate a saw mill, grist mill, and fulling mill, East Providence, RI.

In the initial phase of the feasibility study for an NHA in Sowams, the PointHDC team explored the region's multilayered histories, identifying and articulating the stories that provide important cultural connections in the region and help determine its national significance. Subsequently, the planning team and steering committee built out those concepts into a thematic framework that supports the region's contribution to the nation's heritage. The themes and supporting resources were tested in review by seven subject matter experts and the public (see Appendix A – Planning Participants and Appendix B – Sowams Public Outreach Activities).

Significant Histories as a Catalyst

The nationally significant story of the Sowams region was the catalyst for area residents to organize and pursue NHA designation. Sowams is the homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin, who established a peaceful contract with European settlers in the New World, and also the place where war shattered that peace with devastating consequences and centuries-long precedence for the treatment of Indigenous peoples in North America. In the survey conducted in 2022, Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee members resoundingly confirmed that this is the region's significance, and that they are involved because of their commitment to the region's history and heritage.

Defining Significance

National Heritage Areas are defined by nationally distinctive landscapes. Landscapes that are unique on a national level are areas that hold significant regional and national narratives. These, along with their related natural and cultural resources, allow Americans to appreciate, safeguard, and honor essential elements of the nation's heritage. According to the *National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines* established by NPS, these landscapes are often places that represent and contain identifiable assemblages of resources with integrity associated with one or more of the following:¹⁶²

1. important historical periods of the nation and its people
2. major events, persons, and groups that contributed substantively to the nation's history, customs, beliefs, and folklore
3. distinctive cultures and cultural mores
4. major industries and technological, business, manufacturing innovations/ practices, and labor advancements that contributed substantively to the economic growth of the nation and the well-being of its people
5. transportation innovations and routes that played central roles in important military actions, settlement, migration, and commerce
6. social movements that substantively influenced past and present-day society
7. American art, craft literature, and music
8. distinctive architecture and architectural periods and movements
9. major scientific discoveries and advancements
10. other comparable representations that, together with their associated resources, substantively contributed to the nation's heritage



RISD students Amadi Williams and Isaiah "Prophet" Raines curated *Sonder: The Black Biennial* at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI.

Courtesy of Rhode Island School of Design

As described in the historic context (Chapter 2 – Shifting Currents), the history of Sowams and the resources that remain on the landscape reflect many of these attributes. The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee, in collaboration with the PointHDC study team, distilled the region's history into a statement of significance and themes that flow from that significance. These are set forth below, followed by a description of the natural and cultural resources associated with Sowams and its significant histories.

¹⁶² National Park Service, *National Feasibility Study Guidelines*, 2019, pg. 16. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/upload/NHA-Feasibility-Study-Guidelines_FINAL-Revisions-2019_508-compliant.pdf. Accessed April 6, 2025.

The Significance of Sowams

Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe and their leader, the Massasoit Ousamequin, is nationally significant for its association with events that changed the course of history in what we now know as the United States. The Sowams region today comprises nine towns and cities along the border of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, on the northeastern watershed of Narragansett Bay.

This landscape is the setting for the critical alliance between the Pokanoket Tribe and the Mayflower settlers, and the fracturing of that alliance in King Philip's War. It is here, on the frontier of Plimoth Colony, that early theological reformers introduced the concept of religious freedom and the separation of Church and State. Here, a century later, two family dynasties propelled the regional economy with enterprises that financed the transatlantic trade of human cargo, fueling the industry of enslavement for 75 years. In Sowams, the clash of Indigenous and European worldviews at First Contact ignited a lasting struggle over the land and water, pitting a culture of spiritual reverence against resource exploitation. This pattern would repeat itself across the North American continent, setting a precedent for the colonization of Indigenous lands and molding the political, economic, and social heritage of the nation.



Fishing on Narragansett Bay

This statement of significance is grounded in a watershed time in the nation's history, beginning with the first contact period commemorated in the legend of the First Thanksgiving and ending with the systematic oppression of a civilization that had thrived on this land for millennia. These events took place where land and water meet on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, on a landscape that continues to play a prominent role in the lives of those who call it home.

The statement highlights the differences between the Indigenous world that existed prior to the arrival of the Mayflower and the Europe colonization that occurred during the first half of the 17th century. It confronts the little-known, but devastating, King Philip's War that set the course of American history. It also drives home how the cultural divisions imprinted during the early years of European settlement continued to marginalize Indigenous people across North America for centuries. History leaves a living legacy. This statement of significance illustrates how this shared cultural landscape has continuously evolved to the present day.

Themes for a National Heritage Area

Understanding how the region contributes to the broader story of national heritage provides a foundation for developing interpretive themes – key stories that highlight the most meaningful ideas and concepts connected to that significance. These themes explain why the stories matter today and make them relevant to both residents and visitors. Once themes are identified, they help guide the recognition of natural and cultural resources that support and illustrate those stories, allowing people to connect more deeply with, appreciate, and honor the region's lasting contributions to the nation's heritage.

The Time and Place Where Two Worlds Met

In 1621 in their homeland of Sowams the Pokanoket Tribe, whose ancestors had lived in the region for 12,000 years, and the English settlers arriving on the Mayflower forged a 50-year non-aggression treaty. Each saw their mutual survival in that watershed alliance, but their divergent concepts of law, land ownership, and personal freedom were worlds apart and would change the course of history.

Ancestors of the Pokanoket people had been living in the Sowams region for 12,000 years. When European traders began arriving in North America in the 16th and 17th centuries, they brought devastating communicable diseases that wiped out more than 75% of New England's entire Indigenous population by the early 1600s. The Pilgrims, Separatist Protestants from England via Holland, were welcomed by the leader of the Pokanoket confederation, the Massasoit Ousamequin. Weakened by the pandemic and threatened by the Narragansett across the bay, Ousamequin entered into a remarkable 50-year alliance with the Plymouth Colony in March of 1621. This alliance is enshrined in national conscience through the myth of the First Thanksgiving, which was promulgated in the 19th Century. Ousamequin's watershed alliance with the Separatist Pilgrims serves as a window to understanding Tribal cultures before the arrival of English settlers, the multi-directional interaction among Tribes and the settlers in the English colonies, the wide-ranging impacts of cultural contact, the difficult history of a beloved American holiday and the commemoration of a National Day of Mourning that began in 1970, and the Tribes who still live on or are connected to the land in the region today.

Although the theme statement focuses on the moment of cultural contact, the impact of that contact created a colonial American landscape whose patterns are still visible in the town centers, historic waterfronts and farmlands, and centuries-old buildings that remain.

Causes and Consequences of King Philip's War

As the English colonists increasingly encroached on Indigenous lands, their alliance with the Pokanoket unraveled disastrously, erupting in King Philip's War, a devastating conflict that encompassed Indigenous and colonial communities throughout New England. After the war, the confiscation of Tribal lands, and the attempted cultural genocide, removal, and enslavement of the Pokanoket and other Tribes, realigned the region based on race, setting a dangerous precedent for the subjugation of all Native Americans in the westward expansion across North America.

The death of the revered Pokanoket leader Ousamequin in 1661 gave way to the catastrophic breakdown of the alliance between the Tribe and the settlers. A series of injustices and the increasing encroachment of the colonists on Tribal lands led to the outbreak of a war in which many

New England Tribes banded together to drive the colonists back to Europe. The war that began in Sowams under the leadership of Ousamequin's son Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, spread across all New England. Due to an inability of the Tribes to collectively fight the colonists, a lack of gunpowder, and diminishing food, the Tribes were gradually overtaken by the English militia. After more than a year of battles across the region, Metacom was shot and killed near the Pokanoket seat of power, Potumtuk, in what is now Bristol, RI. His body was drawn and quartered, and his severed head was displayed on a pike in Plymouth as a warning to any remaining Pokanoket and other Tribal members who had opposed the English colonists.

The conflict resulted in the highest per-capita casualty rate for any war in all of North American history. Following the close of King Philip's War in 1676, those Tribal members who were not killed in the war were either enslaved locally, sold into slavery in Barbados, escaped to Maine, interned on reservations, or joined Tribes outside of the region. Furthermore, Indigenous lands were confiscated as war reparations, and the enslavement and attempted cultural genocide and removal of the Pokanoket and other Tribes who fought against the English led to a realignment of the region based on race. This shift profoundly shaped future policies toward Native American communities across North America.

Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island

As settlers moved westward fleeing communities that were governed by strict sectarian principles, Baptist leaders like Roger Williams and John Myles, and Quaker congregations in Somerset and Providence, championed religious toleration. Williams fostered a community where diverse beliefs coexist, laying the foundation for the concepts of freedom of conscience and separation of church and state that are enshrined in Rhode Island's charter.

The region played a role in establishing one of the pillars of democracy – religious freedom, the precursor to the separation of church and state. Roger Williams was the most visible architect of this concept, believing in “a true and absolute soul-freedom to all the people of the land impartially,” not distinguishing by gender, age, or race.¹⁶³

When expelled from the Massachusetts Bay colony in the 1630s, Williams was saved from winter starvation by the Massasoit and subsequently obtained land from the Narragansett leader Canonicus. Williams championed Indigenous rights and attempted diplomacy in King Philip's War, despite his participation in enslavement after the war. He founded Providence as a “shelter for persons distressed of conscience.”¹⁶⁴

As described in the previous chapter, Williams was not the only person championing religious freedom in the New World – complex ideas were emerging in many corners of the region, and many groups benefitted from or built on the groundwork laid in Providence. The Swansea, Massachusetts, congregation has documented roots in the Baptist movement in England, and the

¹⁶³ “Roger Williams: The Verin Case,” Roger Williams National Memorial, Rhode Island. <https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/history-culture/verincase.htm>. Accessed April 5, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ Quote frequently attributed to Williams without specific source. Identified as coming from a Rhode Island land deed dated 1661, a reflection on his 1638 land purchase to establish Providence. Leonard, Bill J. “The Baptists: Distressed and Distressing Conscience,” presented to the Religious Liberty Council, Fort Worth, Texas, June 22, 2012. <https://bjconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Bill-Leonard-The-Baptists-Distressed-and-Distressing-Conscience.pdf>. Accessed April 5, 2025.

related Warren congregation in Rhode Island incubated Brown University and the disestablishment of the Puritan church in Massachusetts. The Society of Friends also embraced religious freedom in the neighboring communities, forming the nation's oldest Quaker House in nearby Newport, and establishing early Quaker settlements in Providence and Somerset. Freedom of Conscience is embedded in Rhode Island's charter, historically codifying the ability of people to live side by side without having to agree with each other.

The Era of Trading Enslaved People

From the forced labor of Indigenous and African peoples to the economic prosperity it brought to the region, the legacy of enslavement in Sowams reflects the complex interplay of colonialism, global commerce, and human suffering. The industries that were established to support and supply the slave trading ships, including shipwrights, food suppliers, rum distilleries, and more, buoyed the economy of the entire Sowams region for more than a hundred years and left a legacy of prosperity with deep roots in slave trading.

The history of enslavement in Sowams flows from the story of cultural contact, colonial settlement, and global trade in New England. English settlers and their American successors enslaved Indigenous and African people from 1619 through the legal abolition of slavery in 1781 in Massachusetts and 1842 in Rhode Island.

The transatlantic slave trade generated huge wealth for those who participated in it and tragedy and dislocation for those who were subjected to it. More than 100,000 enslaved Africans were forcibly removed from their homeland and brought to the New World on ships that originated in Rhode Island. The vast majority were relocated to the sugar plantations in the Caribbean, but some were brought to labor in the households, farms, and waterfront industries in Sowams. People from the Pokanoket Tribe and other Tribes that fought the English in King Philip's War were also sold into slavery, and most were shipped to the Caribbean, in particular Barbados, to work on English sugar plantations.

In Sowams, Indigenous men and African men, women, and children were sold at public auctions in Bristol and Providence. A fierce abolition movement arose in response to the immorality and inhumanity of this trade. Quakers were at the forefront during the American Revolution, anti-slavery societies developed through the mid-1800s, and the Underground Railroad ushered enslaved people to freedom until emancipation during the Civil War made owning slaves a federal crime.

The industries that were established to support and supply the slave trading ships, including shipwrights, food suppliers, rum distilleries, and more, buoyed the economy of the entire Sowams region for over a hundred years and left a legacy of prosperity with deep roots in the trade of enslaved people.

The Interplay of Land and Water

This place where land meets water on the northeastern watershed of Narragansett Bay has defined the history, cultural identities, and economic evolution of Sowams for millennia. Its network of tributaries has enriched the landscape and enabled transportation, trade, recreation, and industrial innovation for the communities who have called this place home. Over the past decades, the citizens of Sowams have developed a conservation ethic to preserve and protect open space and the watershed, which has become even more critical with climate change.

The landscape on the northeastern side of Narragansett Bay has driven the region's water-related economy over centuries, shaping Sowams' rich cultural heritage. Abundant fish in the rivers and Bay have supported people for thousands of years, first for subsistence and later as a profitable industry.

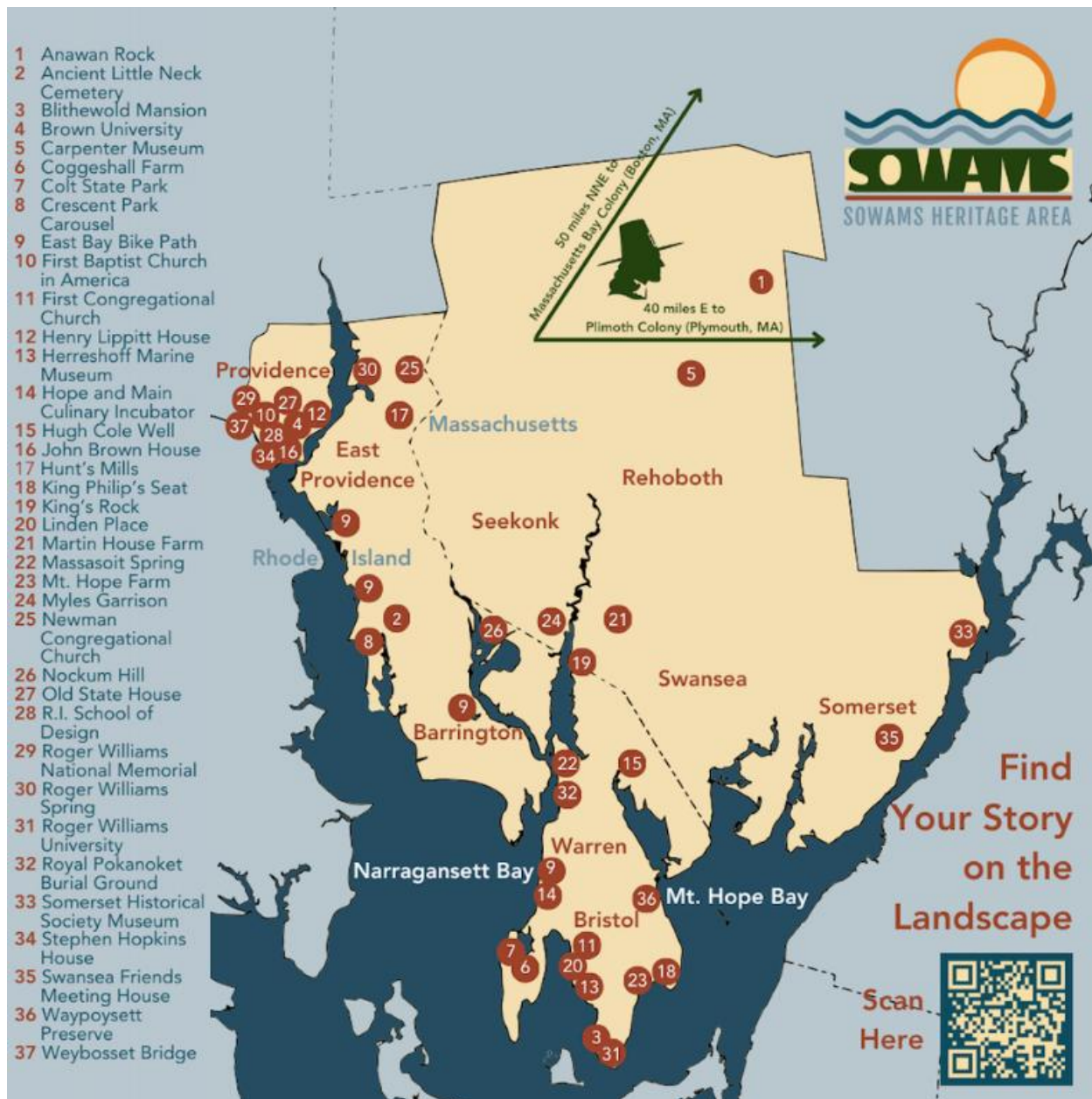
Long before a trading network stretched across the Atlantic, the region's waterways were integral to inter-tribal trade that reached deep into the North American continent. Sailing and shipbuilding have deep roots here, from 17th-century tall ships to modern racing yachts. Bristol's deepwater port was instrumental in the development of transatlantic trade that contributed to the wealth still evident in the historic architecture in several of the region's towns.

Industrialization and innovation have transformed the region, from early textile mills to today's composite industries. Narragansett Bay was a strategic waterway for the British and American navies during the Revolutionary War. As with all parts of the nation, immigration helped build strong ethnic populations; Portuguese and Cape Verdean communities stand out in Sowams.

Today, visitors and residents enjoy the historic waterfront towns and the recreation opportunities offered by the rivers and Bay. Past and present, this place where land meets water has defined the people who live here. In the future, the increasing impacts of climate change could radically alter the coastal landscape and its corresponding way of life.

Historic, Cultural, and Natural Resources

In a National Heritage Area, the collective presence of historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational resources forms the foundation for interpreting a region's nationally significant story. Conserving and enhancing these resources supports interpretation, education, recreation, heritage tourism, and economic development. Identifying and evaluating these resources is therefore a critical part of determining the feasibility of NHA designation. Following the development of interpretive themes, the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee, in collaboration with the PointHDC planning team, assessed the type, number, and integrity of resources within the study area to determine how they contribute to a nationally distinctive landscape and illustrate the proposed themes. Many of these key resources are shown on the Sowams Featured Sites map, and described below, with a full inventory containing 191 resources provided in Appendix E. In addition, an example of the interactive map, which can be filtered by theme or resource type, is found in Appendix H.



Resources Associated with “The Time and Place Where Two Worlds Met”

Identifying and Evaluating Tribal Resources

Since NPS initially developed guidelines for NHA designation in 2004, an important measure of feasibility has been the existence of National Historic Landmarks (NHL), properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and other resources, such as national parks, where significance and integrity have already been determined. While Sowams has many of these, its national significance is rooted in a contested history 400 years in the past. This has required an innovative approach to identifying significant resources during the feasibility study and merits a different measure of evaluation of resources by the National Park Service. As one stakeholder remarked, “If you are trying to document and amplify cultures decimated by colonialism, it is not good to fault them for not having the ‘traditional’ historical resources preserved.”

Another stakeholder interviewed stated, “The traditional cultural properties and the Indigenous and colonial sites associated with King Philip’s War and its participants make a compelling argument for the region’s national significance.”

In Sowams, the majority of resources associated with Indigenous history are natural places and features. Across the landscape, Indigenous place names still map a world that existed before the English arrived. The landscape holds natural spaces that have cultural and historical significance to the Pokanoket or have histories related to cultural contact and King Philip’s War that remain despite centuries of development. Although none of the sites described below have been designated Traditional Cultural Places (TCPs), which are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, several of them likely meet designation criteria, underscoring the national significance of the Sowams region.¹⁶⁵



King Philip’s Seat, sacred meeting place of the Pokanoket Tribe, Bristol, RI

- **Potumtuk and the Seat of Metacom (Bristol, RI)**

This prominent quartz rock formation rises above Mount Hope Bay, part of an ancient chain of mountains whose heights served as lookout points for millennia. At Potumtuk’s foot is the Seat of Metacom, the cradle of power of the Pokanoket. It is where Ousamequin and his sons Wamsutta and Metacom are reported to have met with various Tribes and audiences throughout the 17th century prior to King Philip’s War.¹⁶⁶ The land, which had been confiscated by the English and sold after King Philip’s War, was donated to Brown University in 1955. The following year, the U.S. Army removed the top of the formation to install a Nike Missile site, which was removed in 1976. In 2024, Brown University returned the site to the Pokanoket, who hold it in a land trust that will ensure access

¹⁶⁵ Park Planning – National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Places, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=442&documentID=124454>. Accessed April 3, 2023.

¹⁶⁶ Potumtuk (Mount Hope), Bristol, Sowams Heritage Area, <https://sowamsheritagearea.org/wp/mt-hope/>. Accessed April 8, 2023.

to the land and waters to all Native peoples of the region for whom the land has significance. As part of the transfer agreement, a study commissioned by Brown University found that Potumtuk be considered a traditional cultural place and preserved in perpetuity accordingly.¹⁶⁷

- **The Three Sisters (Mount Hope Bay, Bristol, RI)**

Located on the shores of Mount Hope Bay, this distinctive set of three rocks is instrumental in telling the story of the Pokanoket Tribe's deep spiritual connection to the Earth.¹⁶⁸ As in many Native American Tribes, the "three sisters" represent the trio of corn, beans, and squash, life-giving foods that grow in a symbiotic relationship. The site is closely tied to Pokanoket cultural beliefs and storytelling and plays an important role in teaching traditional knowledge and values.

- **Margaret's Cave and Devil's Rock (Swansea, MA)**

As notable geographic features, this site is recognized by the Pokanoket as significant. After his banishment from Salem in 1636, Roger Williams is said to have been sheltered and nursed back to health for over three months by a Pokanoket healer named Margaret at this site. Although Williams' stay with the Massasoit Ousamequin is documented during this time, documentary evidence of this occurring at Margaret's Cave is lacking. With guidance from Massasoit Ousamequin, Williams later left to establish Providence, a settlement founded on principles of religious freedom and coexistence.

- **Massasoit Spring (Warren, Rhode Island)**

Massasoit Spring, located at the west end of Baker Street in Warren, commemorates Massasoit Ousamequin, 17th-century Pokanoket leader. A granite monument, installed in 1907 by historian Virginia Baker and two of Ousamequin's descendants, marks the site of a spring near a historic Pokanoket village. Though the spring no longer flows, the site remains a place of remembrance.

- **Miery Swamp (Mount Hope, Bristol, RI)**

This wetland, sometimes called Misery Swamp, is where Metacom was killed by Captain Benjamin Church's men in 1676, effectively ending King Philip's War. The site is central to the conflict's history and the long-term impacts of colonization on the Pokanoket people.

- **Pokanoket Royal Burial Ground (Burr's Hill Park, Warren, RI)**

Burr's Hill was an ancient Pokanoket burial ground used in the 1500s and 1600s. Although graves were disturbed by railroad construction and looting in the 19th century, many artifacts and remains were recovered and later repatriated under NAGPRA to the federally recognized Tribes in the region. In 2017, the Wampanoag Repatriation Confederation reburied the remains, including those believed to belong to Ousamequin (Massasoit), restoring dignity to this sacred site.

- **Wannamoisett Marker (East Providence, RI)**

Located near Pawtucket Avenue, this granite marker denotes the historic boundary between the Pokanoket territory of Wannamoisett and the colonial settlement of Rehoboth.

¹⁶⁷ "Brown transfers land in Bristol to preservation trust established by Pokanoket Tribe," Brown University, November 15, 2024. <https://www.brown.edu/news/2024-11-15/bristol-land>. Accessed April 5, 2025.

¹⁶⁸ Three Sisters at Potumtuk, November 6, 2020, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcv7qXLSbTY>. Accessed April 8, 2023.

It commemorates a 1643 land agreement between Ousamequin and settler John Browne.

- **Weybosset (Providence, RI)**

This site, at the junction of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers, was historically a shallow crossing point used by Indigenous peoples during low tide. It marked the convergence of three major trails – one coming from the north, another leading southeast from Mount Hope (Wampanoag Trail), and a third coming up from Connecticut in the southwest (Pequot Trail). The ford was a vital travel and trade route long before European settlement.

As a counterbalance to the story of Sowams, Plimoth-Patuxet Museums (PPM) is a particularly significant resource outside the Sowams boundary. Located approximately 40 miles east of the Sowams region, Plimoth-Patuxet is a nationally recognized living history museum interpreting the 17th-century lifeways of both the Wampanoag people and the English colonists of Plymouth Colony. Through immersive exhibits like the Historic Patuxet Homesite, 17th-Century English Village, Mayflower II, and Plimoth Grist Mill, the museum offers meaningful educational experiences grounded in rigorous scholarship. As a Sowams partner, PPM provides important research, valuable models, and collaborative opportunities for interpreting early cultural contact and colonial history.

Resources Associated with the Colonists

Many historic resources in Sowams date to the colonial era. The colonial era stretches from the period of European colonization of North America in the late 16th century until the incorporation of the thirteen colonies in the new United States following the American Revolution. A number of examples of important colonial-era resources are described in the paragraphs below, while many more may be found in the Sowams Resource Inventory located in Appendix E.

- **Carpenter Museum (Rehoboth, MA)**

The Carpenter Museum preserves the history of Old Rehoboth, established in 1643 and once encompassing parts of present-day Rehoboth, East Providence, Seekonk, Swansea, and other parts of eastern Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. Its collection of over 6,000 artifacts, photographs, and documents reflects the area's rich colonial and local history. Exhibits in the main building and barn explore domestic life, agriculture, textiles, industry, and war, while the E. Otis Dyer Research Center supports genealogical and historical research.

- **John Hunt House, East Providence Historical Society (East Providence, RI)**

Built around 1750, the John Hunt House is a well-preserved Georgian home located at Hunt's Mills, a key site in East Providence's historic "Ring of the Green" district. Originally part of colonial Rehoboth, the area became an early hub of industry, with water-powered mills operating along the Ten Mile River. Later part of the Rumford Chemical Works property, the house now serves as the headquarters of the East Providence Historical Society and a museum dedicated to local history.

- **John Martin House (Barrington, RI)**

The Martin family were among Barrington's earliest settlers. John Martin built a home near Hundred Acre Cove in the 1670s that was later destroyed in King Philip's War. Charred beams in the current cellar suggest this house may incorporate materials from the original. Captain John Martin, his son, expanded the house around 1750 and served

in the American Revolution with his sons. The property, which once included barns and outbuildings, remained in the Martin family until 1864.

- **Joseph Reynolds House (Bristol, RI)**

Built between 1698 and 1700, this private residence is one of the oldest buildings in Bristol and the oldest known three-story house in Rhode Island. Notable for its well-preserved First Period architecture, the house also served as headquarters for the Marquis de Lafayette during the Revolutionary War. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1983 but is not open to the public.

- **Little Neck Cemetery (East Providence, RI)**

Among the earliest burials is John Browne Jr., who died in 1662. He is the son of the man who purchased Wampanoag from the Massasoit Ousamequin. Also buried here is Elizabeth Tilley Howland, a Mayflower passenger who died in 1687. The cemetery is the final resting place of Captain Thomas Willett, the first English mayor of New York City. His gravesite is marked by a memorial from the City Club of New York and contains the original headstones of Willett and his wife Mary.

- **Martin House Farm (Swansea, MA)**

Martin House Farm is a rare example of an 18th century farm that still retains the character of its original setting. Built in 1728 by John Martin and occupied by the Martin family for more than 200 years, the property shares a story of the transition from colony to Republic. Today visitors can experience the house through student-led tours.



The Daughters of the American Revolution steward the Martin House Farmstead (1715), Swansea, MA.

- **Mount Hope Farm (Bristol, RI)**

Mount Hope Farm sits on land that was long cultivated by the Pokanoket people at their traditional seat of Potumtuk. Beginning in the 1680s, European settlers continued farming the property, and it has remained under cultivation ever since. The earliest section of the main house was built circa 1745 by Isaac Royall Jr., a wealthy merchant and slaveholder. The property later passed through the hands of William Bradford and Samuel Church before being acquired by R. F. Haffenreffer, whose donation of artifacts and land led to Brown University's Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology. The site offers a powerful connection to both colonial history and Native heritage.

- **Osamequin Farm (Seekonk, MA)**

The Carpenter family owned this land, also called the Carpenter Homestead, from the early 1700s to the 1930s, and were among the founders of Rehoboth in 1644. The homestead, built in 1720, is one of Seekonk's oldest homes and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Osamequin Farm hosts a cooperative of small-scale farmers, community gatherings, and educational events, many in partnership with the Pokanoket Tribe, honoring the area's deep Indigenous and agricultural roots.

- **Stephen Hopkins House (Providence, RI)**

Purchased by Stephen Hopkins in 1742, the house was enlarged with a section dating to 1707 and served as his home until his death in 1785. Hopkins served as colonial governor and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. George Washington was a guest at the house in 1776. It is the only surviving structure associated with Hopkins and the oldest remaining house from Providence's original Towne Street, moved to the corner of Benefit Street in 1927. The property is a National Historic Landmark.

Resources Associated with Causes and Consequences of King Philip's War

The cultural landscapes of the Sowams region offer powerful insight into King Philip's War, with battles once waged across open fields, dense woods, swamps, and early colonial settlements. Most towns from that time were burned and few physical traces of the conflict remain visible above ground. However, archaeological resources are just beginning to be explored, and the landscape still holds the memory of where lives were lost and strategies unfolded in what remains the bloodiest conflict per capita in American history. The sites below provide an opportunity to interpret the war's devastating impact on both tribal communities and colonial settlers. Some of the Indigenous sites above are associated with the history of King Philip's War.



Veterans of King Philip's War are buried in Kickemuit Cemetery, near where the war began, in Warren, RI.

- **Hugh Cole Well (Warren, RI)**

The well site is all that remains of the homestead of one of the earliest English settlers in the Sowams region. Born in England and arriving in Plymouth in 1633 as an indentured servant, Cole became a respected member of the community and developed a close relationship with his Pokanoket neighbors. In 1667, he purchased 500 acres of land from Metacom in what was then Swansea. His sons were kidnapped by Pokanoket warriors during King Philip's War, but spared by Metacom because of the friendship. Despite this, Cole's home was burned and his family displaced. He eventually returned to settle on the east bank of the Kickemuit River. His descendants placed a marker there in 1917; a new marker and interpretive panel were installed a century later.

- **Kickemuit Cemetery (Warren, RI)**

Kickemuit Cemetery contains over 400 burials, with graves dating back to the late 17th century. Some of the interred include veterans of King Philip's War and Rhode Island's last Colonial Governor, Josiah Lyndon. Located near the Kickemuit River, the cemetery stands near the site where the war began, preserving the region's early colonial and Indigenous history.

- **Myles Garrison Marker (Swansea, MA)**

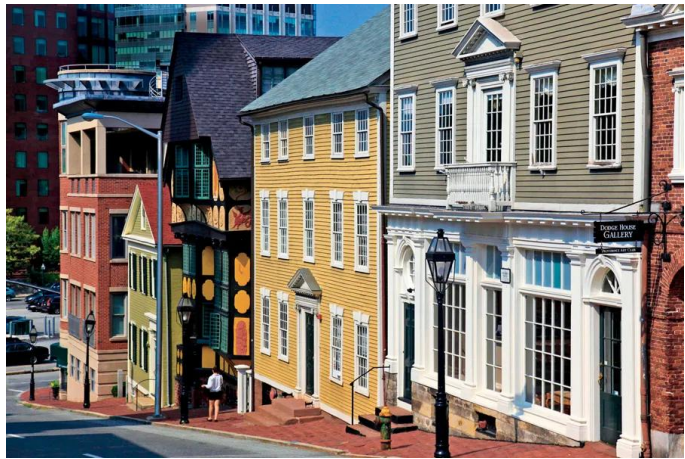
The Garrison Marker in Swansea commemorates the site of the original garrison house used in 1675 at the start of King Philip's War to house Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colony troops. The house belonged to Rev. John Myles, who had emigrated from Swansea, Wales, to lead a group of Baptists who separated from the Newman Congregational Church in Rehoboth. A large stone marker and bronze plaque, located at the intersection of Barneyville and Old Providence Roads near the west side of the Myles Bridge, honor those who lost their lives in the conflict. Across the street stands the abandoned Mason Barney Estate, built in 1802, near the site where the original garrison house stood before it was lost to fire in the early 20th century.

- **Nockum Hill (Barrington, RI)**

Nockum Hill contains the site of the first Baptist Meeting House in colonial America, as well as the site of the first shots fired in King Philip's War. These critical archaeological resources lie within the 82-acre Doug Rayner Wildlife Refuge. In 2024, the Town of Barrington received a \$200,000 preservation planning grant to conduct archaeological testing on the site through the NPS American Battlefield Protection Program.

Resources Associated with Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island

The Sowams region played a foundational role in shaping the American principle of religious freedom. In the 17th century, as colonial governments in New England enforced religious conformity, dissenters and free thinkers sought refuge in places where they could worship according to their conscience. Sowams and surrounding communities became havens for Roger Williams and many others seeking religious freedom. The region attracted Baptists, Quakers, and other groups who established congregations, built meeting-houses, and practiced religious tolerance long before it became a national ideal.



Thomas Street on College Hill, Providence, RI

The following sites in the Sowams region are among those that illustrate this enduring legacy, each contributing to the story of how the struggle for religious liberty helped shape the cultural and historical identity of the United States.

- **College Hill Historic District (Providence, RI)**

The College Hill Historic District encompasses the original settlement area of Roger Williams after his banishment from Massachusetts in 1636. Located along the banks of the Providence and Mooshassuck Rivers, this area preserves early street names, including

Wickenden, Arnold, and Angell, which reflect the strips of farmland owned by the town's first settlers. The district includes numerous colonial and Victorian structures, such as the Stephen Hopkins House, which collectively offer a rich architectural and cultural portrait of Providence's early years. Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design are also among the district's contributing features. The district is a National Historic Landmark.

- **First Baptist Church in America (Providence, RI)**
Organized by Roger Williams in 1638, the First Baptist Church in America began as an informal congregation meeting in private homes. Reflecting early Baptist skepticism of religious display, the community avoided building a formal meetinghouse for decades. That changed in 1774–75, when a steepled and bell-towered church was constructed, a significant shift toward architectural respectability among Baptists in major urban centers. The structure remains a national symbol of the Baptist commitment to freedom of worship and the evolution of religious architecture in early America. The site is a National Historic Landmark.
- **First Baptist Church (Swansea, MA)**
Founded in 1663 by Reverend John Myles, the First Baptist Church of Swansea is the oldest Baptist congregation in Massachusetts. Myles, who had fled religious persecution in Wales, brought the Ilston Book, an early register of Baptist members, with him to the New World. The congregation's current meetinghouse, a Greek Revival structure built in 1848, stands as the fifth in a line of successive buildings. The adjacent cemetery, dating to 1731, offers a glimpse into the early Baptist community's history.
- **Roger Williams National Memorial, National Park Service (Providence, RI)**
Established in 1965 by Congress, the Roger Williams National Memorial honors Williams' foundational role in shaping the principle of religious freedom in America. The memorial occupies 4.5 acres of urban greenspace at the foot of College Hill in downtown Providence, where a freshwater spring marked the heart of the 1636 settlement of Providence Plantations. Here, Williams advocated for the radical idea that religion should be governed by individual conscience rather than by the state. His legacy as a champion of liberty is reflected in the memorial's interpretive exhibits and landscape that commemorate his vision of a society built on tolerance and inclusion. The national park shares a superintendent with the nearby Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.
- **Swansea Friends Meeting House and Cemetery (Somerset, MA)**
Believed to be the oldest surviving Quaker meetinghouse in Massachusetts, the Swansea Friends Meeting House was built in 1702 and enlarged in 1746. Notable for its traditional layout, with pulpit and entrance facing each other, it reflects early Quaker ideals of simplicity and equality. The adjacent cemetery likely includes many unmarked early graves, consistent with 18th-century Quaker burial practices. Together, the meetinghouse and cemetery preserve the story of a community devoted to peace, modesty, and religious liberty.

Resources Associated with Industry of Enslavement

The end of King Philip's War coincided with the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, during which thousands of enslaved Indigenous and African people were trafficked through Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The power dynamic inherent in the trade means that generally only resources associated with the enslavers survive. In Bristol and Providence, historic site managers have em-

ployed the strategy of layering interpretation of enslavement onto existing historical sites and stories. Across the region, organizations and initiatives are also sharing the history of the Middle Passage and enslavement through the development of modern markers, monuments, and exhibits.



Today John Brown House Museum is home to the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI.

- **DeWolf Tavern (Bristol, RI)**

The DeWolf Tavern occupies a restored 1818 waterfront warehouse originally built by James and William DeWolf, members of one of the most prolific slave-trading families in American history. The warehouse supported their shipping business, which was deeply tied to the “Triangle Trade” involving rum, enslaved Africans, and molasses. Today, the tavern includes interpretive features such as remnants of rum barrels and graffiti-preserved plaster from the original “counting room,” offering visitors a tangible connection to Bristol’s maritime and slavery-linked past. The site also features a Rhode Island Slave History Medallion.

- **Brown University (Providence, RI)**

Brown University, established in 1765, has undertaken significant efforts to examine and acknowledge its historical ties to the transatlantic trade of enslaved people. In 2006, the university published a landmark report detailing how its early benefactors, including the Brown family, profited from slavery. As a result, Brown has established the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, which supports scholarly research, public education, and community engagement. The university continues to explore how its legacy intersects with broader narratives of racial injustice and reconciliation in Rhode Island and beyond.

- **John Brown House (Providence, RI)**

Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1968, the John Brown House was the home of John Brown, one of Rhode Island’s most well-known traders of enslaved Africans and a central figure in the state’s economic development through the transatlantic trade. In-

terpretive exhibits inside, including “Transatlantic Slave Trade Connections,” use the infamous voyage of the slave ship *Sally* to explore Rhode Island’s role in the global economy. A powerful educational activity, “Web of Complicity,” helps visitors understand the interconnectedness of commerce, slavery, and everyday life in colonial Providence. A plaque installed by the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society on the grounds acknowledges Brown’s role in the trade.

- **Linden Place (Bristol, RI)**

General George DeWolf, a prominent merchant who traded enslaved people, had his Federal style Linden Place built in 1810. Today it operates as a historic house museum that acknowledges the site’s connections to the transatlantic trade of enslaved individuals. As part of the Rhode Island Slave History Medallion project (described below), a marker at the site includes a QR code linking visitors to information about the DeWolf family’s involvement in slavery and the broader history of the trade in Bristol.

- **Rhode Island Slave History Medallion Project (Statewide)**

Founded in 2019, the Rhode Island Slave History Medallion project places bronze medallions at historic sites and homes across the state that are connected to slavery. Each medallion includes a QR code linking visitors to digital content – research, historical narratives, and educational resources – that illuminate the lives of enslaved and free African American and Indigenous people. With 16 medallions installed to date, the project fosters public awareness, community dialogue, and racial healing by highlighting Rhode Island’s significant role in the transatlantic slave trade and the enduring legacy of slavery.

- **Slave Monument, Princes Hill Cemetery (Barrington, RI)**

This monument, placed during the Jim Crow era in the early 20th century, commemorates the lives of enslaved individuals who lived and labored in colonial Barrington. A white quartz boulder with an inscribed plaque is supported by four black stones, symbolizing the enslaved people whose names and stories are largely unrecorded. The memorial serves as a public acknowledgment of the enslaved community’s presence and contributions to early Barrington.

- **Warren Middle Passage Project (Warren, RI)**

The Warren Middle Passage Project is a volunteer-driven initiative, under the auspices of the Warren Preservation Society, dedicated to uncovering and documenting the history of the transatlantic trade and enslavement in Warren. The project seeks to identify enslaved individuals and their descendants, commemorate the lives lost in the Middle Passage, and recognize the essential contributions of African Americans to the development of Warren and the broader United States. To date, the organization has erected two markers. Long-term goals include the creation of a memorial and increased public awareness of this important chapter in local and national history.

Resources Associated with the Interplay of Land and Water

Long before European settlement, Narragansett Bay was central to the lifeways of Indigenous communities, including the Pokanoket and Narragansett peoples, who relied on its waters for transportation, trade, and sustenance. The bay’s estuaries and shorelines formed a natural network for intertribal exchange and seasonal gathering, fostering deep cultural and spiritual connections to the land and water.



William Henry Vanderbilt III invested in building the Mt. Hope Bridge (1929) between Bristol and Portsmouth, RI to replace ferry service to his summer mansion in Newport, RI.

With the arrival of colonists in the 17th century, the bay became a gateway for transatlantic trade, shipbuilding, and the rise of coastal towns like Bristol, Warren, and Providence. Over the next three centuries, Narragansett Bay and the rivers that feed it powered economic growth – first through maritime commerce and whaling, later through industrialization and manufacturing – and served as a point of entry for immigrants who helped shape the region’s diverse cultural landscape. The resources below are among the region’s many that reflect this long and layered history, illustrating how the bay has shaped and sustained communities for generations.

- **Bold Point and India Point (East Providence and Providence, RI)**

Bold Point was historically used by Indigenous inhabitants as a river crossing at low tide. Across the Seekonk River, India Point became Providence’s first port in the 1680s and remained a major trade center for 250 years, especially during the height of the Atlantic trade. Remnants of historic docks are still visible, connecting the site to its colonial and Indigenous past.

- **Bristol Waterfront Historic District (Bristol, RI)**

Established in 1680, this planned community encompasses the civic, residential, and commercial heart of Bristol, extending from Bristol Harbor to Wood Street. The district’s layout and architecture reflect more than 300 years of development, with notable 19th-century buildings designed by local architect Russell Warren. It remains one of Rhode Island’s most historically intact waterfront communities.

- **Governor Henry Lippitt House (Providence, RI)**

Built in 1865 by textile magnate and Rhode Island Governor Henry Lippitt, this Italianate mansion is one of the best-preserved examples of Victorian-era domestic architecture in the country. Located on Hope Street on Providence’s East Side, the home showcases the wealth and refinement generated by Rhode Island’s booming textile industry in the 19th century. Now owned and operated by Preserve Rhode Island, the house is open seasonally for public tours and interpretation of industrial-era family life. This property is a National Historic Landmark.

- **Herreshoff Marine Museum (Bristol, RI)**

Located on the original site of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, this museum celebrates over six decades of marine innovation. From 1878 to 1945, the company produced steam vessels and some of the world’s fastest racing yachts, including eight America’s Cup defenders. The museum’s collection of over sixty vessels tells the story of Bristol’s leadership in maritime design and craftsmanship. The museum also houses the America’s Cup Hall of Fame.

- James E. Bradbury Museum, Somerset Historical Society (Somerset, MA)**
 The museum preserves and interprets the town's local heritage, offering a window into Somerset's evolving story. Housed in the former Village School, the museum features themed rooms showcasing Somerset's contributions to American history, from Indigenous artifacts and Revolutionary War service to local industries like pottery and shipbuilding. Highlights include the Indigenous Room, Veteran's Room, Pottery Room, General Store, Tool Room, and the Hathaway Room, which recreates a 1930s kitchen and parlor.
- John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (Rhode Island & Massachusetts)**
 Encompassing 25 cities and towns across the Blackstone Valley, this National Heritage Corridor complements the nearby **Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park** in Pawtucket, RI – which lies outside the proposed boundary – by interpreting a broader regional story of industrial transformation. The corridor preserves a wide array of natural and cultural landscapes tied to America's industrial heritage, including mill towns, transportation networks, and rural settlements. The corridor and park function cooperatively to preserve and share the story of this nationally significant landscape.
- Narragansett Bay Lighthouses**
 Three of Narragansett Bay's 21 historic lighthouses are in Sowams: Bristol Ferry Lighthouse, Nayatt Point Lighthouse, and Pomham Rocks Light Station. All three nineteenth century structures feature keeper's houses and are important features of the region's maritime history. They are all listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but only one, Pomham Rocks, is accessible to visitors.
- Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) (Providence, RI)**
 Founded in 1877 as a coeducational school by women, RISD was established to support the region's thriving manufacturing and textile industries. RISD has long been a leader in art, design, and industrial innovation. The school was established in response to the growing need for skilled designers and artists in an increasingly industrialized economy. Located near Providence's commercial center, RISD has shaped generations of creative professionals whose work bridges fine arts and applied design. Today, the school continues to draw on the region's legacy of craft, commerce, and creativity to educate future innovators.
- Warren Waterfront Historic District (Warren, RI)**
 Centered on the Warren River, this district has been the town's core since the mid-18th century. Once a thriving whaling and shipbuilding center, Warren later flourished with manufacturing. The district reflects the maritime and industrial evolution of the town and has a number of 19th-century civic buildings and homes.
- Washington–Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, National Historic Trail**
 This National Historic Trail follows the route taken by American and French troops during the 1781 campaign that culminated in the victory at Yorktown. French General Rochambeau and over 5,000 troops arrived in Narragansett Bay in 1780, beginning a critical military alliance with General George Washington. Though little physical evidence remains of the original campsites and taverns that dotted the route, interpretive sites across the region commemorate this key chapter in the American Revolution and the role Rhode

Island played in securing independence. One such property is the Reynolds House in Bristol, where General Washington met General Lafayette.

- **Revolutionary Heritage Byway (Bristol, RI)**

Rhode Island's only National Scenic Byway, the Revolutionary Heritage Byway spans six miles through Bristol. Designated nationally in 2021, the route follows Route 114 (Hope Street and Ferry Road), connecting colonial landmarks, waterfront parks, and downtown Bristol. The byway traces Bristol's Revolutionary War history, including British raids, militia defenses, and the presence of French troops under Rochambeau. It also follows the route of the nation's oldest Fourth of July parade, celebrated since 1785.

- **Weybosset Bridge (Providence, RI)**

Constructed in 1764, the original drawbridge allowed West Indies cargo ships access to Providence's inner wharves. Destroyed by the 1815 hurricane, its replacement in 1816 closed the harbor to sea-going ships, marking a shift in local trade. A plaque on the nearby Market House commemorates the storm's floodwaters and the bridge's historical importance.

Natural and Recreational Resources in Sowams

The Sowams region's coastal landscapes, estuarine systems, and parklands offer both ecological richness and a deep connection to the area's historical and cultural heritage. The region contains approximately 12 square miles of protected open space. In addition, 3.5 square miles within the proposed boundary are water, while just over 19 square miles are considered wetlands. A summary of water and open spaces within Sowams was generated during mapping for the feasibility



study conducted by the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is found in Appendix F – Sowams Affected Environment. From salt marshes and meadows to bike paths and historic farms, these resources serve as places for recreation, education, and reflection, offering opportunities to explore the natural beauty and layered stories of the region. See Appendix H for maps depicting wetlands, open space, and recreational trails.

Riding on the East Bay Bike Path along Narragansett Bay

- **Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium (Bristol, RI)**

Located on the 28-acre Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, this interactive natural history museum allows visitors to explore coastal ecosystems of Rhode Island. Highlights include a tidepool tank, marine life exhibits, and a life-size model of a North Atlantic Right Whale. ADA-certified walking trails begin at the Palmieri Pollinator Garden and continue through upland meadows and salt marshes to a boardwalk with sweeping views of Narragansett Bay. The center is also accessible via the East Bay Bike Path.

- Blithewold Mansion, Gardens and Arboretum (Bristol, RI)**
 Blithewold is a historic 33-acre seaside estate overlooking Narragansett Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island. Originally the summer home of the Van Wickles family, the estate features a grand 45-room mansion built in the English Country Manor style, as well as extensive gardens and one of the most diverse arboreta in the Northeast. Developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Blithewold reflects the lifestyle of America's Gilded Age elite and the region's ties to maritime trade and industry. Today, it serves as a public museum and horticultural center, offering visitors an opportunity to explore the intersection of landscape design, cultural history, and environmental stewardship within the Sowams region.
- Colt State Park (Bristol, RI)**
 Spanning 464 acres on Poppasquash Neck, Colt State Park offers scenic open space once part of the estate of industrialist Samuel P. Colt. Now a public park and part of the Poppasquash Farms Historic District, the park features walking trails, picnic groves, boat ramps, an observation tower, and a Chapel-by-the-Sea. It is also a popular stop along the East Bay Bike Path.
- Coggeshall Farm Museum (Bristol, RI)**
 Situated at the southern end of Colt State Park, Coggeshall Farm Museum recreates the daily life of 18th-century salt marsh farmers. In partnership with Old Sturbridge Village, the museum offers immersive programs with live interpreters, historic buildings, heirloom gardens, and heritage livestock, providing hands-on educational opportunities in a historically significant setting.
- East Bay Bike Path (Providence to Bristol, RI)**
 Stretching just over 14 miles, the East Bay Bike Path links Providence to Bristol while passing through eight parks and scenic coastal towns. Built on an inactive railroad right-of-way and recognized in the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame, the trail offers dramatic views of Narragansett Bay, access to historic waterfronts, and opportunities to explore the region's maritime and industrial history.
- Osamequin Nature Trails and Bird Sanctuary (Barrington, RI)**
 This sanctuary along Hundred Acre Cove provides access to one of the most ecologically significant inland estuaries in New England. Managed trails lead visitors through salt marsh, woodland, and coastal habitats rich with birdlife and native plants. Two main trail systems offer walking paths and views of the Barrington River and its surroundings.

Living Traditions

The region abounds in festivals and cultural events built around history, living traditions, food, arts, and special places. Those described below are examples of the many important events that fulfill roles as culture keepers, educational experiences, visitor attractions, and economic drivers.



WaterFire Festival, Salute to Veterans, Providence, RI

Photo by Tom Backman, courtesy of WaterFire

- **Bristol Fourth of July Celebration (Bristol, RI)**

Bristol is home to the nation's oldest continuous Independence Day celebration, established in 1785 by Rev. Henry Wight, a Revolutionary War veteran and pastor of the First Congregational Church. Known for its deep patriotic roots, the celebration begins each year on Flag Day, June 14, and continues for several weeks with a wide variety of events including outdoor concerts, the Orange Crate Derby, a firefighters' muster, the Fourth of July Ball, and formal Patriotic Exercises. The festivities culminate on July 4 with the renowned Military, Civic, and Firemen's Parade, which draws more than 50,000 spectators from across the country and around the world.

- **Community Heritage Festivals**

Community festivals in Sowams celebrate the region's maritime heritage and culinary traditions, particularly those centered around seafood and the waterfront. In Bristol, the annual Harbor Festival & Blessing of the Fleet brings together residents and visitors for a day of festivities honoring local fishermen and their vessels. Highlights include a traditional fleet blessing, live music, a popular "stuffie" (stuffed quahog) competition, and a feast featuring chowder, raw bar offerings, and a littleneck clam boil. Similarly, Warren's beloved Quahog Festival highlights the town's connection to the bay through food, entertainment, and local traditions. These events not only support the local economy and fishing communities but also reinforce Sowams' identity as a place shaped by its coastal culture.

- **Pokanoket Heritage Day (Warren, RI)**

Held annually at Burr's Hill Park in Warren, Pokanoket Heritage Day is a free public event that offers visitors an opportunity to experience and honor the rich heritage of the Pokanoket people in the Sowams region. Through traditional dancing, singing, drumming, storytelling, presentations, and cultural displays, the event shares the history and enduring presence of the Pokanoket Tribe from past centuries to the present.

day. Other events, such as the Strawberry Moon Thanksgiving, are not public, but engage other Tribes from across New England.

- **Portuguese Cultural Traditions (Rhode Island and Massachusetts)**

Portuguese-American communities in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts celebrate their heritage through vibrant annual traditions. The Rhode Island Day of Portugal Festival, held each June, features music, dance, traditional folklore, a parade, and authentic Portuguese cuisine. Celebrated since 1978, it brings together families and community members to honor Portuguese culture and pride.

The Feast of the Holy Ghost, rooted in Azorean Catholic tradition, is also widely observed in the region. This multi-day event includes processions, the crowning of a symbolic queen, communal meals, and music – reflecting themes of faith, charity, and community unity. These celebrations highlight the enduring cultural contributions of Portuguese Americans to the region.

- **Preserve America Communities (Rhode Island)**

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation manages the Preserve America initiative, including the designation of Preserve America Communities across the U.S. The Preserve America Communities program provides grants to protect and celebrate heritage, uses historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and promotes historic resources through interpretation and heritage tourism. Communities must apply for the designation. In Rhode Island, all five communities in the Sowams region have received the designation. None of the four Massachusetts communities have received the designation, which currently is not accepting new applications.

- **WaterFire (Providence, RI)**

WaterFire is an award-winning public art installation that transforms downtown Providence into a celebration of the city's cultural, artistic, and maritime heritage. Centered around nearly 100 bonfires set atop the surface of the three rivers that flow through the heart of the city, WaterFire combines the visual power of firelight with music, performance, and community gathering. The result is a multisensory experience that honors the city's historic relationship with its waterways while drawing thousands of visitors to its parks and riverwalks. WaterFire is presented along the Providence River Walk twice monthly from May to November.

A Strategic Assemblage of Resources

The criteria for designating a National Heritage Area include the existence of “a strategic assemblage of natural and cultural resources that relates to the identified themes.”¹⁶⁹ A strategic assemblage of resources in a National Heritage Area refers to a geographically concentrated group of natural, cultural, historic, and recreational sites that together support and illustrate a nationally distinctive landscape. These resources must be tied to the NHA's significance statement and themes, allowing for an authentic experience of the national story. To qualify as a strategic assemblage, the resources must be documented for their historical integrity and significance, located close enough to form a cohesive landscape, support unified management, and enable meaningful interpretation of the area's national significance.

¹⁶⁹ *National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines*, 2019, pg. 9.



The Rehoboth Antiquarian Society oversees the Carpenter Museum, Blanding Library, and the Arts in the Village concert series in the historic village of Rehoboth, RI.

The resource descriptions above are key sites that demonstrate Sowams meets the threshold of having a “strategic assemblage” of resources. However, the concentration of resources that tell Sowams’ stories extends beyond these sites to many other contributing features on this special cultural landscape. The Sowams Resource Inventory, found in Appendix E, presents a fuller picture of the places that define Sowams and gives it an enduring sense of place.

The Sowams Resource Inventory – Development and Analysis

At the outset of the feasibility study process, project organizers had developed a preliminary inventory that identified 52 17th-century historic sites and natural features. In the fall of 2022, the themes and resources committee expanded the scope of the inventory to reflect the major theme topics emerging during the study. The group also considered various formats that would accommodate the range of information aligned with NPS expectations. With oversight by the committee, the PointHDC team populated the Sowams Resource Inventory, found in Appendix E, which includes the following information:

- Resource type (Educational/Interpretive, Historical, Cultural/Living Traditions, Natural, Recreational)
- Designations (National Register, National Historic Landmark, National Park, National Heritage Area, etc.)
- Ownership information (Public, Private, or Nonprofit)
- Location (Address, City, State)
- Public access

The Sowams Resource Inventory contains 191 entries that embody the history of Sowams’ five defining themes. “The Time and Place Where Two Worlds Met” theme has the most resources associated with it, 116, as the theme includes the Indigenous sites that preceded contact and the colonial sites that were a legacy of contact. The 30 sites associated with King Philip’s War are a subset of the colonial and Indigenous sites. The history of religious freedom, in “Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island” is reflected in 29 sites, all of which also date to the colonial period. “The Era of Trading Enslaved People” is marked on the landscape by 26 extant sites from the 19th century. Finally, “The Interplay of Land and Water,” includes 103 sites tied to the evolution of the landscape dominated by Narragansett Bay – from the Transatlantic trade to the industries that drew immigrants and built the region.

Sowams includes 96 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including 17 historic districts. Of these, 67 are located in Rhode Island and 29 are in Massachusetts. Among the listed properties are 13 of Rhode Island's 45 National Historic Landmarks (NHL) – 11 in Providence, one in East Providence, and one in Bristol. Two NHLs date to the 17th century – the First Baptist Meetinghouse and the College Hill District. No NHLs are located in the Massachusetts portion of the Sowams region.

The inventory also classifies entries by category. Sowams contains 164 historical resources, 67 associated with cultural groups, the arts, and living traditions, 57 resources related to the natural environment, 46 recreational resources, and 47 interpretive or educational resources. Of the region's historical, cultural, and natural assets, 134 are open or accessible to the public, although some are on a limited or seasonal basis. This inventory underscores the Sowams' region's depth and breadth of cultural and natural assets that confirm its potential for National Heritage Area designation.



Luther Store (1815) was the economic center of Swansea, Massachusetts, in the mid 19th century, housing the post office and library.

Opportunities for the Future

Public outreach throughout the planning process revealed strong community interest in preserving Sowams' historic, cultural, and natural resources, sharing its layered and often difficult histories, and expanding opportunities for education, recreation, and sustainable heritage-based tourism.

Several stakeholders commented on residents' historical and cultural engagement in the region, as well as their commitment to and enjoyment of area resources. In Rhode Island alone, 465 historical and cultural organizations exist, including ten preservation groups in Bristol and seven in Warren. As one stakeholder noted, "This demonstrates there is huge value placed on the state's history curated by these small, often volunteer organizations to preserve, protect, animate, and engage."



Concert Series on Bold Point, part of the Watchemoket Square/ Waterfront Gateway revitalization project in East Providence, RI

Local government planners from both states emphasized the importance of historical and natural resources in comprehensive community planning. The Watchemoket Square project in East Providence is an example of this, as its redevelopment draws on the area's location on the Seekonk River, the East Bay Bike Path, historic architecture, and arts, history, and culture.

One person interviewed commented that "People are invested in protecting the environment and the history of the area." Another stakeholder saw potential in the preservation of the built environment. "The region was bypassed by big waves of economic development, so now industrial

spaces are being adapted and reused. These spaces can be very novel and make a great contribution to people's lives and spaces. There are lots of capital opportunities for the future."

Stakeholders frequently brought up climate change and its impact on historic, cultural, and natural resources in the first phase of the feasibility study project. They want to ensure that planning for and paying for resource protection as the environment changes is a consideration for any regional collaboration. Partners like Save the Bay, the Taunton River Stewardship Council, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and Massachusetts Audubon Society are conducting ongoing research and developing community engagement plans that address climate change. The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is continually monitoring the health of the watershed and posts on its website periodic Science Updates that measure rain and snow changes, ocean acidification, the health of seagrass meadows, quahog populations, and water clarity.



Cannon shot recovered from the site of the Swansea settlement on "Nockum Hill," subject of an archeological collaboration between the Town of Barrington and the National Park Service, which is funding the survey through the American Battlefield Protection Program

Courtesy of Town of Barrington

The development of interpretive materials, exhibits, and educational programming is central to advancing Sowams as a region where the public can engage with its long and complex heritage. Two sites that illustrate this potential should the region attain NHA designation are Nockum Hill and Weypoyset Preserve. At Nockum Hill – site of the first Baptist Meeting House and the opening battle of King Philip's War – ongoing archaeological investigations can deepen understanding of the conflict and the intertwined histories of Indigenous and colonial communities. At Weypoyset Preserve, interpretation can highlight thousands of years of Indigenous presence, early colonial trade activity, and the area's ecological richness along the Kickemuit River and Mount Hope Bay. Through thoughtfully curated ex-

hibits, signage, and place-based storytelling, Sowams can not only share the region's histories with visitors, but also create meaningful educational opportunities for students and residents.

In tandem, the adaptive reuse of historic properties, especially the historic fabric of 19th century mills and waterfront districts, can bring new life to these spaces while preserving their cultural significance. Furthermore, enhanced recreational infrastructure, such as pedestrian and cycling trails, can continue to expand connectivity across the region and offer additional opportunities for immersive experiences tied to the land and water. Finally, heritage-based festivals, culinary traditions, and community events deepen public engagement and fuel sustainable tourism. Together, these strategies will promote inclusive storytelling, economic revitalization, and a strong sense of place throughout the Sowams region.

Boundary

Defining a National Heritage Area Boundary

Defining the boundary of an NHA is a multi-step process that takes place over the course of developing a feasibility study. The final boundary is informed by research and public outreach including surveys, site visits, resource assessments, and stakeholder input. The designated area is ultimately refined to include a concentration of interconnected resources and stories that illustrate a nationally distinctive landscape. The process considers historical and functional relationships – such as patterns of industry, cultural activity, and transportation – that reflect the shared

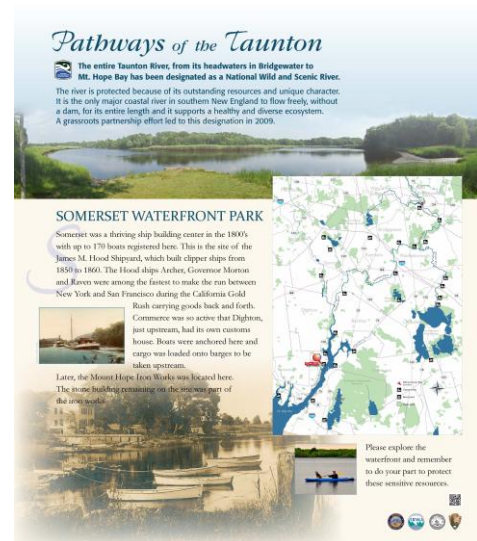
heritage of the region. These relationships are evaluated alongside geophysical features like rivers and roads, which may influence, but do not solely determine, the boundary.

Equally important is the cultural dimension, the way in which communities past and present have interacted with the landscape, preserved traditions, and defined a shared sense of place. Settlement patterns, land use, and cultural practices help reveal the human connections that bind the region together. While political boundaries may offer convenient delineation, they are considered secondary to the historical and cultural narratives that drive the designation. Ultimately, the final boundary must be both meaningful and practical: cohesive enough to support interpretation of the region's significance, inclusive of its major resources, and realistic to manage effectively by the coordinating entity and its partners.

Sowams Boundary Considerations

The proposed boundary for Sowams National Heritage Area is based on the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe, encompassing four towns in Massachusetts and two cities and three towns in Rhode Island. The area measures approximately 140 square miles. Generally, Narragansett Bay and Mount Hope Bay define the NHA's western and southern border. During the orientation visit, the PointHDC team identified two areas within the preliminary study area that required further clarification as the planning process progressed – the extent of the northern and eastern edges in Massachusetts and whether to include the entire City of Providence.

The final boundary was determined with input from the steering committee, stakeholder interviews, and public outreach. To the north, the border follows the northernmost edges of Providence, East Providence, Seekonk, Rehoboth, Swansea, and Somerset. According to a map drawn by an Assonet Wampanoag elder depicting Tribal lands in the 1600s and maps in Brooks' *Our Beloved Kin*, the land north of this area was home to the Seaconke, Assonet, and Mattapusit Tribes.¹⁷⁰ The eastern boundary was set at the Taunton River in Somerset, beyond which lies the ancestral heart of the Pocasset Tribe. Further south along the bays lay Aquidneck and Sakonnet lands. In Providence, where many Tribes historically converged and some of the territory was contested, the steering committee opted to define the boundary at the Moshassuck River, marking the transition into Narragansett and Nahaganset ancestral lands. With the exception of the City of Providence, the proposed boundary includes all land within the municipal borders of the eight participating communities.

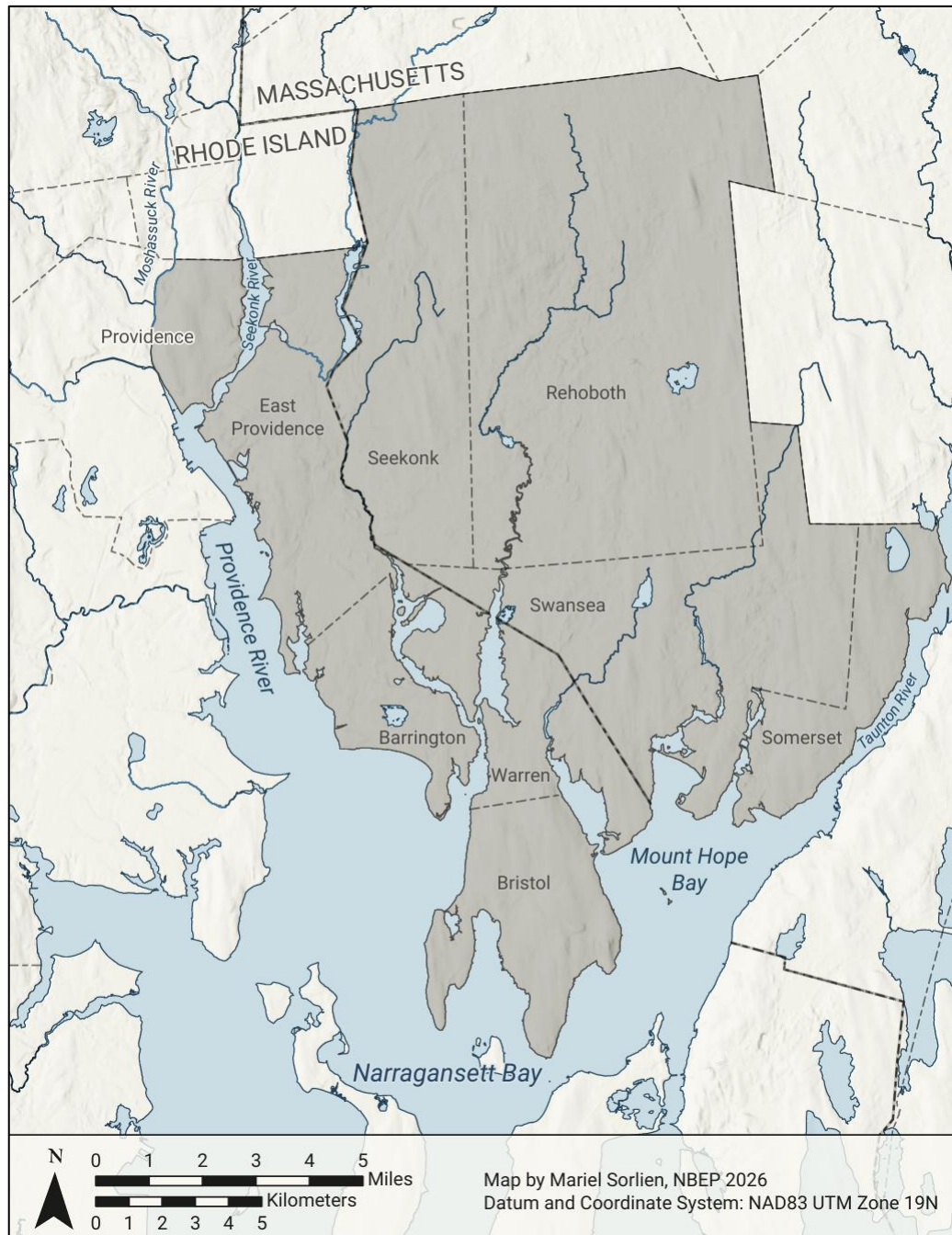


Pathways of the Taunton wayfinding kiosk for Somerset Waterfront Park, sponsored by the Taunton River Stewardship Council

This boundary provides a logical foundation from which to share the history represented in the themes and statement of significance. It incorporates the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and

¹⁷⁰ Nanepashemet/Edward Pollard, Wampanoag Country in the 1600s. Plimoth-Patuxet Museums, Wampanoag Indigenous Program Archives, c. 1980. <https://plimoth.org/yath/unit-1/map-of-wampanoag-country-in-the-1600s>; and Brooks, Lisa, *Our Beloved Kin: Remapping a New History of King Philip's War*, <https://ourbelovedkin.com/awikhigan/concentric-circles-map-gr-1.jpg>. Both accessed April 8, 2025.

recreational resources described above, is easy for residents and visitors to comprehend, and aligns with major waterways, highways, and political boundaries.



The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee has led the way in erasing the state boundary and increasing visibility of this proposed boundary in matters where the emerging National Heritage Area is concerned. In outreach beginning in 2022, the steering committee has successfully raised awareness of the region's identity and significance, including its historical underpinnings, current connections, and future opportunities.

CHAPTER 4 – GOVERNANCE, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Effective governance is critical for the success and sustainability of any National Heritage Area. Beyond establishing historical and cultural significance, governance ensures a framework for financial stewardship, operational management, strategic planning, public accountability, and community collaboration. The National Park Service requires that proposed NHAs demonstrate credible and sustainable governance models capable of achieving public benefits over the long term.

This chapter details the governance, organizational structure, staffing plan, partnership strategies, and evaluation framework for Sowams National Heritage Area. It reflects the planning and organizational development led by the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and integrates the mission, vision, core values, partnership relations, and guiding principles that will underpin all operational aspects of the proposed NHA.

Under the steering committee, a subcommittee focused on governance was comprised of town planners and nonprofit organizations with experience in operations, organizational development, and budgeting. The governance committee was responsible for evaluating the current steering committee and nonprofit organization, as well as making recommendations on the structure of a future NHA coordinating entity. Through a series of meetings, the committee developed mission, vision, core values, and guiding principles along with an operational and administrative strategy and budget for the NHA including staffing, board structure, and partnerships. The following sections describe the recommendations of the governance committee, adopted by the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a foundational element of governance for any National Heritage Area. It articulates the core purpose of the heritage area – why it exists, what it seeks to achieve, and whom it serves. Because NHAs are collaborative, multi-jurisdictional, and community-driven by design, a clear and compelling mission provides essential focus and cohesion. It unites diverse partners around a shared vision, guides strategic planning and decision-making, and reinforces the public value of the heritage area's work. For Sowams, the mission statement helps communicate the significance of its nationally significant stories, ensures that stewardship and interpretation are inclusive and respectful, and anchors governance in a long-term commitment to education, cultural conservation, and sustainable development.

In day-to-day practice, the mission serves as a guiding framework for decision-making, program development, and partner coordination. It helps ensure that activities across the heritage area – whether they involve preservation, interpretation, education, tourism, or community engagement – are aligned with the broader goals and values of the NHA. For partners, the mission provides a common language and purpose, enabling organizations with different mandates and capacities to collaborate effectively without losing sight of the heritage area's collective priorities. It also offers clarity for staff, volunteers, and funders, reinforcing how individual projects contribute to a larger vision. In this way, the mission of Sowams Heritage Area not only defines its reason for being – it actively shapes its work and identity every day.

The mission of the proposed Sowams National Heritage Area is:

Sowams National Heritage Area is dedicated to instilling a sense of stewardship and deep appreciation for the profound historical, cultural, and natural significance of the Sowams region on the northeastern watershed of Narragansett Bay. Here, the critical alliance between Pokanoket Tribe and the Mayflower settlers, and the fracturing of that alliance, changed the course of history. Through preservation, regional collaboration, community development, and experiential learning, we illuminate the pivotal events that happened on this landscape over centuries, providing a space for people to tell their own stories about the intricate interplay of people, land, and water that shaped the political, economic, and social heritage of the nation.

Importance of the Mission

The mission addresses the urgent need to preserve, interpret, and sustain a landscape that profoundly shaped early American history but remains under-recognized in the broader national story. The Pokanoket were residents and stewards of Sowams at a critical time when contact with the outside world began. Sowams represents foundational moments in the history of the United States – the divergent worldviews over the value of land and water, the forging and eventual breakdown of the partnership between the Pokanoket people and the English colonists, the genesis of religious freedom in North America, and a moral and economic debate about enslavement. These lessons resonate deeply today and pose questions about cultural exchange and identity, freedom of conscience, stewardship of resources, and the meaning of community.

The importance of this mission lies in several key areas:

- **Preserving Critical History** – Without intentional preservation efforts, important historical and cultural resources in the Sowams region risk being overlooked or lost. The mission ensures that this pivotal story rooted in both cooperation and conflict continues to be accessible, visible, and understood by future generations.
- **Centering Indigenous Perspectives** – The mission elevates the voice and history of the Pokanoket Tribe, who played a unique role in shaping the relationship between Indigenous communities and the English colonies during our nation's founding years. It provides a platform for dialogue and ensures that heritage interpretation is not one-sided but honors the complexity of the region's history and cultures.
- **Fostering Stewardship** – By instilling a sense of stewardship, the mission extends beyond historic preservation to include care for the natural environment, recognizing that land and water have always been fundamental to the life and culture of Sowams. Stewardship encourages both residents and visitors to see themselves as caretakers, not just consumers, of this extraordinary place.
- **Building Community Connections** – Through its focus on regional collaboration and community development, the mission strengthens bonds among towns, Tribes, organizations, and individuals. It helps to break down governmental and community barriers and promotes collective action to safeguard shared resources and stories, reinforcing a sense of belonging and mutual responsibility.
- **Inspiring Learning and Personal Engagement** – Sharing the region's history has been a focus of the initiative from its inception. Early efforts have included the expansion of interpretation through a new website and series of brochures (see Appendix B – Sowams Public Outreach Activities). The organization continues to build upon the

themes outlined in Chapter 3, deepening personal connections to place and history, fostering reflection and understanding for residents and visitors.

- **Highlighting National Relevance** – Sowams is not just a regional story; it is a story that shaped the political, social, and economic roots of the United States. By illuminating the complex interplay between people, land, and water, the mission helps people understand how decisions made here centuries ago continue to influence the nation’s path today.

Vision Statement

A vision statement plays an important role in the governance of a National Heritage Area by describing the long-term future the partnership seeks to create. While a mission explains purpose, a vision articulates aspiration – what the heritage area hopes to become and how it will positively shape the region over time. For a collaborative initiative like Sowams, which spans multiple communities, cultures, and states, a shared vision provides direction, inspiration, and a unifying sense of possibility. It helps partners imagine beyond current boundaries or constraints and align their efforts toward a common, future-oriented goal for a region. In practice, the vision guides strategic choices, influences investment in programs and partnerships, and ensures that near-term decisions support lasting impact. It also energizes public, private, and grassroots stakeholders by connecting their contributions to a broader legacy of stewardship, education, reconciliation, and regional pride. A well-crafted vision ensures that Sowams National Heritage Area remains forward-looking, relevant, and resilient in the face of change.



Anyone can contribute the sap from their maple trees to the annual Community Maple Boil at Osamequin Farm, Seekonk, MA.

Photo by Madeleine Young, courtesy of Edible Rhody

The vision for the proposed Sowams National Heritage Area is:

Sowams Heritage Area is a vibrant network of diverse communities sharing a deep sense of belonging and respect for the national significance of this living landscape. Those who call this place home weave the history and legacy of Sowams into the fabric of their lives by sharing resources, collaborating with partners, and telling stories about what happened here. All who experience Sowams honor this sacred place and help steward the land and water that has defined the culture of this region for millennia.

Importance of the Vision

The vision for Sowams Heritage Area centers on a living, connected landscape where history, culture, community, and environment are deeply intertwined. It reflects an aspiration that goes beyond preservation alone: it seeks to nurture a vibrant network of diverse communities who recognize Sowams not just as a place on a map, but as a shared legacy that shapes their identity, values, and future.

At its heart, this vision recognizes that the significance of Sowams is not locked in the past. The people who live here today continue to weave its stories, landscapes, and traditions into their daily lives. By sharing resources, collaborating across governmental boundaries and communities, and telling the authentic stories of the land and its peoples – including Indigenous, colonial, and contemporary narratives – residents and partners ensure that Sowams remains a dynamic and relevant part of America's ongoing story.

This vision also recognizes that stewardship is a collective act. Everyone who lives in or visits Sowams carries a responsibility to honor its sacred landscapes – its rivers, coastal waters, forests, fields, and historic sites – that have shaped cultures here for thousands of years. Stewardship is not solely about protecting resources; it is about cultivating respect, understanding, and active engagement with the land and its meaning.

Ultimately, Sowams Heritage Area envisions a place where:

- Communities thrive by embracing and celebrating their shared history and cultural diversity;
- Partnerships are built across traditional boundaries to care for resources and tell a fuller, richer story;
- Visitors and residents alike are invited into a living tradition of stewardship, understanding, and connection to the landscape; and
- Indigenous voices and legacies are honored, ensuring that the region's earliest stories remain central to its identity.

By establishing this vision, the organization sets a profound goal for itself and how other heritage landscapes might foster a deep sense of place, community pride, cultural awareness, and shared responsibility.

Core Values

Sowams National Heritage Area is dedicated to instilling a sense of stewardship and deep appreciation for the profound historical, cultural, and natural significance of the Sowams region. Many different communities and cultures have lived on this landscape. Building partnerships and collaborating make it possible to achieve something bigger than what can be done alone. The organization's work is guided by four principles:

- Respect the land, the water, all living creatures, and their histories.
- Everyone has a story to tell, and Sowams is a place where their story can be told.
- What is unfamiliar, complex, or difficult is an opportunity to learn and grow.
- While working towards reconciliation and healing, acknowledge trauma, pain, and despair, but also hope, achievement, and joy.

The core values of Sowams Heritage Area are fundamental to its mission. They ensure that all work undertaken – whether preservation, interpretation, or community engagement – is rooted in



Celebrating Pokanoket Heritage Day, Warren, RI

respect and inclusivity. The core values help to ensure that stewardship of this place is not only about protecting its resources, but also about honoring the full human and environmental story that continues to unfold here. This commitment is carried out through a collaborative relationship among diverse partners who contribute their unique knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to a shared effort. The importance and structure of this collaboration are further detailed in the Partnerships section of this chapter.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles adopted by the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee form the essential framework for governance and decision-making throughout the heritage area's development and future operations. They provide an understanding among all partners about how collaboration will function, how responsibilities will be met, and how the Sowams Heritage Area's mission and priorities will remain the central focus of collective efforts. These principles move beyond aspirational statements; they serve as a practical code of conduct, designed to promote transparency, foster inclusivity, build trust, and ensure that every decision supports the sustainable stewardship of the Sowams landscape.

The guiding principles, found in Appendix G, serve as the foundation for the partnership model that follows. They set expectations for how organizations and stakeholders will interact, contribute, and share responsibilities under the Sowams Heritage Area framework. By adhering to these principles, partners will build a governance culture rooted in trust, mutual respect, and a steadfast focus on protecting and promoting the cultural, natural, and historical treasures of the Sowams region.

The guiding principles form the essential foundation for how Sowams Heritage Area will operate, ensuring that collaboration is transparent, inclusive, and centered on the area's long-term stewardship. These principles also establish a clear framework for partnerships, recognizing that the success of Sowams Heritage Area will depend on the strength, diversity, and cohesion of its partners. Partnerships are not only operational necessities, but also strategic alliances built on aligned

purposes, mutual respect, and collective responsibility. The following section outlines how partnerships will be structured, nurtured, and sustained to advance the Sowams Heritage Area's mission and ensure the effectiveness and resilience of its governance over time.

Organizational History and Current Structure

The Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. was established in 2020 as a nonprofit organization with the goal of securing NHA designation for the Sowams region. A volunteer steering committee was later formed through local advocacy and early collaboration with Tribal representatives, historians, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations. The steering committee has served as the catalyst for building on the region's identity as the homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, and has guided initial planning, outreach, and resource documentation efforts. However, to successfully transition from planning to operational management as a designated NHA, Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. must evolve into a more formalized coordinating entity with professional governance and staff capacity.

Recommended Coordinating Entity Model

The recommended model for Sowams National Heritage Area is to transition Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. into a formal coordinating entity. This structure will maintain nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) regulations, amending its bylaws to provide for a larger board. An independent nonprofit coordinating entity allows for equitable service across all municipalities in both states, the ability to leverage diverse funding sources, and the establishment of transparent governance and financial accountability systems required by NPS standards.

Board Governance and Development

The coordinating entity will be governed by a board of directors consisting of 3 to 15 members. The board will include representation from across the heritage area's geographic scope, as well as from Tribal entities, cultural organizations, educational institutions, businesses, local governments, and nonprofit sectors. Members will be recruited based on their commitment to the heritage area's mission and their professional expertise. The board will establish standing committees focused on governance, finance, partnerships and programs, and fundraising. Term limits, officer roles, and committee structures will be codified in revised bylaws, ensuring continuity, the inclusion of fresh perspectives and new membership, and strong fiduciary oversight.

Staffing and Operational Needs

A phased staffing plan will guide the growth of the coordinating entity's operational capacity. Initially, a part-time executive director will be hired to lead daily management, partner coordination, board support, and early program implementation. Financial services will be outsourced to ensure professional standards while controlling administrative costs. As funding expands, the executive director will transition to full-time. Subsequently, a program/project manager will be hired to coordinate interpretive programming, educational initiatives, marketing, communications, and community engagement. Future staffing needs, such as administrative or development positions, will be assessed as organizational growth continues.

Evaluation and Performance Measurement

Structured evaluation will guide continuous improvement and public accountability. Annual internal evaluations should include board assessments, staff reviews, financial audits, and partner feedback surveys. An external independent evaluation should occur every five to seven years, measuring organizational effectiveness, program impact, financial compliance, and alignment

with mission goals. Evaluation metrics should track short-term outputs, medium-term program and funding growth, and long-term impacts on resource preservation, public engagement, and institutional sustainability.

Partnerships

A defining characteristic of successful National Heritage Areas is their foundation in strong, multi-faceted, and collaborative partnerships. In NHAs, governance is not solely the function of a central coordinating entity, but rather the result of sustained engagement among organizations, governments, Tribes, businesses, and individuals who are stewards of the region's identity, resources, and stories. The proposed Sowams NHA is developing such a network and is already demonstrating a commitment to a unified vision and regional collaboration.

The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee anchors the emerging partnership network. Its members represent key sectors vital to National Heritage Area governance, including historic preservation and cultural organizations, local governments, tourism organizations, land conservation, schools and educational institutions, Tribal leadership, and other nonprofit sectors (see Appendix A – Planning Participants). This committee has been integral in guiding the feasibility study process, and it is laying the groundwork for a collaborative structure that can carry the NHA forward.



Citizens from the nine towns and cities in Sowams joined the Community Conversations to discuss opportunities for collaboration and how the Sowams Heritage Area can benefit their communities.

During the planning process, the steering committee and consultant team engaged dozens of prospective partners to assess alignment, capacity, and readiness (see Appendix A – Planning Participants, Appendix B – Sowams Public Outreach Activities, Appendix D – Sowams Partners). These conversations confirmed that while Sowams' partners are diverse in mission and geography, they share common interests in interpreting the region's history, preserving its historic sites

and cultural and natural landscapes, promoting sustainable tourism, advancing education, and fostering community pride.

Role of the Partnership Network in Governance

Within the proposed governance framework, the partnership network will:

- **Contribute to shared decision-making** through an advisory council and committee structures aligned with thematic and programmatic areas (e.g., interpretation, resource stewardship) as described later in this chapter.
- **Implement projects and initiatives** in collaboration with or under the leadership of the coordinating entity, leveraging respective missions, capacities, and funding sources.
- **Amplify outreach and visibility**, helping to ensure regional messaging is accurate, inclusive, and representative of all communities and voices.
- **Strengthen local ownership and sustainability**, cultivating collective ownership of Sowams Heritage Area through this integrated partnership model, which empowers local institutions, communities, and stakeholders to actively shape and sustain the heritage area. By aligning with existing civic and cultural priorities, the network ensures that responsibility for Sowams is broadly shared and rooted in place.

Types of Partners

The Sowams Partners table (Appendix D) lists over 120 different partners that represent existing and potential partners in the region, and their interrelationship to the Sowams Heritage Area. Several are represented on the steering committee, and almost all have been included in outreach to date. This network of partners includes the following sectors:

- **Academic Institutions and Libraries** – Colleges and universities (e.g., Roger Williams University, Brown University) and public libraries are important collaborators in research, interpretation, and student engagement, while local schools provide essential pathways for youth education.
- **Arts and Culture Organizations** – Museums and cultural institutions are essential for interpreting Sowams' nationally significant story, including Indigenous cultures, along with European and Latino populations. Their stories are essential for interpreting Sowams' nationally significant heritage.
- **Business and Industry** – Local businesses, farms, service providers, heritage industries, and developers are essential allies in developing visitor infrastructure, undertaking large redevelopment projects of heritage resources, and delivering the kinds of experiences that make Sowams both economically viable and culturally compelling.
- **Economic Development and Tourism** – Regional and state tourism offices can help position Sowams as a destination with a distinct identity and authentic experiences tied to history and place.
- **Environment, Agriculture, and Gardens** – These partners preserve the landscape's integrity and help mitigate climate change threats, which are critical to long-term resource stewardship.
- **Funders and Grant Makers** – Funders like the Barr Foundation, corporations and small businesses, and other entities could play an important role in supporting Sowams with grants for projects and programs, operational support, and sponsorship.

- **History and Humanities** – Sowams is home to a large concentration of these organizations, many of which are small, volunteer-led, and eager to collaborate across community boundaries.
- **Municipalities** – Elected officials and planners are instrumental in aligning the NHA with municipal planning, infrastructure development, and economic revitalization. Several have already expressed interest in supporting NHA implementation through staffing support, inclusion in comprehensive plans, or promotional efforts.
- **National and Statewide Organizations** – Agencies such as the National Park Service (Blackstone River Valley NHP and Roger Williams National Memorial), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the humanities councils and historic preservation offices in both states have the potential to provide technical assistance, financial support, and policy alignment.
- **Religious Communities** – Central to the national significance of Sowams is the history of religious freedom whose legacy is still present in the historic churches, congregations, and places of worship across the Sowams landscape.
- **Tribal Partners** – Providing a platform for Indigenous voices to be heard is critical for interpreting Sowams' nationally significant story. The Pokanoket Tribe continues to be represented on the leadership team of Sowams Heritage Area, and the perspectives of its tribal neighbors will remain important to the story of Sowams.

Governance Through Collaboration

As the proposed National Heritage Area advances from planning toward implementation, its partnership network will evolve into a collaborative governance structure – one that is participatory, transparent, and reflective of the region's wide-ranging voices. In this model, the coordinating entity does not dominate but instead facilitates, enabling partners to take active roles in advancing common goals. Governance will depend on clearly defined roles, accountability, and intentional mechanisms that foster collaborative leadership. Several key elements will support this structure:

- **A partnership framework to define commitments:**
A foundational step in establishing collaborative governance is creating an agreement that outlines the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of the coordinating entity and its partners. This agreement could be informal or could take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), resolution, or charter and would articulate the shared vision of the Sowams NHA, commitments to mission and values, and the mechanisms for decision-making and conflict resolution. The agreement provides transparency and clarity, particularly for organizations contributing staff time, funding, or programmatic resources.
- **Annual gathering of partners for planning, reporting, and shared learning:**
An annual partner gathering will offer a vital forum for collective planning, transparency, and celebration of shared progress. The gathering will serve multiple purposes: reviewing accomplishments, evaluating the effectiveness of programs, setting new goals, reporting on financial and organizational performance, and fostering networking among stakeholders that can build a stronger coalition for advocacy. This event will reinforce transparency, align strategies across sectors, and renew momentum for the year ahead, ensuring that all partners have a voice in shaping the NHA's future.
- **Communication strategies for consistent messaging and transparency:**
Strong communication is integral to collaborative governance. Building on the efforts established during the feasibility study process, the coordinating entity will lead efforts to

establish internal and external communication protocols, including regular partner updates, newsletters, shared branding and messaging guidelines, and inclusive public engagement practices. These strategies will promote consistent messaging across partner organizations, maintain public trust, and ensure that all participants, especially underrepresented voices, are informed and empowered to contribute.

- **Committees organized by operations, expertise, themes:**

To ensure inclusive and informed governance, the Sowams NHA will benefit from the establishment of committees composed of subject matter experts and community representatives. These committees should be organized around core activities such as interpretation and education, Tribal engagement, tourism and marketing, resource stewardship, and economic development. They will provide strategic input, identify emerging needs and opportunities, and guide program development.

Financial Projections

The financial projections developed for Sowams National Heritage Area are designed to meet NPS requirements for feasibility studies. These projections reflect broad assumptions regarding funding and operations, based on the expectation that Sowams will receive federal designation. In accordance with NPS guidelines, the projections assume authorization to receive up to \$1 million annually under NHA legislation. However, current congressional appropriations have limited new NHAs to \$150,000 per year for the first three years while the organization conducts its required management plan, and \$300,000 annually thereafter.

The five-year budget for Sowams National Heritage Area reflects these funding assumptions. Revenues during the first three years are built around the \$150,000 NHA annual allocation, with a transition to \$300,000 per year beginning in Year 4. In addition to federal funding, the projections incorporate diversified revenue sources including earned income, contributions and donations, memberships, special events, corporate sponsorships, state and local government grants, foundation grants, and limited other income such as sales and miscellaneous revenue. Over the five-year period, total projected revenues amount to \$2,357,000.

Earned income projections remain modest, ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000 annually, reflecting revenue from program activities, sales, or events. Contributions, memberships, sponsorships, and special events revenues are projected to grow incrementally, recognizing that fundraising capacity will expand as the organization develops its professional staff and a broader base of supporters. Foundation and state grants represent a significant source of additional funding. The projections reflect a conservative assumption regarding the availability of non-NHA federal grants, recognizing that other federal funds cannot be used as a match for the NHA federal allocation.

On the expense side, the largest operational cost category is staffing. In Year 1 and Year 2, staffing costs are based on a part-time executive director, transitioning to full-time employment in Year 3. Year 4 anticipates additional part-time administrative support to meet growing operational demands. Staffing costs are projected based on average nonprofit salary data for comparable roles in Warren, Rhode Island, adjusted for fringe benefits, legally required employer taxes, and a standard benefits package. Across the five years, staffing and administration costs total \$620,841.

Consulting costs are also significant in the early years, primarily to support development of the required management plan. The management plan is a federally mandated deliverable that must be completed within the first three years following NHA designation. Consultant expenses, projected at \$75,000 annually in Year 1 and Year 2 and declining in Years 3 through 5, also allow for additional planning activities such as interpretive planning and strategic assessments. Total consultant costs over five years are projected at \$240,000.

Grantmaking to partners is another core element of the budget. Beginning at \$25,000 in Year 1, grants to partners are projected to increase each year, reaching \$150,000 annually by Year 5. These grants are intended to support collaborative projects across the region, aligned with the heritage area's mission, and to incentivize local investment in stewardship and public engagement. Cumulatively, partner grants are projected at \$360,000 over the five-year period.

The financial projections also account for required match obligations. Under federal law, every dollar of NHA federal funding must be matched by at least one dollar from non-federal sources. The budget meets both the overall match ratio and the legislative match requirement, excluding other federal grants to ensure compliance. Matching funds will be secured through a combination of state grants, foundation support, local government contributions, earned income, private donations, and in-kind services. While specific partner match contributions are not yet detailed, it is reasonable to assume that partners will match or exceed the NHA grant amounts through direct project investments and leveraged resources.

The budget does not include amounts for in-kind or non-cash contributions of goods, services, or volunteer time so as to project actual cash needs to sustain operations. This conservative approach ensures that the coordinating entity maintains realistic and responsible expectations for its fundraising and financial management responsibilities.

The financial plan anticipates modest but steady growth over the five-year period, allowing the organization to expand its staffing, programming, grant making, and partnership initiatives in a sustainable manner. The structure of the budget demonstrates a deliberate effort to diversify revenues, build organizational capacity, and meet federal match requirements, providing a clear and credible path toward the financial sustainability of Sowams National Heritage Area.

Five-Year Projection - Annual Operating Revenues & Expenses						
REVENUES	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	5-Year Totals
Earned Income	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	10,500
Contributions/Dona- tions	1,250	1,300	1,350	1,400	1,450	6,750
Membership	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,750	2,000	8,250
Special Events	500	750	1,000	1,250	1,500	5,000
Sales	500	750	750	1,000	1,000	4,000
NHA Funds	150,000	150,000	150,000	300,000	300,000	1,050,000
Other Federal Grants	10,000	10,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	170,000
State Grants	100,000	100,000	100,000	120,000	120,000	540,000
Local Government Grants	10,000	20,000	25,000	50,000	50,000	155,000
Corporations/Sponsor- ships	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	10,000
Foundations	35,000	35,000	50,000	125,000	150,000	395,000
Other Revenue	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
Total Revenue	312,750	323,300	384,100	655,400	681,450	2,357,000
EXPENSES	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	5-Year Totals
Admin. & Operations	65,716	67,750	95,000	193,200	199,175	620,841
Consultants	75,000	75,000	50,000	25,000	15,000	240,000
Grants	25,000	35,000	50,000	100,000	150,000	360,000
Equipment & Mainte- nance	3,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000	25,000
Insurance	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	5,000	14,000
Marketing & PR	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000	75,000
Office & Facility/ Utilities	1,000	5,000	7,000	10,000	12,500	35,500
Printing, Copying, Post- age	2,500	3,000	3,500	3,500	3,500	16,000
Professional Expenses	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,000	2,000	9,250
Program Expenses	1,500	2,500	3,000	3,500	5,000	15,500
Org. & Membership Fees	1,500	2,000	3,500	5,000	5,000	17,000
Supplies & Furnishings	1,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,500
Travel & Related	4,000	4,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	31,000
Misc. & Other	1,000	2,500	3,000	5,000	5,000	16,500
Total Expenses	189,216	218,500	250,000	385,700	444,675	1,488,091
Profit/Loss	123,534	104,800	134,100	269,700	236,775	868,909
In-Kind Support	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	123,534	104,800	134,100	269,700	236,775	868,909

Organizational Retreat, Outcomes, and Recommendations

An organizational retreat for the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee was held on May 28, 2025, at the Bristol Art Museum. The retreat served as a pivotal moment for transitioning the initiative from a planning phase into formalized governance and operational development. The retreat opened with a grounding in place and purpose, including a welcome by the host institution and partner, the Bristol Art Museum, and a brief historical context of the region. Participants reviewed and endorsed a set of group agreements emphasizing respectful communication, active listening, bold thinking, and mutual care. After personal reflections on the significance of Sowams, the group reaffirmed its strategic priorities for 2025–2026, which include transitioning to a formal governance structure, increasing public and political support, and leveraging existing programming to serve communities across the region.



Outreach workshop at the Sowams Steering Committee retreat in the Bristol Art Museum, Bristol, RI

A significant portion of the retreat focused on mapping the path toward formal governance. Steering committee members explored in-depth considerations around establishing a board of directors, sunsetting the existing steering committee, and creating an advisory council and board committees. Also discussed were board recruitment strategies that prioritize representation, expertise, and commitment, and emphasized the importance of early staff hiring to implement board strategies effectively. The retreat included a discussion to reflect on challenges, such as funding, community engagement, Tribal relationships, timing of next steps, and a collaborative workshop to identify ideal board, advisory, and committee members. The retreat concluded with a detailed set of action steps, responsibilities, and deadlines to ensure steady momentum toward building a durable and inclusive organizational framework for Sowams Heritage Area.

The steering committee promptly started implementing the recommendations of the governance committee. In January 2026, eight months after their planning retreat, the steering committee dissolved and the original 501(c)(3) entity reconstituted its board of directors to include some

founding members of the steering committee and new directors. That board grew from three members to 11 members with a potential for 15 members. On advice of counsel, the by-laws were revised to align with the governance practices of National Heritage Areas. The original subcommittees, which had worked with the consultants on the feasibility study, were expanded to include non-board members, and new committees were formed to respond to the evolving needs of the emerging heritage area. The board felt strongly that including heritage partners on board committees was critical to strengthening Sowams Heritage Area's regional impact and building a pipeline of future leaders. One of the new committees was the Tribal Engagement Committee whose mandate is to engage the Pokanoket's Tribal neighbors, both federally recognized and self-identified, in sharing their own perspectives on the story of Sowams.

Early Implementation Projects and Programs

The organizational retreat prioritized several early implementation projects and programs as opportunities to raise visibility, build partnerships, and align with the mission of Sowams Heritage Area. These efforts reflect a strategy to leverage existing programs, celebrate regional history, and support community engagement while building the organizational infrastructure required for future National Heritage Area designation. The programming and projects reflect broad regional interests, including education, interpretation, cultural celebration, and public outreach.

Six years ago, Sowams Heritage Area Project Historian, David Weed, started conducting tours of the Pokanoket sites in Sowams and giving talks about the pivotal events that happened here in the 17th century. Such programming events continue today in collaboration with Sowams partners like the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, East Providence Preservation Society, the Somerset Historical Society, and the Carpenter Museum in Rehoboth. Sowams has been a co-sponsor of the 14-month commemoration of King Philip's War in 2025–2026, convening experts from Plimoth-Patuxet Museums, the Pokanoket Tribe, and Roger Williams University. The 250th celebration of American Independence has been an opportunity to highlight both the history of Sowams and the benefits of a Sowams Heritage Area. These events and the programming of our regional partners are often featured in our monthly newsletter, "Sowams News," which began distribution in January 2025.



Don "Strong Turtle" Brown and Eric Schultz discuss the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War at Joseph Case Junior High School, Swansea, MA

The steering committee's outreach to the community has produced opportunities to build programming around the other Interpretive Themes. After an introductory meeting in 2024, leaders of land trusts and conservation commissions in Sowams are eager to collaborate on mitigating climate change. Historic churches like the First Congregational Churches in Barrington and Bristol, the Baptist Church in Swansea, and the Newman Church in East Providence want to participate in interpreting their roles in the founding of their towns and the legacy of religious tolerance today. O'Brien and Brough, which recently started to distill rum in Bristol after 200 years, has offered to host events for Sowams Heritage Area and the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project in their distillery in the historic Bristol Industrial Park. Sowams Heritage Area will present a panel on engaging heritage partners at the joint conference of The Association of State and Local History and the National Council on Public History in Providence, RI in September 2026.

Going forward, key opportunities for Sowams Heritage Area will be to leverage the programming activity of institutional partners, such as, schools, colleges, universities, and libraries; community groups like Boys and Girls Clubs, the Cape Verdean Progressive Center, and the Providence Cultural Equity Initiative; and tourism and community development entities like the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, RI Commerce, and the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District. This approach allows the heritage area to build momentum and form durable partnerships without needing to initiate and manage every program.

Projects and programs include:

- **Tourism and Economic Development Initiatives**
Collaborate with the region's local chambers and tourism groups to promote heritage tourism, adaptive re-use, and Sowams Heritage Area's Interpretive Themes.
- **Youth Programming**
Develop place-based educational activities – emphasizing nature, history, and stewardship – with Oasis International, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, The Y, and summer camps, which provide generational continuity with the heritage area's mission.
- **Arts and Culture**
Showcase arts, crafts, and culture – WaterFire, Portuguese Heritage Festival, Pokanoket Heritage Day, and the Meshanticut Cultural Placemaking ConFestival – to reinforce local historical narratives and support cross-community storytelling.
- **Historical Societies, Land Trusts, and Preservation Groups**
Provide a platform for heritage and environmental groups to share resources and collaborate on projects.

These early actions serve as both a soft launch for Sowams as a National Heritage Area and a test bed for future organizational capacity. They also signal a commitment to collaboration, equity, and locally rooted implementation while the organization transitions toward formal governance.

CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA CRITERIA

Introduction

Beginning in 2022, local stakeholders launched a formal effort to explore creating Sowams National Heritage Area on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The effort was led by the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and facilitated by Point Heritage Development Consulting, building on grassroots that stretched back at least a decade. Local governments, Tribal leaders, museum and nonprofit representatives, educators, business owners, and residents from Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Providence, and Warren in Rhode Island, along with Seekonk, Rehoboth, Swansea, and Somerset in Massachusetts, have participated in the effort. Through extensive public outreach that ranged from individual interviews to community-wide conversations, stakeholders across the region considered the opportunities that an NHA designation might bring.

Throughout this dialogue the steering committee and planning team focused on three core questions:

1. What nationally significant stories link the region's communities and help define the American experience?
2. Do the region's historic, cultural, and natural resources possess the integrity and concentration needed to convey those stories?
3. Does Sowams have the organizational capacity and partnerships to steward these resources, enrich quality of life, share important history, and foster sustainable economic development?

The National Heritage Area Act of 2023 sets out seven criteria for evaluating emerging National Heritage Areas.¹⁷¹ The remainder of this chapter lists those criteria and explains how the Sowams feasibility study satisfies each one, demonstrating the region's readiness for federal designation and unified stewardship.



Samuel Pomeroy Colt, founder of the largest rubber company in America 1901, built the bridge at the Mill Gut on his farm, now Colt State Park, Bristol, RI.

¹⁷¹ The National Heritage Act of 2023, Public Law 117-339. <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ339/PLAW-117publ339.pdf>. Accessed June 23, 2026.

Evaluating the Sowams Region

(A) Has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that

- (i) represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States;**
- (ii) are worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use; and**
- (iii) would be best managed**

(I) through partnership and among public and private entities; and

(II) by linking diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.

The Sowams study area – nine closely linked communities framed by Narragansett, Mount Hope, and Kickemuit Bays and the rivers that feed them – contains a tightly clustered network of the Pokanoket ancestral homeland, early colonial settlements, King Philip’s War sites, places that nurtured religious liberty, maritime and enslaved-labor landmarks, and ecologically rich shoreline habitats. Together these natural, historic, and cultural resources chronicle formative moments in American history: sustained Pokanoket land-use; the diplomacy enshrined in the First Thanksgiving; the clash of cultures that reshaped colonial-Native relations; early experiments in freedom of conscience; and the rise of Atlantic trade that tied New England to a global economy.



East Providence Historical Society stewards the John Hunt House at Hunt's Mills, East Providence, RI.

A narrative of Sowams’ historical trajectory and significance is found in Chapter 2, while a thematic framework and discussion of the assemblage of resources are documented in Chapter 3 and listed in Appendix E – Sowams Resource Inventory. Because the resources remain geographically contiguous, retain documented integrity, and are interpreted by active Tribes, museums, local governments, and nonprofits, they function as a single heritage landscape rather than isolated points of interest. The inventory developed during planning confirms that this concentration meets National Park Service expectations for a “strategic assemblage.” The region offers visitors an authentic, place-based experience of nationally significant stories and can be stewarded through the cooperative framework envisioned for a National Heritage Area.

(B) Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story.

National Heritage Areas are living landscapes, and Sowams contains a continuum of traditions that reflect important currents in the American experience. The history and living traditions found in the region are documented in the historic context found in Chapter 2.

Long before European contact, the Pokanoket shaped the region through fishing, shellfish harvesting, controlled burns, and the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash. Pokanoket stewardship expressed through ancestral placenames, annual heritage gatherings, and the successful campaign to reclaim their most sacred site overlooking Mount Hope Bay anchors the region in Indigenous worldviews centered on reciprocity with the land and water.

Seventeenth-century dissenters add another layer of significance whose impact is still lived today. Roger Williams' insistence on freedom of conscience was an idea that later shaped the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Williams, John Myles, the Antinomians, the Quakers, and others made space in Sowams to freely express their religious beliefs. The region's active religious congregations have deep roots, including the First Baptist Church in America in Providence, the Newman Congregational Church in East Providence, and the Swansea Baptist Church and Swansea Friends Meeting House across the border in Massachusetts.



The original meeting house of the Newman Church, founded in 1643 by the Reverend Samuel Newman, was burnt down in the King Philip's War, East Providence, RI.

Economy and folklife tied to water are also important in Sowams. The region's shipyards advanced from wooden whalers to the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company's America's Cup defenders and, today, to high-tech composite-fabrication firms, demonstrating how boatbuilding ingenuity continues to flow from the bays into national industry. From prehistory to the present, food from the rivers and bays has defined the region's foodways. The seafood industry thrives in restaurants and businesses across Sowams, including institutions like Blount Fine Foods. Festivals like Warren's Quahog Festival and Bristol's Harbor Festival & Blessing of the Fleet commemorate these seafood and shipbuilding roots, while WaterFire celebrates arts and heritage along the Providence River.

A long-standing civic tradition captures the region's commitment to patriotic expression and community pride. Bristol's Fourth of July Celebration, the oldest continuously held Independence Day celebration in the nation, culminates in a parade that dates back to 1785.

Successive waves of immigrants brought traditions that enrich the region. Of particular note are the Portuguese and Cape Verdean communities. Whaling and trade from these water-oriented cultures laid a foundation for a significant population in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. Cultural organizations and annual religious and independence festivals are important expressions of Portuguese and Cape Verdean culture and history.

(C) Provides outstanding opportunities

(i) to conserve natural, historic, cultural or scenic features

Sowams is as historically significant as it is biologically diverse. The region presents an interwoven landscape where traditional Indigenous sites, colonial-era farms and meetinghouses, and later historic properties lie amid the bays and rivers, estuaries, salt marshes, meadows, and forestlands. Within the proposed National Heritage Area boundary, nine communities contain more than 190 natural, cultural, and historic features. This includes over 100 historic properties, described in more detail in Chapter 3 and in Criterion D (below), as well as approximately 12 square miles of protected open space, 3.5 square miles of open water, and over 19 square miles of wetlands. This mosaic of cultural landmarks and natural habitats demonstrates great historical and ecological value.

Many of the region's oldest resources are among those that could benefit from the opportunities afforded by National Heritage Area designation. Potumtuk, the quartz outcropping above Mount Hope Bay, stands at the center of Pokanoket culture and history. Brown University recently transferred ownership of the land to a preservation trust of the Pokanoket Tribe for preservation in perpetuity and access for Tribes with historical connections to the property. The land is buffered by open space purchased by the City of Bristol. Currently, it bears no designation, although the study accomplished prior to the transfer confirmed its significance as a traditional cultural property. Furthermore, many of the region's historic structures are owned privately or by small nonprofit organizations. Support and guidance to preserve these structures is needed. There are many adaptive reuse opportunities for buildings associated with historic industry in the region. Finally, in the most populous area of the nation – coastline along the northeast corridor – natural spaces are increasingly rare; safeguarding these resources is critical for environmental health, climate resilience, and quality of life for the region's residents.



Stewarded by the Barrington Land Trust, Osaqmequin Nature Preserve is a popular spot for birdwatching, Barrington, RI.

Courtesy of the Barrington Land Conservation Trust

As described in Chapter 4 and Criterion E (below), there exists a well-established network of local organizations and agencies ready to collaborate on conserving and celebrating these resources, an essential foundation for National Heritage Area designation (see Appendix C – Concurrent Plans and Appendix D – Sowams Partners). The combination of resources and partners provide opportunities for coordination in the documentation, planning, and preservation of historic resources; participation in projects and programs that address climate resilience and natural resource and land conservation; and the leveraging of funding for stewardship projects.

(ii) for recreation and education.

During the planning process, partner organizations and residents alike named sharing the region’s nationally significant stories as one of the top priorities for National Heritage Area designation. The Pokanoket alliance with the Separatist Pilgrims, King Philip’s War and the realignment of colonial/Indigenous relationships, the foundations of religious freedom in North America, and the region’s role in the Triangle Trade of enslaved people are histories whose legacy resonates far beyond Sowams. National Heritage Area designation will increase visibility and understanding of these histories, as well as support for projects and programs that can elevate them in national conscience.

Educational opportunities exist on many levels. First, the interpretive opportunities mentioned above have many applications, including but not limited to museum exhibitions, interpretive signage, digital media, and formal classroom curricula. Another important aspect of education could include public education on the benefits and best practices concerning historic preservation, as many of the region’s historic properties are under private and nonprofit ownership. Similarly, a National Heritage Area could help amplify messaging on natural resource conservation, water quality, and the work of the region’s numerous land trusts, potentially assisting with coordinating efforts of local organizations with those addressing conservation at the regional level.



Boating and sailing on the Warren River, Warren, RI

The region's natural spaces provide an important foundation for recreational opportunities. The 14-mile East Bay Bike Path begins at India Point Park in Providence and ends at Independence Park in Bristol, linking all five Rhode Island towns within the proposed National Heritage Area boundary. The path is an important artery that highlights cultural and natural resources, connecting waterfront parks, working wharves, historic downtowns, and major attractions such as Watchemoket Square and Colt State Park. The Revolutionary Heritage National Scenic Byway and the Washington–Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, a National Historic Trail, are also important resources that connect recreational experiences and history. In addition, the Taunton and Kickemuit Rivers, as well as the Hundred Acre Cove, are among the many resources that enable paddlers to explore, giving them important glimpses of the natural world that the Pokanoket inhabitants and the English settlers knew four centuries ago. Narragansett and Mount Hope Bays offer a variety of recreational boating and excursions.

National Heritage Areas link a region's natural beauty with its historic and cultural stories. By uniting these resources under one banner, a Sowams National Heritage Area would better coordinate sites and programs, giving visitors richer experiences while strengthening local pride, heritage tourism, and the area's economy.

(D) Contains resources that

- (i) are important to any identified theme of the National Heritage Area; and**
- (ii) retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.**

The Sowams study area contains a critical mass of historic, cultural, and natural resources whose documented integrity can sustain high-quality interpretation of the region's national significance and



Local children come costumed on their class visits to the one-room Hornbine School, built in 1847 in Rehoboth, MA.

supporting themes. The region's historic context is described in Chapter 2, while a thematic framework and descriptions of key resources are set forth in Chapter 3. An inventory of 191 resources is found in Appendix E – Sowams Resource Inventory.

Within the nine communities that comprise the proposed National Heritage Area boundary, there are many significant sites associated with the region's history and cultures. Together, these resources convey the complex history of Indigenous settlement and early colonial contact (116 resources), King Philip's War (30 resources), religious freedom (29 resources), enslavement and the trade of enslaved peoples (26 resources), and the industries and innovation tied to the cultural landscape on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay (103 resources).

Several resources are notable for their significance, integrity, and relation to the region's themes. Potumtuk, the heart of Pokanoket culture described above, is central to the stories of the contact era and

King Philip's War, along with being an important site for living traditions. In addition, the Roger Williams National Memorial, the core of Williams' Providence Plantation, and the first Baptist church in the nation anchor the story of religious freedom. The region includes 13 National Historic Landmarks, all of which are tied to Sowams' themes. Among the sites are colonial houses, Brown University and RISD as well as the homes of men who built their wealth on maritime trade – including the trade of enslaved people. In all, the region contains 96 individual listings in the National Register of Historic Places, including 17 historic districts.

The Sowams inventory also identifies a wide array of historic churches and cemeteries, historic waterfronts and downtowns, traditional Indigenous cultural sites, and natural areas. Although twenty-first-century growth has taken place around them, the core resources retain location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, natural environment, and associative values sufficient for NPS-level interpretation. Their close geographic grouping strengthens thematic cohesion, facilitates visitor circulation, and supports coordinated stewardship by municipal, Tribal, nonprofit, and private partners.

Taken together, the resources in Sowams provide a compelling and interpretable framework for public education and heritage tourism. The proposed boundary of the National Heritage Area is fairly compact, situating these resources in close proximity to one another and allowing them to be managed and interpreted as a single, coherent heritage landscape.

(E) includes a diverse group of residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and State and local government that

(i) are involved in the planning of the proposed National Heritage Area

Sowams National Heritage Area meets this criterion through an extensive and inclusive planning process led by a representative steering committee that includes local governments, nonprofit organizations, heritage and cultural institutions, Tribal representatives, educational institutions, and business and tourism stakeholders. More than 120 partners have been identified, many of whom have directly contributed to the planning process, strategy development, and outreach initiatives (see Appendix A – Planning Participants, Appendix B – Sowams Public Outreach Activities, and Appendix D – Sowams Partners). This wide-ranging coalition has affirmed strong and growing regional support for designation and implementation.



The East Providence Arts Council presents the Loeff Arts Festival, named for the historic Loeff Carousel in Crescent Park, East Providence, RI

Courtesy of East Bay Media Group

Although the legislative criteria do not mandate Tribal engagement, the Sowams initiative recognizes and respects the complex role of Indigenous history and the Pokanoket Tribe in shaping the region's nationally significant story. The project does not rely on the resolution of historic or political issues related to Tribal recognition or land claims. Such resolution could not be expected or achieved within the scope of an NHA. Nor should it. Instead, Sowams provides a platform for truth-telling, layered narratives, and continued dialogue. The door remains open for Tribal engagement, but the success and justification of the NHA should not be dependent on full consensus or formal endorsement from the representatives of the neighboring Tribes. To condition the legitimacy of the broader coalition on that singular factor would not only be unrealistic – it would unjustly discount the contributions of over 100 other stakeholders of the Sowams' region who have come together in good faith to preserve and interpret a richly complex American story.

(ii) have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles of all participants in the proposed National Heritage Area, including the Federal Government

A governance committee composed of planners and nonprofit professionals developed a financial strategy and administrative framework for the coordinating entity, ensuring that the roles of federal, state, local, and private sector partners were considered, are understood, and are integrated into the planning effort. The five-year conceptual financial plan reflects realistic funding assumptions based on the established tiered formula of the federal appropriations allocated through the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Heritage Partnership Program and outlines the shared responsibility for meeting match requirements through state and local grants, philanthropic support, in-kind contributions, and partner contributions. In-kind contributions may be accounted for, but they are not included in the financial projections in order to provide a more accurate figure of the total dollars necessary to manage the NHA. This diversified approach ensures the financial sustainability of the heritage area while fulfilling federal requirements.

(iii) have demonstrated significant support for the designation of the proposed National Heritage Area

The proposed coordinating entity for the Sowams NHA has demonstrated sustained leadership, vision, and organizational capacity. It has grown from a grassroots initiative into a formal nonprofit with a clear governance strategy, bylaws, and a defined pathway to becoming a federally recognized coordinating body. The board structure includes representation from across the region's towns, Tribal communities, cultural organizations, and nonprofit sectors, reflecting a genuine commitment to inclusive, multi-jurisdictional governance.

Municipal leaders and planners have actively participated in the planning process and have expressed support for designation and partnership. The feasibility study outlines a collaborative governance model that includes an annual gathering, an advisory committee, working committees organized by topic, and transparent mechanisms for shared decision-making. Through these structures, local governments and partner organizations are not merely consulted; they are empowered to shape the heritage area's priorities and programs.

The willingness to collaborate is further underscored by the inclusion of staffing and grantmaking strategies designed to support joint projects and promote local ownership. The phased staffing plan and the integration of local and state funding support demonstrate that the coordinating entity is well-positioned to manage federal funds responsibly while continuing to serve as a regional convener and leader.

(F) Has a potential management entity to work in partnership with the individuals and entities described in subparagraph (E) to develop the proposed National Heritage Area while encouraging State and local economic activity.

The *Sowams National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* fully demonstrates Criterion F by clearly identifying a capable and evolving management entity, rooted in an existing nonprofit organization that has been active in the region. The nonprofit organization Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. – though modest in its original scope – has grown in capacity and mission through its leadership role in convening and supporting the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee throughout the multi-year feasibility process. Rather than creating an entirely new entity, the feasibility study assumes building on this existing nonprofit’s infrastructure, strengthening it with broader representation, deeper expertise, and greater community engagement.

The governance model has been intentionally designed to reflect this evolution. Most members of the steering committee have already transitioned into formal leadership and advisory roles within the expanded nonprofit framework. To avoid conflicts of interest, some, like the town planners, chose not to join the reconstituted board, leaving opportunities for new members to revitalize the board with energy and new ideas. This ensures institutional continuity while expanding the entity’s operational and strategic capacity. The feasibility study describes in detail the organizational structure of the proposed coordinating entity, including a governing board, working committees, an advisory committee, and planned staff positions aligned with its responsibilities for programming, partner coordination, communications, fundraising, and stewardship. The proposed staffing model begins with a part-time executive director and adjusts as needed over time to include additional positions to support implementation of the National Heritage Area’s mission and goals.

Importantly, the feasibility study provides a conceptual financial plan tied to this structure, outlining potential revenue streams and matching requirements, including federal appropriations, state and local support, philanthropic contributions, and earned income. The entity is fully described – not only in name and form, but in its practical ability to serve as an effective and inclusive manager of Sowams National Heritage Area.

The proposed Sowams National Heritage Area lies within a diversified, water-oriented economy built on shipbuilding, advanced composites, seafood processing, healthcare, and fast-growing heritage tourism. As detailed in the historic context in Chapter 2, in 2023, the Rhode Island side of the region attracted \$31 million in visitor spending – nearly a third in arts, entertainment, and recreation – while the Massachusetts side exceeded pre-COVID visitor revenues by 25 percent. These sectors prosper alongside a resurgent working-waterfront culture and a cluster of small craft breweries, restaurants, and creative-arts firms.



Boatyards and marinas, like the Somerset Boatyard, carry on the legacy of marine trades in Sowams, Somerset, MA

Courtesy of Bristol Marine

National Heritage Area designation would reinforce this momentum:

- **Stronger tourism brand** – A nationally recognized brand would knit together Tribal and colonial resources, historic downtowns, working waterfronts, and natural spaces, giving visitors a reason to extend stays and spend more in local businesses.
- **New investment leverage** – Partnership-based NHAs commonly unlock federal, state, and philanthropic grants beyond the reach of individual towns, funding planning and implementation for adaptive re-use of historic properties, trail development, wayfinding and interpretive initiatives, and workforce programs related to heritage industries.
- **Business-friendly model** – Because NHAs are purely voluntary and non-regulatory, critical industries continue without added permitting or land-use constraints.
- **Year-round benefits** – Off-season interpretation, festivals, and trails spread visitor demand throughout the year, supporting restaurants, lodging, and retail outside the summer peak.

The proposed Sowams National Heritage Area will add value to an already vibrant regional economy, described in Appendix F – Sowams Affected Environment. By expanding heritage tourism markets while respecting the working landscape, the proposed Sowams National Heritage Area is fully compatible with – and will amplify – existing economic activity.

(G) Has a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public.

The proposed Sowams National Heritage Area boundary was shaped through historical and topographical research; discussions with the Pokanoket, members of other Tribal communities, and stakeholders; steering committee deliberations; and open public meetings. The proposed boundary traces the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe, embracing nine municipalities – four in Massachusetts and five in Rhode Island – within a compact 140-square-mile corridor framed by Narragansett Bay, Mount Hope Bay, the tidal Taunton River, and the Moshassuck River in Providence.



Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe, is prominently displayed beside the incorporation of Warren, RI on a plaque above the portico of the Warren Town Hall.

The footprint of the Pokanoket Tribe is evidenced on streets and in public places. The names of Sowams and the Pokanoket leaders who lived here – the Massasoit Ousamequin, Wamsutta (Alexander), Metacomet (Philip), and Anawan – are found throughout the towns and cities that comprise the Pokanoket homeland. Among them are King Philip, Metacom, or Metacomet streets in Barrington, Bristol, East Providence and Warren, RI and Rehoboth, Seekonk, Swansea and Somerset, MA; Wamsutta roads in Barrington, Bristol and Providence, RI and Swansea, MA; Sowams Nurseries in Swansea, Sowams Cider Works and Sowams Drive in Warren, and Sowams Elementary School, Sowams Road, and Sowams Woods in Barrington; Ousamequin Farm in Seekonk, MA and Ousamequin Nature Preserve in Barrington, RI.; the Massasoit's war chief Anawan, is recognized in Rehoboth with a street, school, club, grange hall, and farm.

Although the region is sometimes associated with Newport or Providence, RI or Fall River, MA, residents and stakeholders support this border because it mirrors a landscape they already experience as a single cultural place, the home of the great Pokanoket Massasoit and his royal family.

- **Cohesive story-scape** – The boundary encompasses the Pokanoket seat at Potumtuk, early colonial town centers, King Philip's War sites, the core of Roger Williams' "lively experiment," and working waterfronts into one easily understood geography. This helps make interpretation and wayfinding intuitive for visitors and residents alike.
- **Community-driven fit** – During the feasibility study, the steering committee considered alternative edges. Public comment favored following existing municipal lines to the north and the Taunton River to the east, ensuring every town that identifies with "Sowams" is included while respecting neighboring Tribal territories.
- **Visible, bipartisan backing** – Town planning divisions, heritage organizations, and representatives of the Pokanoket Tribe have endorsed the map. Moreover, cross-border collaborations already exist and have grown more numerous as the feasibility study has progressed.

The proposed Sowams National Heritage Area boundary enjoys broad support. It emerged from a transparent public process, resonates with cultural identity, and follows recognizable natural and municipal features.

Study Findings

Along the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, the Sowams landscape still conveys some of the nation's earliest and most pivotal encounters: Pokanoket lifeways, the 1621 alliance that underpins the Thanksgiving story, the upheaval of King Philip's War, the first sustained experiments in freedom of conscience, and the maritime commerce that drew New England into the Atlantic world. Because these themes are illustrated by a compact concentration of Tribal sites, colonial town centers, battlefields, early meeting-houses, working waterfronts, and coastal and estuarine habitats, the region meets the National Park Service's tests for an assemblage of nationally significant resources with sufficient integrity for interpretation.

Since 2022, community conversations, subject matter expert interviews, and partner and governmental briefings at the local, state, and federal have broadened the understanding of the region's historical, cultural, and ecological value, and support for



Executives Marcia and Julie Blount are carrying on the legacy of their late father, Luther H. Blunt, whose shipbuilding company now designs and builds state-of-the-art crew transfer vessels for the offshore wind sector.

its designation as a National Heritage Area. While long-term funding and detailed governance will continue to evolve and require constant attention, a strong network of partners coalesced to provide a solid foundation to take on the coordinating duties of the proposed Sowams National Heritage Area.

Taken together, the nationally significant history, documented resource base, demonstrated local interest, and emerging stewardship network suggest that Sowams is well positioned for designation as a National Heritage Area.

Recommendations on Next Steps

Given the conclusion that residents of the region, under the leadership of Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc. and the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee, should pursue NHA designation by Congress, the organization has considered the next steps that must occur. A set of recommendations came out of discussions with stakeholders, community members, regional leaders, and the steering committee over the course of the feasibility study, summarized here:

1. Pursue designation by the U.S. Congress of Sowams National Heritage Area.
2. Identify and carry out early implementation projects discussed during the planning process and developed through the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee retreat.
3. Continue to build the NHA partnership network through continued outreach and early implementation projects and programs.
4. Continue to inform Tribes from the surrounding areas of the effort, leaving the door open for their future participation.
5. Implement the recommendations of the governance section to build a board and staff that can meet the evolving needs of the organization.
6. Grow fundraising to ensure a sustainable organization and NHA.



The Meadows is a recovered natural setting for "Yoga and Storytime" sponsored by the Seekonk Public Library.

Final Thoughts

The Sowams region spanning Massachusetts and Rhode Island boasts significant historical, cultural, and natural resources, each important in its own right. However, the true power of these resources lies in the stories of the people who shaped the region – from the original inhabitants to generations of newcomers – their relationships, past and present, and the lasting impact of their presence on a changing landscape. Sowams bears witness to the existence and flourishing of Indigenous culture over millennia, and also to the establishment of one of the iconic early European settlements in North America. Its story sheds light on the convergence and clash of cultures that unfolded over time, as well as the conflict inherent in our nation's founding ideals. Given its national significance, Sowams and its history, cultures, and present-day environment deserve recognition as a National Heritage Area.



APPENDIX A – PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

Board of Directors

- Paul Cogley, Treasurer – Chair of Economic Development Committee, Town of Somerset, MA
- Tracey Dancing Star – Sachem of the Pokanoket Tribe
- Dr. Charles Hartman – Retired Baptist Pastor, Swansea, MA
- Chelsea Johnson – Assistant Director, Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, MA, Program Coordinator, Bristol Historical & Preservation Society, Bristol, RI
- Steven H. Kitchin – former Chair, Select Board, Town of Swansea, MA
- Laura McNamara, Vice Chair – Director of Events and Community Engagement, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Barrington, RI
- James Moran – Former Chief Economic Planner, City of East Providence, RI
- Dr. Silas Otniel Rodrigues Pinto – Deputy Chief of People and Culture, City of Providence, RI
- Richard Pierce – Chair, Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation, Somerset, MA
- Andrea Rounds, Chair – Institutional Advancement Consultant, Bristol, RI
- Dr. David Weed, Project Historian – Founder of Sowams Early History, Warren, RI

Steering Committee Members

- John J. Aubin, III – Town Planner, Town of Seekonk, MA
- Tracey Dancing Star – Sachem of the Pokanoket Tribe
- William Guy, Winds of Thunder – Sagamore of the Pokanoket Tribe
- John P. Hansen, Jr. – Assistant Town Administrator/Community Development Director, Town of Swansea, MA
- Dr. Charles Hartman – Retired Baptist Pastor
- Chelsea Johnson – Assistant Director, Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, MA, Program Coordinator, Bristol Historical & Preservation Society, Bristol, RI
- John Larsen – Director, Somerset Historical Society, Somerset, MA
- Laura McNamara – Director of Events and Community Engagement, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- James Moran – Former Chief Economic Planner, City of East Providence, RI
- Bill Napolitano – Taunton River Watershed Alliance
- Dr. Silas Otniel Rodrigues Pinto – Deputy Chief of People and Culture, City of Providence, RI
- Andrea Rounds – Sowams Project Advisor
- Rock Singewald – Warren Land Trust, Warren, RI
- Dr. David Weed – Sowams Project Historian
- Diane Williamson – Director of Community Development, Bristol, RI

Planning Team

POINT Heritage Development Consulting

- Dr. Nancy I. M. Morgan, Principal
- August R. Carlino
- Peter Samuel

Stakeholder Interviews

- Dr. Jeremy Bangs – Founder, Leiden American Pilgrim Museum
- Tracey Dancing Star – Sachem of the Pokanoket Tribe
- Dr. Charlotte Carrington-Farmer – Associate Professor of History, Roger Williams University
- Eric Chiasson – Regional Tribal Liaison, Region 1, National Park Service
- Elizabeth Francis – Executive Director, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities
- C. Morgan Grefe – Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Society
- William Guy, Winds of Thunder – Sagamore of the Pokanoket Tribe
- John P. Hansen, Jr. – Assistant Town Administrator/Community Development Director, Town of Swansea, MA
- James Moran – Chief Economic Planner, City of East Providence, RI
- Julia Renaud – Associate Director of Grants and Strategic Initiatives, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities
- Stephen Venuti – Former officer of the Barrington Preservation Society; former member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee
- Raymond “Two Hawks” Watson, Esq – Chief of the Mashapaug Nahaganset Tribe, Director of the Center for Indigenous People’s Rights
- Dr. Catherine Zipf – Executive Director, Bristol Historic and Preservation Society

Subject Matter Experts

- Don Brown, Jr., Strong Turtle – Tribal Historian of the Pokanoket Tribe
- Dr. Jeremy Campbell – Professor of Anthropology, George Mason University (formerly of Roger Williams University)
- Jeffrey Emidy – Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
- Dr. J. Stanley Lemons – Professor Emeritus, Rhode Island College
- Richard Pickering – Deputy Executive Director, Plimoth-Patuxet Museums
- James Warren – Historian and author of *God, War, and Providence*
- Dr. Catherine Zipf – Executive Director, Bristol Historical & Preservation Society

APPENDIX B – SOWAMS PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Steering Committee Outreach Plan

The Sowams Heritage Area Project Outreach Plan was launched at the meeting of the Steering Committee on June 20, 2023. The purpose of the plan was to engage the Steering Committee in building a robust network of stakeholders, partners and influencers to support and advocate for the Sowams Project. Each Steering Committee member received an Outreach Toolkit, which included FAQs, Talking Points, a sample Meeting Briefing and sample Contact Report. At that time, 12 people served on the Steering Committee.

Each Steering Committee member was assigned a portfolio of individuals and/or groups to meet and cultivate. Combined, the Committee engaged more than 70 individuals, including 13 Tribal leaders. In addition, Steering Committee members, alone or in sub-committees, were responsible for reaching out to the district teams of four US senators and three US congressmen; numerous state senators and representatives; managers, councilors, and select persons from nine municipalities; and religious communities, historic societies, environmental groups, business organizations, and the arts community.

Many of these meetings were the beginnings of ongoing relationships. For instance, a meeting with the founder of *Hope and Main* food incubator led to *Hope and Main* hosting one of the public input sessions. Outreach to the *Friends of the Palmer River* resulted in an introductory meeting of land trusts and environmental groups in Sowams. A Steering Committee member who is a retired pastor mobilized the churches in Sowams, encouraging them to invite their congregants to the Community Conversations.

Contact names and new leads were added to the Sowams database, so that Sowams Project Updates could be sent monthly.

Summary of Informational Meetings

Project leadership conducted extensive outreach, participating in and providing information about the emerging National Heritage Area at 464 meetings over years. *Monthly meetings with the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee, Board of Directors, subcommittees, the consultant team, and Friends of the Pokanoket Tribe are not included in this list.*

2018 – 30 Meetings

January 10 to December 6 – Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Heritage Foundations, Historic Commissions, Land Conservation Organizations, Town Councils, Rotary Clubs, Tribal Representatives.

2019 – 14 Meetings

January 8 to December 12 – Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Historical Societies, Rotary Clubs, Town Councils, and Tribal Councils.

2020 – 5 Meetings

January 7 to October 27 – Mayor of East Providence and Town Councils of Barrington and Warren.

2021 – 5 Meetings

April 27 to December 6 – American Indian Study Committee and Town Councils.

2022 – 94 Meetings

January 13 to December 14 – Arts Centers and Festivals, Chambers of Commerce, Estuary Commission, Historic Sites, Historical Societies, Indian Affairs Commission, Museums, National Park Service, Preservation Societies, State Parks, Town Councils, Town Planners, Tourism and Economic Development Groups, and the Staffs of U.S. Senator Jack Reed (RI) and U.S. Senator Edward Markey (MA). The year also included participation in several academic conferences and the initial meeting of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee.

2023 – 154 Meetings

January 7 to December 21 – American Indian Study Committee and Indian Affairs Commission, Antiquarian Society, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Directors, DAR, Genocide Education Commission, Historical Societies, Inter-Tribal Powwow, Land Trusts, Libraries, Local Businesses, Local Government Planners, Museums, RI Council on the Humanities, RI Foundation, Religious Leaders, Senior Centers, Spring Fest Event, Tourism Professionals, Tribal Members, Universities, and the Staffs of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (MA) and U.S. Congressman Jake Auchincloss (MA).

2024 – 93 Meetings

January 4 to December 28 – Arts Organizations, Community Development Groups, Genocide Education Commission, Land and Water Conservation Organizations, Libraries, Local Businesses, Historic Sites, Historical Societies, Middle Passage Project, Museums, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, Religious Leaders, RI Historical and Preservation Society, Town Councils, Tribal Councils, and Universities. Project representatives also participated in the Meshanicut Cultural Place-making Festival and met with the Staffs of U.S. Senator Jack Reed (RI), U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (MA), U.S. Senator Edward Markey (MA), U.S. Congressman Jake Auchincloss (MA), and U.S. Congressman Gabe Amo (RI).

2025-2026 (to date) – 65 Meetings

April 24, 2025, to March 31, 2026 – Tourism Agencies, Libraries, Historic Sites, Historical Societies, Arts Organizations, Religious Leaders, Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project, University Professors, RI and MA State Legislators and Governors' Staff. and the RI Historic Preservation Officer. Project representatives presented in commemorations of the 250th Anniversary of King Philip's War and local America250 events, as well as at Select Board Meetings in Massachusetts and Town/City Council Meetings in Rhode Island. Representatives of the Steering Committee/Board of Directors met with U.S. Congressman Gabe Amo (1-RI) and Seth Magaziner (2-RI), as well as the Staffs of U.S. Senator Jack Reed (RI), U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (MA), U.S. Senator Edward Markey (MA), and U.S. Congressman Jake Auchincloss (MA).

Public Meetings

The Steering Committee hosted four "Community Conversations" to introduce the public to the Sowams Heritage Area Project and invite their feedback:

1) October 17, 2023 First Christian Congregational Church Swansea, MA Total attendance: 35	2) October 18, 2023 Hope and Main Food Incubator Warren, RI Total attendance: 29
3) March 26, 2024 Seekonk Public Library Seekonk, MA Total attendance: 67	4) March 27, 2024 Mt. Hope Farm Bristol, RI Total attendance: 55
5) March 19, 2026 Newman Congregational Church, East Providence, RI Total Attendance: 76	

Branding, Brochures, Website, and Newsletter

Outreach during the National Heritage Area feasibility study also included the development of a logo and digital and print materials that provide information about the initiative. They are described briefly below, and examples of each are found on the following pages.

Logo Development

The Sowams Heritage Area logo was developed by artist Mary Dondero in 2023 to be used on all materials associated with the emerging National Heritage Area.

Brochures

Two brochures have been created and are currently in circulation. One is a tri-fold brochure with general information and QR codes for the user to obtain additional information. The other highlights the history of the Sowams region and the interpretive themes of the emerging National Heritage Area. The history brochure includes a map with key sites identified on it.

Websites

A revamped interactive website (www.sowams.org) went live in January 2025. This features maps, explains the interpretive themes and stories in the emerging National Heritage Area, and highlights the various sites that can be visited throughout the region. A partner website, Sowams Early History (sowamsearlyhistory.org), created by David S. Weed in 2017 the precursor to Sowams Heritage Area. This is a digital archive containing in-depth information on 17th century history and resources associated with that time period.

Newsletter

The Sowams Steering Committee began electronic distribution of a monthly newsletter called the “Sowams Project Update” in 2023, which was rebranded in January 2025 as “Sowams News.” The Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and the board that has succeeded it has been consistently sharing this with a mailing list that currently has 586 subscribers to report on meetings and news in the region that has an impact on the development of the future National Heritage Area. An archive of the “Sowams Project Update” is available at <https://www.sowams.org/sowams-heritage-area-news>. All editions of “Sowams News” are posted on the “News” page of the [sowams.org](http://www.sowams.org) website.

Sowams Heritage Area

Brand and Creatives

Logo

Representing Sowams Heritage Area, the logo implies a sense of place, history, and cultural importance, while appealing to a wide, contemporary audience. Simple iconic shapes are reinterpreted to reflect the Pokanoket people who lived in Sowams for more than 12,000 years and the interplay of land and water that defines the Sowams landscape.

Sky: The sun is positioned to the right, signifying the sun rising in the east. The Pokanoket and other Tribes on the New England coast believed they lived where the day begins.

Water: The color scheme of the water specifically represents the grey/blue of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New England.

Earth: Embedded in the logo is the word “Sowams” whose letterform is in the negative, suggesting a representation of earth. Its distinctive geometric shapes give it a strong identity.



Typography



Color Palette

RGB: (14, 78, 95) CMYK: (93, 60, 46, 28)	
RGB: (113, 145, 161) CMYK: (59, 34, 29, 1)	
RGB: (249, 224, 169) CMYK: (2, 10, 38, 0)	
RGB: (232, 127, 36) CMYK: (6, 60, 100, 0)	
RGB: (35, 66, 14) CMYK: (64, 23, 100, 71)	
RGB: (158, 66, 41) CMYK: (26, 83, 93, 20)	
RGB: (218, 183, 112) CMYK: (15, 26, 65, 0)	

Digital Media

Website: sowams.org
Facebook: sowams heritage area
Newsletter: Sowams News

Includes interactive maps and timelines
376 followers
586 subscribers

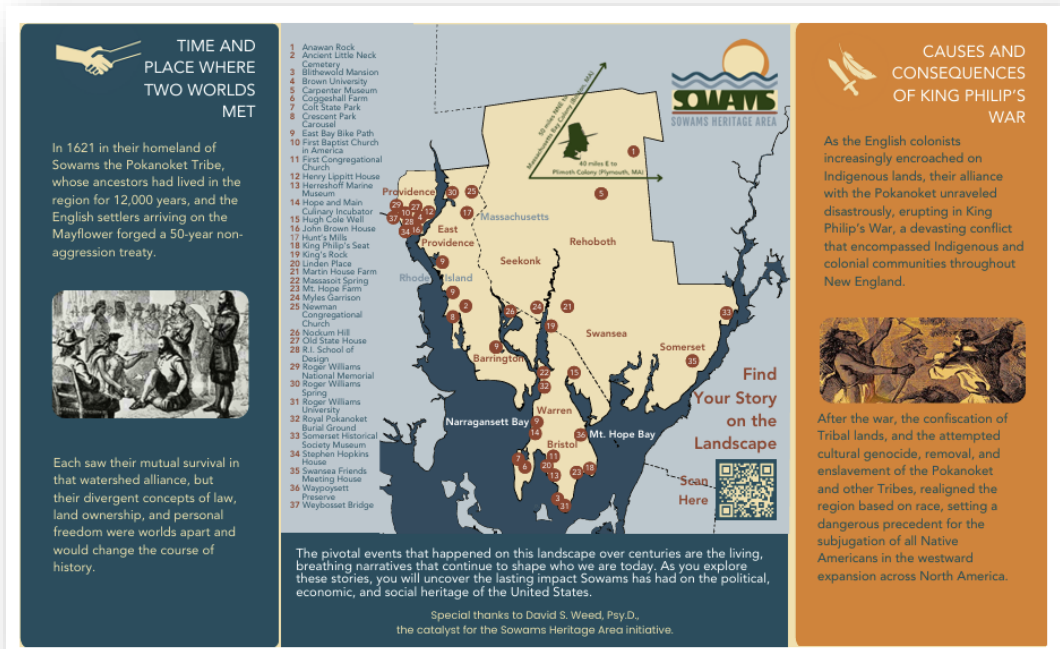
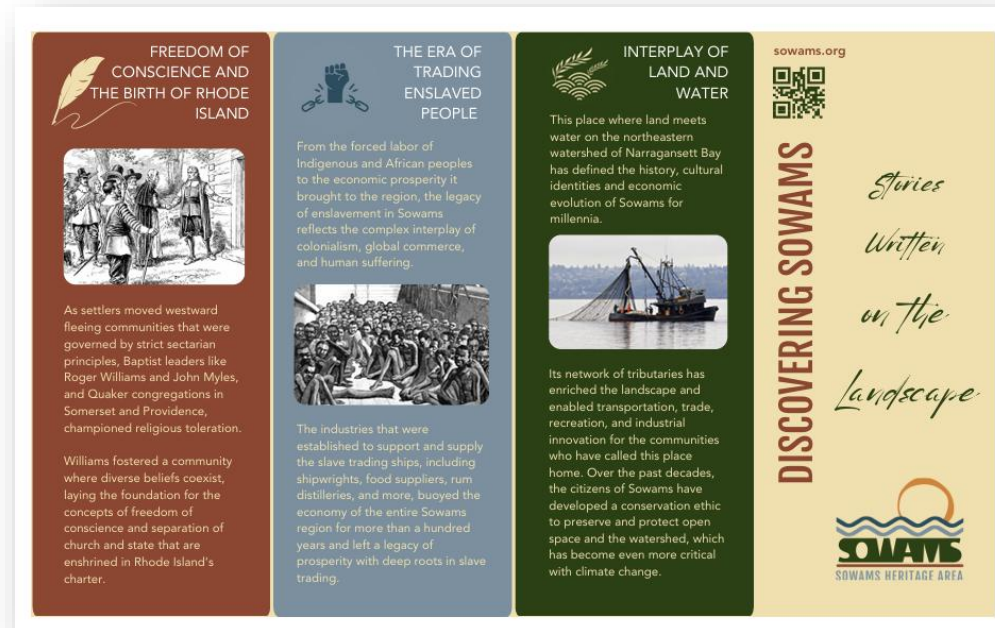
Sowams Brochures

8.5" x 11" Trifold

8.5" x 14" Accordion

Sowams Heritage Area, includes QR codes to website pages and maps

Sowams Stories, includes Interpretive Themes and a map with featured sites



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- To foster collaborations among local organizations to help them fulfill their missions.
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- To provide a platform where stories can be shared and heard.
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Where the land & water tell stories still unfolding.

scan to visit SOWAMS.ORG



EXPERIENCE SOWAMS

Whether you are seeking knowledge, a lover of adventure, or looking to connect with the diverse threads that have woven together to form our society, Sowams offers a journey that is as enlightening as it is transformative.

Wonder

Explore the living landscape that was a setting for America's origin story—ancient natural landmarks, towns with 350 years of history, and a thriving cultural scene.



Enjoy

Experience the vibrant communities of Sowams. Visit local shops, museums and hidden gems, and meet the artists, artisans, and culinary makers who steward their cultural legacy.



Connect

Immerse yourself in nature—sail the bays, hike scenic trails, or stroll through gardens and parks that showcase the beauty of Sowams' waters and landscapes.



Learn

Delve into the pivotal events and diverse cultures that shaped this land. From colonization to innovation, Sowams offers a deep dive into history that is still alive today.



TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024

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Top Stories - April 13 (/detail.html?sub_id=121311) / Sowams Heritage Area talks generate significant ...

Sowams Heritage Area talks generate significant interest



(https://epsilon.creativecirclecdn.com/eastbayri/original/20240411-124321-Sowams%20Talks.jpg)

Consultant Nancy Morgan begins a Community Conversation with more than 60 people who gathered at Mount Hope Farm on March 27 to discuss the future of a proposed Sowams National Heritage Area.

Posted Friday, April 12, 2024 6:00 am

More than 130 people attended the Community Conversations presented by the Sowams Heritage Area Project at the Seekonk Public Library, in Seekonk, Mass. on March 26, 2024, and Mt. Hope Farm in Bristol, RI on March 27, 2024.

Both events were packed with people from the region known as Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621.

They came to discuss the future of the proposed Sowams National Heritage Area (NHA) and its impact on the nine towns/cities in the NHA study area: Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, a portion of Providence, and Warren, RI, as well as Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, and Swansea, Mass.

"The ideas were flying," said Laura McNamara, Director of Events and Community Engagement for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, who was one of the Sowams Project Steering Committee members tasked with recording one of the break-out sessions. "There was an impressive and diverse range of people that included environmentalists, historians, Tribal members, business owners, preservationists, religious leaders, artists and writers, civil servants, and two toddlers!"

This was the second of three rounds of public conversations that are integral to the development of an NHA feasibility study, which the National Park Service recommends when seeking designation by Congress as a National Heritage Area. The discussions

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(1)

Barrington Town Council endorses Sowams National Heritage Area

U.S. Congress will make final determination on designation



(<https://epsilon.creativecircledn.com/eastbayri/original/20251222-155910-6b2-sowams%20heritage.jpeg>)

The Barrington Town Council recently approved a resolution supporting the creation of the Sowams National Heritage Area, which recognizes the region's important role in the country's development. Shown is Lot 3A at Nockum Hill.

Posted Monday, December 22, 2025 4:00 pm

SOWAMS NHA: 140 SQUARE MILES

A presentation shared with members of the Barrington Town Council during the Dec. 1 meeting offered information about the program and about the Sowams area. Following are some National Heritage Area facts:

- Each National Heritage Area is created through individual federal law
- Through annual Congressional appropriations, the National Park Service distributes funds to National Heritage Area entities. Although most

By Josh Bickford

The effort to create the Sowams National Heritage Area received a lot of support and a little bit of push-back during the Barrington Town Council meeting earlier this month.

The majority of people who spoke about the issue shared their appreciation for the effort to create a new land designation for nine area towns, including Barrington, that would recognize the region's important role in the country's development and "celebrate its contributions to American history and culture."

The Sowams National Heritage Area request coincided with a presentation about a recent archeological survey of the land at Nockum Hill on George Street in Barrington. Preservation officials said the survey revealed dozens of musket balls and other evidence that shows the property played a crucial role in American history, serving as the location for the start of King Philip's War.

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<https://www.eastbayri.com//////////stories/barrington-town-council-endorses-sowams-national-heritage-area,136501>

Page 1 of 4

Adams said she had visited the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and noticed the helpful information signs throughout. She said she was excited to support the effort. Robinson said he had been involved with the Blackstone River Valley effort and said the program allows communities the opportunity to tell their own local or regional story. He said that bringing the towns together in the Sowams National Heritage Area would allow them to amplify the effort.

Councilors shared their support for the effort also. Jordan Jancosek said she reached out to the groups who were involved in establishing a different National Heritage Area to learn more. She said the effort could benefit Barrington and the other towns. O'Neill referenced a letter of support from Rhode Island Commerce Corporation President and CEO Jim Bennett.

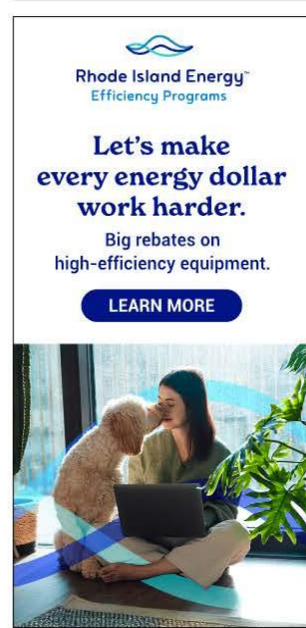
OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Hark, the herald students sing
(/stories/hark-the-herald-students-sing,136575)

Christmas comes early in Westport
(/stories/christmas-comes-early-in-westport,136572)

Bringing the bling to Bristol for seven decades
(/stories/bringing-the-bling-to-bristol-for-seven-decades,136521)

New film about Christmas features scenes shot in and ...
(/stories/new-film-about-christmas-features-scenes-shot-in-and-around-town,136523)



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(https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/5dUmq8A)

Sowams Newsletter



Sowams News: December 2025

The pivotal events that happened in Sowams over centuries are the living, breathing narratives that continue to shape who we are today.

Tour the digital landscape of Sowams Heritage Area at

sowams.org

Passing the Torch

After four years, the Sowams Steering Committee wraps up Phase I: the planning stage



In January 2022, the Sowams Steering Committee was established to lead the first stage of a regional initiative to designate as a National Heritage Area (NHA) Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621.

Composed of partners from the nine towns of Sowams, the volunteer coalition represented a wide range of interests in the area, including leaders of local government, the Pokanoket Tribe, tourism entities, historical societies, museums, land trusts, and the arts and education sector.

Setting the Stage



With the help of hundreds of individuals and organizations throughout the region, the Steering Committee assessed the feasibility of creating a National Heritage Area in Sowams.

The planning team identified the nationally significant resources on the landscape; explored interpretive themes that tell the stories of Sowams; told those stories; and engaged a broad swath of the community.

Telling the Story



Rachel Averitt



Mary Dondero

Sowams has many stories to tell, and the planning team wants to provide a platform for all voices to be heard.

Our Storytellers

Mary Dondero—artist, professor, and curator of the Bristol Art Museum—designed the Sowams logo to convey a sense of place and cultural importance with iconic representations of sky, earth and water.

sowams.org

Rachel Averitt, founder of Rely on Rach, designed the sowams.org website to enhance Sowams digital presence, support and amplify community voices, and honor historical storytelling.

Mapping the Landscape



A big shoutout to Mariel Sorlien from the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program for analyzing the Geographic Information System data in Sowams and making various maps of the region.

Sowams is situated on the northeastern watershed of Narragansett Bay, which is fed by 12 rivers that flow through the landscape. For millennia, this nexus of land and water has defined the history, culture, and economy of the region.

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

Identifying the Resources



Sowams Project Historian David S. Weed led the Resources Committee, identifying 187 nationally significant sites, from ancient Indigenous landmarks to cultural destinations that welcome visitors today.

Ever since he witnessed the reburial of the Massasoit Ousamequin in 2017 in Warren, RI, Dr. Weed has been interested in 17th century Sowams. For a deeper dive into the region's early history, explore his trove of research and archives on his website.

Sowams Early History

Engaging the Community

The "Places of the Heart" promotion encouraged the public to share what they love about Sowams.



Participants in the public workshops discussed the benefits of the National Heritage Area program and brainstormed about how NHA designation could help showcase their own communities.

These Community Conversations were hosted by early supporters of the Sowams Heritage Area Project:

Mt. Hope Farm

Seekonk Public Library

The Old White Church

Hope and Main Culinary Incubator

In May 2025, the Steering Committee held a retreat at the Bristol Art Museum to review their progress and identify the final tasks for Phase I of the planning process.



Planning Next Steps

The Steering Committee agreed that Sowams Heritage Area was no longer just a project, but a real, functioning regional heritage area.

High on the committee's list of priorities was preparing to pass the torch to a reconstituted formal Board of Directors in January 2026. The new team would oversee Phase II, the process of seeking Congressional designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.



In successful NHAs, the central governing entity does not dominate but instead facilitates, enabling the partners to take active roles in advancing common goals.

Join us!

The Sowams team wants to expand its volunteer network in 2026. If you are interested in helping with research, programming, marketing, community engagement, or operations, please click on this link:

[How to Get Involved](#)

To the members of the Sowams Steering Committee and to all our friends and partners,
Thank you for leading the way!



As the torch is passed, we will all continue to support the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area in 2026.

Happy New Year!



Stories on the Landscape



Sowams Heritage Area explores five interlocking interpretive themes. These stories are woven through our collective legacy.

Stories on the Landscape

- ~ The Time and Place Where Two Worlds Met
- ~ The Causes and Consequences of King Philip's War
- ~ Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island
- ~ The Era of Trading Enslaved People
- ~ The Interplay of Land and Water

Where Land and Water Meet



The ancestral homeland of the Massasoit today is comprised of Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Warren, and portions of Providence, RI; as well as Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, and Swansea, MA

We are deeply grateful for your support, whether by contributing, volunteering your time, or collaborating with our heritage partners.

[Support Sowams](#)

Sowams Heritage Area is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization sustained by the generosity of our supporters.

Please share our newsletter and stay connected!

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Sowams News: March 2026

Thanks for your feedback!

The Sowams planning team is grateful to the community for its feedback on the draft Sowams National Heritage Area feasibility study. If you missed the Community Conversation, here's the video

[Community Conversation Video](#)



The Sowams partnership network turned out in force for the final Community Conversation at the Newman Congregational Church on March 19.

Reflecting the mosaic of communities in Sowams, the 74 participants represented historic societies, environmental groups, Tribes, municipalities, and places of worship.

"We are absolutely 100% behind it. We'll do what we can on our part to lobby our congressional delegation to get support for this designation."

--- Mayor Roberto DaSilva



Mayor DaSilva brought a contingent of leaders from the City of East Providence, representing the planning department, the East Providence Conservation Commission, and the Mayor's Advisory Council on Indigenous Affairs.

Stewarding Sowams

The citizens of Sowams share a conservation ethic to preserve and protect open space and the watershed.



Roger (Gray Fox) Desrosiers, Taunton River Stewardship Council, and Patrick Hanner, Principal Planner, City of East Providence

Participants from the environmental sector included the Barrington Conservation Land Trust --- Blithewold Manor, Gardens, and Arboretum --- Friends of the 10-Mile River Watershed --- Osamequin Farm --- Rehoboth Land Trust --- Save the Bay --- Taunton River Watershed --- and the Warren Land Trust.

"One of the things that's been wonderful about our group is that we've had everyone around the table talking, getting together, making things happen."

---Jim Moran, Board member



John Aubin and Jim Moran

John Aubin, Seekonk Town Planner, and Jim Moran, former Chief Economic Planner, City of East Providence, led a discussion about the benefits of designation as a National Heritage Area

- With professional management, NHA designation lifts the organization to a new level, raising awareness and engaging more people in the process.
- Leveraging the NHA brand helps organizations become more competitive in securing grants for placemaking projects and environmental protection initiatives, such as those for water quality and wildlife habitat.

Added Value



"I've had a lot of involvement with the five heritage areas that already exist in Massachusetts. They're all great organizations, and they add a lot of value to their communities. So, I think the same would hold true here."

--- Russ Cohen, Independent Naturalist

Other organizations represented were the Bristol 250 Commission --- the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society --- the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project --- the Center for Indigenous People's Rights --- the City of Providence Department of People and Culture --- the East Providence Historical Society --- the Providence Cultural Equity Initiative --- Sowams Early History --- the Somerset Economic Development Commission --- the Somerset Historical Society --- the Town of Swansea Select Board

"This Church has existed in three counties, two states, and three towns without ever having moved---

The towns of Rehoboth, Seekonk, and East Providence; the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island; and the countries of the U.S, England, and Sowams."

--- Reverend Sam Lovett, Newman Church



Other participants in the event share the Newman Church's legacy of religious tolerance in Sowams:

- Reverend Nancy Soukup is the minister of the First Congregational Church in Bristol
- Rick Peirson is leading the effort to restore the Swansea Friends Meeting House in Somerset
- Retired pastor, Charlie Hartman, is the 43rd pastor of the Swansea Baptist Church in Swansea, founded in 1667

We've invested our heart and soul into this over the years, and we intend to bring even more people and more organizations into the process. We're ready to go!"



--- Laura McNamara, Board member

The pivotal events that happened in Sowams over centuries are the living, breathing narratives that continue to shape who we are today.

Tour the digital landscape of Sowams Heritage Area at

sowams.org



Stories on the Landscape

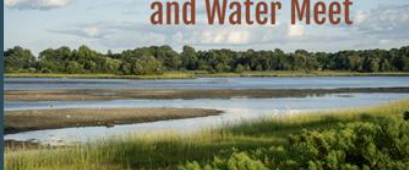


Photo by Rachel Abbott

Stories on the Landscape

- ~ The Time and Place Where Two Worlds Met
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Where Land and Water Meet



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APPENDIX C – CONCURRENT PLANS

PLAN	ORGANIZATION	AVAILABILITY	CONNECTION WITH NHA
Title (Year)	Name of Organization	Link to Web Address/Location	Brief Explanation of Contents and/or Relevance
Barrington, RI, 2050 Comprehensive Community Plan Update (currently being written)	Town of Barrington, RI	https://ri-barrington.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/171/Comprehensive-Plan---2015-Update-PDF?bidId=	Town Comprehensive Plan designates as a critical environmental and cultural asset Nockum Hill. The archeological projects on this site are central to interpreting the causes and consequences of King Philip's War in Sowams
Barrington-Palmer-Warren Rivers Watershed Plan (2012)	RI Dept of Environmental Management	https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkg-bur861/files/programs/benviron/water/quality/pdf/bpwatplan.pdf	Foundational plan for intra-state management of the watershed in the Sowams towns of Barrington, Bristol, East Providence and Warren, RI and Rehoboth, Seekonk and Swansea, MA
Bristol-Kickemuit Rivers Watershed Plan (2012)	RI Dept of Environmental Management	https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkg-bur861/files/programs/benviron/water/quality/pdf/bkwatplan.pdf	Foundational plan for intra-state management of the watershed in the Sowams towns of Bristol and Warren, RI and Rehoboth and Swansea, MA, which are towns closely associated with the start and end of King Philip's War
Brown University Facilities Master Plan (2023)	Brown University, Providence, RI	https://facilities.brown.edu/sites/default/files/documents/2023_0818-2023-Brown-IMP-FINAL-Digital.pdf	Impacts the development of the College Hill Historic District in Sowams, which includes the First Baptist Church in America and several landmark buildings associated with the Brown family and other prominent figures in Rhode Island history
City of East Providence, RI Comprehensive Plan (2024-2034)	Planning Department, City of East Providence, RI	https://eastprovidenceri.gov/sites/default/files/field/files-docs/250220_epcp_updateddraft_1-compressed_1.pdf	City Comprehensive Plan to identify resources to protect and development potential, including the redevelopment of Watchemoket Square, whose history goes back to when it was a major crossing point over the Seekonk River for the Pokanoket
Light the Way: Strategic Vision for 2024	Moses Brown School	https://www.mosesbrown.org/about/lighttheway	Strategic vision in celebration of 250 years of Quaker education at a school founded by the abolitionist Moses Brown, brother of John Brown whose wealth came from trading enslaved peoples

Massachusetts Cultural Council Strategic Plan (2024-2026)	Massachusetts Cultural Council	https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/who-we-are/strategic-plan/	Objectives include building partnerships and storytelling, both inside and outside of the sector. Provides a roadmap for the cultural councils in each of the four Massachusetts towns in Sowams
Mass Humanities Strategic Operational Plan (2021-2024)	Mass Humanities	https://masshumanities.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mass-Humanities-2021-24-Strategic-and-Operating-Plan-1.pdf	Goals include catalyze civic engagement and expand stories of Massachusetts, which mirrors the outreach strategy for Sowams Heritage Area
Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Plan (2023-2031)	Massachusetts Historical Commission	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/mhc/download/2023-2031-state%20hist-pres-plan-comment.pdf	Preservation plan to identify, document, and conserve historic resources in Massachusetts
Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2023)	Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	https://www.mass.gov/files/massachusetts-scorp-2017-for-submission.pdf	Massachusetts statewide plan to consider acquisition of open space, development and renovation of parks, and trail construction
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Update (2025)	Narragansett Bay Estuary Program	https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eea260cea828333324dba1c/t/672e2370c6e11d6edb22c019/1731076981544/Draft%2B2025%2BNBEP%2BCCMP%2BUdpate%2BPublic+V3.pdf	A regional call to action for “shared efforts that can measurably improve the region’s water quality, wildlife, and quality of life over the next decade.” This aligns with the priorities of Sowams Heritage Area and its environmental partners
Ocean State Accelerates: Rhode Island’s 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	Rhode Island Commerce	https://commerceri.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/00_OceanStateAccelerates_Strategy_FINAL.APPROVED_optimized.pdf	Includes “asset-based community development” that impacts quality of life and place-making in the Rhode Island towns of Sowams
Ocean State Outdoors – Rhode Island’s Comprehensive Recreation Plan (2019)	Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management	https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkg-bur861/files/2024-05/scorp19.pdf	Establishes long-term goals and policies and a five-year “Plan for Action” for outdoor recreation in Rhode Island; impacts Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Providence and Warren, RI
Only Together: Five Year Action Plan (2024)	Rhode Island Foundation	https://rifoundation.org/news/only-together-our-five-year-action-plan	As the premier community foundation in Rhode Island, RIF’s strategic priorities can enhance opportunities to bring the RI communities of Sowams together
Palmer River Land Use & Regulatory Analysis Report (2019)	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/documents/palmer-snep-lurar.pdf	Assessment of land use change and development patterns in the Palmer River Watershed in portions of Rehoboth, Seekonk, and Swansea, MA, and Warren and Barrington, RI

Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island (2021-2028)	Rhode Island Preservation & Heritage Commission	https://preservation.ri.gov/preserve-project/preservation-planning	Preservation Plan to identify, document, and conserve historic resources in Rhode Island
Providence, RI, Comprehensive Plan (2024)	Planning Department, City of Providence, RI	www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Comprehensive-Plan_Ordinance-2024-66-No465_11.22.24.pdf	City Comprehensive Plan to identify resources to protect and development potential, including the Moshassuck region of Sowams between the Moshassuck River and the Seekonk River
Rehoboth, MA Reconnaissance Report – Heritage Landscape Inventory Program (2001)	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation	https://www.mass.gov/doc/rehoboth/download	Analysis of Rehoboth’s cultural landscapes with focus on landscape character, reflects the integration of historic interpretation, place-making, and environmental conservation, a defining strategy of Sowams Heritage Area
Rhode Island Civic Health Index (2022)	Rhode Island Council for the Humanities	https://rihumanities.org/program/ri-civic-health-index/	Provides a baseline to help communities, leaders, and policy makers understand what challenges and opportunities Rhode Islanders share. This will support the work of heritage partners in the Rhode Island town of Sowams
RI 2030 Charting a Course for the Future of the Ocean State (2025)	Working document of Governor Dan McKee	https://rhodeisland2030.ri.gov	Invites Rhode Islanders to incorporate their initiatives into long-term strategic planning; including driving economic development and growth and addressing climate change
Roger Williams University Strategic Action Plan (2021)	Roger Williams University	https://www.rwu.edu/who-we-are/strategic-action-plan	Priorities include engaged learning and sustainable futures; RWU’s admired community engagement programs can play a critical role in research and outreach for Sowams Heritage Area
Rt. 6/118 Corridor Study (2024)	Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District	https://srpedd.org/economic-development/swansea-route-6-118-corridor-study/	Study to explore redevelopment potential along Route 6 and the Route 118 intersection in Swansea, MA
Save the Bay: 2027 Strategic Plan	Save the Bay	https://savebay.org/strategic-plan-2027/?srsltid=AfmBOooeLKH9xgPFNIT3PouZ8XG4BKKggj0NyEbJ3MGntQOqFpyg	Outlines the strategic priorities of the primary organization dedicated to engaging the communities along the shore of Narragansett Bay, whose northeastern watershed comprises the Sowams landscape

Somerset Development Guide, Town of Somerset, MA (2021)	Town of Somerset, MA	Somerset-Development-Guide-PDF	Town Comprehensive Plan to identify resources to protect and development potential of Somerset, MA, which is the southeastern border of Sowams
Taunton River Stewardship Plan – Taunton River Wild and Scenic River Study (2005)	Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee/ Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District and the National Park Service Northeast Regional Office	https://wpwildrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Taunton-River-Stewardship-Plan.pdf	Resource protection plan for the Taunton River, which is the southeastern border of Sowams; this National Wild and Scenic River was a major waterway for both Indigenous people and colonists in the 17 th century and a shipbuilding center in Somerset, MA in the 19 th century
Ten-Year Master Plan for the Farm Campus (2024)	The Wheeler School Farm campus, Seekonk, MA	https://www.wheelerschool.org/the-future-of-the-farm/	Plan for expanding capacity to incorporate nature- and place-based learning in the 120-acre Farm campus of the Wheeler School; this will have a significant impact on the open space plan for the Sowams town of Seekonk, MA
Town of Bristol, RI Comprehensive Community Plan (2016)	Town of Bristol, RI	https://planning.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkg-bur826/files/documents/comp/2017/BRI-10YP-16_StateApproved_20170202.pdf	Town Comprehensive Plan to identify resources to protect and development potential in Bristol, where the Pokanoket recently reclaimed a portion of its sacred Mt. Hope lands
Town of Seekonk, MA Master Plan Update (2022)	Town of Seekonk, MA	Master Plan Update (Working Draft) Seekonk, MA	Town Comprehensive Plan to identify resources and development potential, such as Osamequin Farm and the Gamino Pond Preserve
Town of Swansea, MA, Comprehensive Plan (2024)	Town of Swansea, MA	Swansea-Comprehensive-Plan-03-30-2024-1.pdf	Town Comprehensive Plan to identify resources and development potential in Swansea, MA, which was one of two towns in Sowams established by Plymouth Colony
Town of Warren, RI, Comprehensive Plan (2024)	Town of Warren, RI	https://www.townofwarren-ri.gov/WARREN_COMPPLAN_FINALDRAFT_06122024.pdf	Town Comprehensive Plan to identify resources to protect and development potential of Warren, RI, where skirmishes ignited the King Philip's War; today Warren's economy reflects its legacy of shipbuilding and shell-fishing

APPENDIX D – SOWAMS PARTNERS

SOWAMS HERITAGE AREA – CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS		
(p=current partner; los = letter of support; city/town resolution)		
ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES
Academic Institutions and Libraries		
Barrington Public Library (p, los)	Founded in 1880, the library also houses the Barrington Preservation Society's Museum	The collection currently holds Indigenous and colonial objects, and will eventually include the artifacts unearthed from the archaeological digs on Nockum Hill, where King Philip's War began.
Blanding Free Public Library (p, los)	Located in Rehoboth, MA; operated by the Rehoboth Antiquarian Society	The Library preserves, promotes and enhances the significant historical, educational and cultural assets of Rehoboth, MA
Brown University	Founded in 1764, Brown was one of nine colleges chartered before the American Revolution and the first to codify tolerance of "sectarian differences of opinions"	Prime resource for slave trade research for Sowams feasibility study; other academic resources include John Nicholas Brown Center for Advance Study of Public Humanities
George Hail Library and Charles Whipple Greene Museum (los, p)	Historic public library and museum in Warren, RI	Promotes and hosts Sowams events and programming
Moses Brown School	Quaker private secondary school founded in 1784 by abolitionist member of the prominent merchant family in Providence	Collaborating with faculty member on Quaker 17 th Century history and their role in the King Philip's War
Providence Public Library	Privately governed and supported public library in Providence, RI	The catalogue includes historic books, manuscripts, photographs, ephemera, maps, and other artifacts

Public schools in Sowams	The K-12 schools in the nine towns/cities in MA and RI	Opportunities for engaging students in Sowams Interpretive Themes
Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)	One of the first art and design schools in the U.S., founded as a co-educational school for industrial design	Illustration department expressed interest in documenting Sowams sites; opportunities to collaborate with specific programs, such as Landscape Design, and others
Rogers Free Library	Public library in Bristol, RI	Promotes and hosts Sowams events and programming
Roger Williams University (p)	Private university named after the founder of Rhode Island; situated on the ancestral Pokanoket Mt. Hope lands in Bristol, RI	Faculty member is a frequent speaker at Sowams affiliated events; Director of Co-Lab is on the Sowams Programming Committee
Seekonk Public Library (p, los)	Public library in Seekonk, MA	Hosted Sowams Community Conversation; opportunity to promote and host other Sowams events and programming
Somerset Public Library (p, los)	Free public library in Somerset, MA	Founded in the 1880s, the library is the town's primary community center; its collection includes a room dedicated to Somerset history
Swansea Free Public Library	Free public library in Swansea, MA	The original 1800 Gothic Revival building is being renovated and expanded to include a major space, special collections, and a room dedicated to local history
Weaver Library (p)	Public library in East Providence, MA	Hosted organizational meeting of Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee; opportunity to promote and host other Sowams events and programming

Wheeler School Farm Campus	Located in Seekonk, MA, “Country Campus” of a private secondary school founded in 1889 in Providence, RI	Potential partnership with environmental studies on the farm, as well as with general curriculum on Providence campus
Arts and Culture		
Arts in Common and PorchFest	Consortium of artists on the Bristol Town Common and host of the annual PorchFest music festival on High Street in Bristol, RI	Opportunity for collaboration with the creative community
Bristol Art Museum (BAM) (p, los)	Regional arts museum in Bristol, RI founded in 1963	The museum’s curator designed Sowams logo and is creating a fine art photographic study of Sowams Indigenous sites; hosted the Steering Committee retreat
Cape Verdean American Community Development of Rhode Island	Advances and strengthens the Cape Verdean community to honor the past, embrace the present and empower the future	Reflects heritage of Cape Verdean culture in the story of Sowams
Cape Verdean Progressive Center	Preserves Cape Verdean culture and promotes good will and fellowship through integrated social, educational, and charitable programs	The Cape Verdean community can play an important role in preserving the heritage of Sowams
Center for Indigenous People's Rights (p, los)	Provides policy research and development, legal services, and nation-building technical assistance to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous nations exercising their inherent rights to self-governance and cultural, social, and economic development	CIPR directors are members of the Sowams Heritage Area Tribal Engagement Committee
Friends of the Pokanoket (p, los)	Tribal members and friends supporting the acquisition and stewardship of 244 acres of Mt. Hope Land by the Pokanoket Tribe	Sowams Heritage Area is represented on this committee

Imago Gallery	Artists collaborative in Warren, RI	Opportunity for partnering with the creative community in the East Bay of RI
Local Cultural Councils (LCCs) in Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, and Swansea, MA	Funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, LLCs foster a rich cultural life in their communities with programs and activities	Each will contribute to interpreting the five themes of Sowams Heritage Area
Mashapaug Nahaganset Tribe (p, los)	The Nahaganset draw their lineage to and from the Narragansett Sâchemag of the North leading up to and during the time of the King Phillip's War	Participates in Sowams events; the chief was interviewed as a Sowams stakeholder and currently serves on the Sowams Tribal Engagement Committee
Meshanticut Cultural Placemaking ConFestival (p)	Advances the cultural placemaking sector and stimulates interest and investment in cultural placemaking as a strategy for promoting tourism and equitable economic development	Sowams Heritage Area has been represented on conference panels
Middle Passage Port Marker Projects in Bristol and Warren, RI (p, los)	Research commemorates and documents the legacy of trading enslaved people	Partner in raising awareness about Bristol and Warren's role in the economic expansion driven by the Triangle Trade industry
Nipmuc Tribe	Preserves and promotes the culture, language, and values of the Nipmuc People, while striving to improve the quality of life for all their citizens, now and in the future	Tribe members attended Sowams Community Conversations
Pokanoket Tribe of the Pokanoket Nation (p, los)	Descendants of a first contact tribe, members preserve their beliefs, culture, and lands for all to learn and appreciate	The Pokanoket Sachem and Sagamore served on the Steering Committee from the start; Sachem is now on the board of directors; Tribal Historic Preservation Officer was a Subject Matter Expert and is a frequent speaker at Sowams events
Providence Cultural Equity Initiative (p, los)	Advocates for and promotes services and opportunities that engage Rhode Island's cultural sector, economy, and communities	Founder/CEO Ray "Two Hawks" Watson has been an advisor and supporter of Sowams Heritage Area from the start

Research BIPOC History	Researches, documents, and publicizes the often overlooked history of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals	Resource for programming of Sowams Interpretive Theme "The Era of Enslavement and Slave Trading"
Rhode Island Cape Verdean Heritage	Commemorates and preserves Cape Verdean culture; improves the well-being of Cape Verdean children and adults in the US; fosters brotherhood and understanding among Cape Verdeans	Sponsors annual Independent Cape Verdean Day Festival
Rhode Island Slave History Medallions	Research, public programs and interactive bronze medallions commemorate Rhode Island's role in the American slave industry	Resource for community partners to raise awareness about the Sowams Interpretive Theme "The Era of Enslavement and Slave Trading"
RISD Museum	Founded in 1877 as part of the RISD arts community, collection includes masterpieces of decorative, utilitarian, and fine art	Potential for collaboration with curators of historic art and design collection
Teofilo Braga Club	Preserves and celebrates the heritage of the Portuguese community	The Portuguese community is part of the living heritage of Sowams
Seaconke Wampanoag Tribe	Families descended from the Tribe of the Seaconke Plain in Pokanoket territory; Tribal chief is Executive Director of the RI Indian Council	Cultural resource; attended Sowams Community Conversation
WaterFire	Iconic fire-on-water cultural festival on the intersection of the Providence and Moshassuck rivers in downtown Providence; presented periodically in season	Opportunity for showcasing Sowams communities, programs, and partners by the rivers that mark the NW boundary of Sowams
Business and Industry		
Blount Boats (Ios)	Family-owned commercial ship building business since 1949; now designing and building crew transfer vessels for wind farms	Carrying on the legacy of ship-building and innovative design in Sowams Heritage Area

Blount Fine Foods (p)	Blount Fine Foods is a five-generation family-owned and operated manufacturer, marketer and developer of fresh prepared foods	Has been underwriting the cost of Sowams Heritage Area interpretive signs for several years
Bristol Marine	Thriving marina business in Bristol, RI and Somerset, MA, as well as Jacksonville, FL	Business leader in the maritime trades and boating industry in two towns that today are part of Sowams Heritage Area
C.B. Brito Utility and Construction and Unity Park	Family-owned utility and construction business since 1954; now developing for adaptive reuse the 19th Century Bristol Industrial Park; oldest structure was built in 1833	Opportunity to leverage leadership in historic preservation of industrial buildings and to raise awareness of Sowams manufacturing heritage
Hope and Main Culinary Incubator (p, los)	Provides food and beverage businesses a low-risk opportunity to test, scale, and develop their products without the cost of maintaining their own commercial culinary facility	Hosted the second Sowams Community Conversation; a valuable community leader in the Sowams Heritage Area business community
Johnson's Roadside Market (p)	Family-owned market since 1982, offering baked goods, provisions, and seasonal fruits and vegetables grown on their farm in Swansea, MA	Maintains the King's Rock Indigenous site and funded the way-faring marker there; opportunity to showcase Sowams agricultural tradition
Sowams Cider Works (p)	Orchard with 80 varieties of apples; cider house, tasting bar, and fruit stand in Warren, RI	Provides refreshment for Sowams events; opportunity to showcase Sowams agricultural tradition
WaterRower, Inc.	Designs and manufacturers dry-land rowers with unique flywheels that simulate the instant, smooth, and quiet resistance of water rowing	Typical of the innovative manufacturers in Sowams who are carrying its legacy of marine trades into the 21st Century
Economic Development and Tourism		
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (p, los)	Consulting and educational organization that assists communities, government agencies, and private sector companies in shaping tourism development programs	Director of Events and Community Engagement served on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and is currently the Vice Chair of the Sowams Board of Directors

Discover Newport (los)	Destination management organization that promotes the City of Newport and its eight surrounding townships as a premiere destination for business and leisure travel	Conduit for tourism funding from the Rhode Island Commerce department for five communities in Sowams
East Bay Chamber of Commerce (los)	The voice of the business community in Barrington, Bristol, and Warren, RI, and Swansea, MA	Chamber includes business leaders in maritime trades and composite innovation
East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce	Voice of the business community in Barrington and East Providence, RI and Rehoboth and Seekonk, MA	Early supporter of Sowams Heritage Area; former Executive Director serves on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee
Explore Bristol (los)	Supports Bristol merchants and promotes Bristol, RI as a quintessential New England destination for families and visitors	Deeply embedded in the community of Bristol, where the ancestral seat of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin is located
One SouthCoast Chamber	The second largest chamber in Massachusetts; supports business with economic development, trade shows, and legislative initiatives	Serves the business community in four towns of the Sowams region
Rhode Island Commerce (los)	Quasi-public agency promotes RI's economic health and prosperity and offers business assistance and tourism marketing strategies	Associate Vice President of Tourism Marketing is a founding member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee
Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (los)	Plans for the future of southeastern MA, including expanding economic opportunity, protecting natural and historic resources and developing cultural amenities	Former Environmental Director of SRPEDD is a member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee; four towns in Sowams fall under its jurisdiction
Somerset Economic Development Committee (los)	Advises the Select Committee on economic development and supports the business community	Committee Chair has been an early proponent of Sowams Heritage Area and now serves on the Sowams Board of Directors

Southeastern Massachusetts Convention and Visitor's Bureau (Bristol County RTC) (los)	Bristol County Tourism Council is the liaison between Bristol County, MA and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism	Promotes tourism in four towns in Sowams Heritage Area
Environment, Agriculture, and Gardens		
Barrington Land Conservation Trust (p, los)	Owens 285 acres of protected open space in Barrington, RI; collaborates with Audubon and the Nature Conservancy	Stewards land that once was the winter home of the Pokanoket Tribe; attended the community conversation
Blithewold Mansion and Arboretum (los)	Flagship tourist attraction in Bristol, RI, this Country Place Era estate is located on the waterfront and framed by a landscape of rare plants and specimen trees	Working with Sowams Heritage Area to develop programming around Indigenous plants
Brigham Farm Conservation Area (BFCA)	Formerly the East Providence Land Conservation Trust, promotes preservation of natural resources in the City of East Providence and protects access to BFCA	Stewards open spaces in the East Providence area of Sowams
Bristol Land Conservation Trust	All volunteer organization working to preserve land in its natural state and to retain the beauty of the landscape in Bristol, RI	Supported the Pokanoket acquisition of Mt. Hope land; collaborates with Sowams Heritage Area
Friends of the Moshassuck	Dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and revitalization of the Moshassuck River	The Moshassuck forms the NW border of Sowams Heritage Area and is where Roger Williams settled and founded Providence
Friends of the Palmer River	Alliance of residents, businesses, and organizations committed to preserving and protecting the Palmer River	Collaborating with Sowams Heritage Area and other organizations to steward the Palmer River watershed in Sowams
Mt. Hope Farm (p, los)	Historic farm, inn, arboretum, and farmer's market located at the foot of Mt. Hope, a sacred landmark of the Pokanoket people	A featured attraction in Sowams, the Farm hosted the fourth Sowams Community Conversation and has been an enthusiastic supporter of Sowams Heritage Area from the beginning

Osamequin Farm (p, los)	Historic working farm and educational space that preserves and shares the land with farmers and neighbors in the Seekonk, MA area	Participated in Sowams Community Conversations; collaborates with the Pokanoket Tribe on annual maple boil
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (p, los)	Provides independent scientific data analysis and support to catalyze scientific inquiry and collective action to restore and protect the Narragansett Bay Watershed	Provided critical geospatial data for determining the boundaries of Sowams and designing the interactive maps on the Sowams website
Rehoboth Land Trust (p, los)	Protects, conserves, and promotes the land and natural resources significant to the quality of the environment, wildlife, and rural character in and around the town of Rehoboth, MA	Attended Sowams Community Conversations and was an early participant in discussions about a Sowams land trust coalition
Save the Bay (p, los)	Member-supported organization founded in 1970 to protect and improve Narragansett Bay through advocacy, education, and habitat restoration and adaptation	Provides research, programming and advocacy to the communities in the Narragansett Bay watershed in Sowams
Seekonk Land Conservation Trust	Founded in 1967, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the distinctive landscapes and natural resources in the Town of Seekonk, MA	Participated in Sowams Community Conversations; opportunity to collaborate with the other land trusts in Sowams
Taunton River Watershed Alliance (p)	Alliance of concerned residents, businesses, and organizations that restores and manages the water and natural resources within the Taunton River Watershed	Board member served on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and is currently an advisor to SowamsHA
Ten Mile River Watershed Council	Works to protect the Ten Mile River and its watershed by monitoring water quality, educating the public, and improving recreational opportunities	Board member is chair of the Providence Conservation Commission of East Providence, whose chief planner serves on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee
Warren Land Conservation Trust (p, los)	Protects, preserves, and restores open space in Warren, conserving Warren's natural resources and stewarding ancestral Pokanoket land	Board member served on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee

Wildlands Trust (formerly Swansea Land Trust)	Protects and stewards six conservation parcels formerly held by the Swansea Land Trust, including Jarabeck Preserve, Tierney Preserve, and Barney-Bell Preserve	A mix of upland and wetland habitats, these properties are an important part of the Barrington-Palmer-Warren River watershed, which sustains the Sowams landscape
Funders and Grant Makers		
Barr Foundation	Invests in human, natural, and creative potential in the area of arts and creativity, climate, and education in New England	Prospective funder
Massachusetts Cultural Council	Dispenses funds from appropriations of the Massachusetts state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts to local arts councils in the state	Source of funding for arts and cultural institutions in Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset and Swansea, MA
Mass Humanities	Affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), partners with local non-profit organizations to integrate humanities into Massachusetts communities	Source of funding for humanities institutions in Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset and Swansea, MA
National Parks Conservation Association (p)	The only independent, nonpartisan membership organization exclusively dedicated to advocating for the National Park System	Awarded three grants to help underwrite the Sowams feasibility study and programming
National Trust for Historic Preservation (p, los)	Privately funded nonprofit organization working to save America's historic sites, tell the full American story, and build stronger communities	Contributed \$25,000 to help underwrite the Sowams Heritage Area feasibility study through the "Telling the Full Story" program; is advising Sowams leadership on the NHA designation process
Papitto Opportunity Connection (p)	Foundation dedicated to empowering underserved RI communities by investing in education, job skills training, housing, healthcare, and entrepreneurial ventures	Awarded Sowams Heritage Area two grants totaling \$25,000 to help underwrite the feasibility study
Rhode Island Foundation	Community foundation established in 1916 to help improve the lives of all Rhode Islanders	Prospective funder

Rhode Island Council on the Humanities (p)	A RI state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), RICH supports and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement	Sowams stakeholder and advisor; awarded Sowams Heritage Area several grants to underwrite cultural programming and has
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts	Charged by the RI state legislature in 1967 to stimulate public interest and participation in the arts, and to serve as the liaison to the state's arts community	Prospective funder
Taunton River Stewardship Council (p, los)	Serves as the central coordinating body for stewarding the Taunton River and promoting its long-term protection	Awarded two grants to Sowams Heritage Area to help underwrite the feasibility study, create GIS maps, and redesign the Sowams website
History and Humanities		
Barrington Preservation Society	Dedicated to exploring, preserving, and interpreting Barrington history; operated Town Museum and holds artifact and archival collections	Sponsoring the archeological research of the site of the first battle of the King Philip's War on Nockum Hill in Barrington, RI
Bristol Historical and Preservation Society (p, los)	Stimulates interest in Bristol, RI history through education, research, and preservation of historic objects; produced the award-winning banner, a 56-foot-long timeline of Enslavement in Bristol	Executive Director is Sowams Subject Matter Expert; lead partner in the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War
Cape Verdean Museum	Dedicated to celebrating the history and culture of Cape Verde and Cape Verdean Americans	Resource for culture and history related to Sowams Interpretive Themes of "The Era of Enslavement and Slave Trading" and "The Interplay of Land and Water"
Carpenter Museum and the Rehoboth Antiquarian Society (RAS) (p, los)	The Carpenter Center is the flagship exhibit space for the RAS, which preserves, promotes, and enhances the historical, educational, and cultural assets of Rehoboth, MA	The leadership of the Carpenter is a founding member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and now serves on the Board

Coggeshall Farm and Old Sturbridge Village (p, los)	Working farm museum (1800) in Bristol, RI; managed by the Old Sturbridge Village town museum in Sturbridge, MA	Coggeshall Farm frequently presents Sowams-related programming
East Providence Historical Society (p, los)	Founded in 1967 to preserve and promote the heritage of East Providence; now based in the historic John Hunt House on the Ten-Mile River	Hosted the organizational meeting of historic organizations in the Sowams region; partners with SowamsHA on the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War
Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation (p, los)	Overseeing the restoration of the Swansea Friends Meeting House in Somerset, MA, the oldest Quaker meeting house in MA	Chair of the Friend board is on the Sowams Programming Committee
Herreshoff Marine Museum and America's Cup Hall of Fame (los)	Maritime museum that celebrates the history of the Herreshoff Company, innovative designer and manufacturer of steam ships, torpedo boats and seven America's Cup defenders	Contributes to the preservation of the shipbuilding legacy of Sowams Heritage Area
Historic New England	The oldest and largest regional heritage organization in the nation, preserving and sharing New England's historic buildings, landscapes, and objects for generations	Potential resource and advisor in the preservation of Sowams heritage
Historic Warren	Preserves, protects, and promotes the cultural and architectural heritage of Warren, RI - such as the Fireman's Museum, Historic Warren Armory, and the Masonic Temple	Provides a portal to the historical sites, museums and collections along Warren's waterfront, including organizations preserving the heritage of Sowams
John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor	National Heritage Area dedicated to the history of the American Industrial Revolution in 25 cities and towns in MA and RI	Leadership met with the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee during planning; opportunity to partner on projects and programs
Linden Place (los)	Historic estate museum, originally the home of the DeWolf slave trading family; offers cultural programming on "Bristol's Front Porch" in downtown Bristol, RI	Participant in Sowams Community Conversations; contributes to interpreting the Sowams theme of "The Era of Enslavement and Slave Trading"

Martin House	Managed by the Colonial Dames of America, a rare example of an 18th and early 19th century farm, with cultivated fields surrounded by dry stone walls and woodlands	One of the featured sites in Sowams Heritage Area
Massachusetts Historical Commission	Established by the Massachusetts state legislature in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth	Primary state historic and archaeological resource for four of the nine towns in Sowams Heritage Area (Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset and Swansea)
Massasoit Historical Association (p, los)	Manages the historic Maxwell House and other properties; collects and preserves objects relating to this history of Warren, RI	The association is restoring the Massasoit Spring, one of the featured Indigenous sites in Sowams Heritage Area
Municipal Historical District Commissions in the nine towns/cities in Sowams	Quasi-municipal commissions charged with identifying, protecting, and preserving the historical heritage of their communities	Many of the heritage assets in Sowams are championed by local historic commissions
Old Colony Historical Society and History Museum	Founded in 1853, Old Colony stewards an extensive collection of artifacts from southeastern, Massachusetts, prior to its merger with Massachusetts Colony in 1691	Old Colony Historic Museum has hosted Sowams-related events, most recently a discussion commemorating the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War
Pilgrim John Howland Society	A family society perpetuating the memory of their ancestors, John Howland and his wife, Elizabeth (Tilley) Howland, Mayflower Pilgrims	Elizabeth Tilley Howland is buried in Little Neck Cemetery, a Sowams Heritage Area site in East Providence, RI
Plimoth Patuxet Museums (p, los)	Museums, historic structures, and experiential learning spaces that recreate the iconic Plimoth colony and Wampanoag homesite in Plymouth, MA	Leadership has been an early proponent of Sowams Heritage Area; participated in several Sowams programs with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer; and has been a trusted advisor
Preserve Rhode Island	Protects historic places in Rhode Island through advocacy, stewardship, and preservation programs	Stewards historically significant properties in Sowams, including the Lippett House Museum in Providence, the Philip Walker House in East Providence, and Blithewold in Bristol, RI; Former E.D. has advised the planning team

Providence Preservation Society	Support and advocate for historic preservation, thoughtful design, and people-centered planning in Providence, RI	Responsible for creating the College Hill Historic District in Providence, RI, a featured site in Sowams Heritage Area
Rhode Island Historical Society	Founded in 1822, one of the oldest state historical societies in the US; holds the largest and most important historical collections relating to Rhode Island	Subject Matter Expert for Sowams feasibility study; resource for Rhode Island history in Sowams Heritage Area
Roger Williams Family Association	Association of the descendants of Roger Williams preserving the history and legacy of the founder of Rhode Island	Roger Williams plays a major role in the Sowams Interpretive Theme "Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island"
Roger Williams National Memorial	Commemorates the life of the founder of Rhode Island and a champion of the ideal of religious freedom; Williams, banished from Massachusetts for his beliefs, founded Providence in 1636	This National Park Service national landmark is the flagship site for Sowams Interpretive Theme "Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island"
Somerset Historical Society (p, los)	Established in 1955 to preserve the history of the Somerset, MA region; manages the James E. Bradbury museum in the Village School	Director served on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and currently serves on the Finance Committee of the Sowams Board of Directors
Swansea Historical Society (SHS)	Headquartered in the historic Luther Store, a Sowams Heritage Area featured site; founded in 1941, SHS preserves, collects and researches the history of Swansea, MA	Chartered by Plimoth Colony 1667, Swansea is a historically significant region in Sowams Heritage Area
Warren Heritage Foundation	Protects, restores and maintains structures, buildings, and open spaces of historic and architectural significance in Warren, RI	Supports the preservation of Warren Baptist Church, a Sowams Heritage Area site, among others
Warren Preservation Society	Promotes the preservation of historic buildings in Warren, RI through historic house marker program, public exhibits, guest speaker programs, renovation projects and education	Stewards some sites in Sowams Heritage Area, including the historic Warren Baptist Church

Rhode Island Preservation and Heritage Commission	RI state agency that operates a statewide historical preservation program, which identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, structures, and archaeological sites	Subject Matter Expert for Sowams feasibility study; resource for the preservation of Rhode Island's historic structures and sites in Sowams Heritage Area
Roger Williams National Memorial	Managed by the National Park Service, site of the original settlement of the Colony of Rhode Island, commemorating its founder, Roger Williams	One of the most important sites in Sowams Heritage Area, associated with three Sowams Interpretive Themes: "Where Two Worlds Met," "King Philip's War," and "Freedom of Conscience and the Birth of Rhode Island"
Rochambeau Washington Revolutionary Route	Managed by the National Park Service; route of the largest troop movement in the American Revolution, which led to victory at Yorktown and secured American independence	The historic trail passes through five towns/cities in Sowams Heritage Area
Revolutionary Heritage Byway	Designated as a National Scenic Byway by the National Scenic Byway Foundation; connects key historical sites, towns, and landmarks central to the events of the American Revolution in Bristol, RI	One of the historic pathways in Sowams Heritage Area
Municipalities		
City of East Providence, RI (p, los, City Council resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The city was represented on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee by their Chief Planner, who has since retired and now services on the Sowams Board of Directors
City of Providence, RI (p, los)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The city was represented on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and now Board of Directors by the Deputy Director of People and Belonging for the City of Providence

Town of Barrington, RI (Town Council Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The Barrington Town Council voted unanimously to support the designation of Sowams NHA; Sowams has participated in Barrington 250 commemoration
Town of Bristol, RI (Town Council Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	Bristol was represented on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee by the Director of Community Development; Town Council voted unanimously and enthusiastically to support the designation of Sowams NHA
Town of Rehoboth, MA (Select Board Letter/Vote of Support)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The Rehoboth Select Board voted unanimously to support the designation of Sowams NHA
Town of Seekonk, MA (Select Board Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	Seekonk was represented on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee by their Town Planner, who now serves on the Sowams Tribal Engagement Committee; the Seekonk Select Board voted unanimously to support the designation of Sowams NHA
Town of Somerset, MA (Select Board Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The Somerset Board of Selectman voted unanimously to support the designation of Sowams NHA
Town of Swansea, MA (Select Board Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	Swansea was represented on the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee by the Assistant Town Administrator/Community Development Director; former Select Board Chair is an advisor to Sowams

Town of Warren, RI (Town Council Resolution)	One of nine towns/cities that today comprise the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit, who greeted the Pilgrims in 1621	The Town of Warren, which has been an early supporter of Sowams Heritage Area, voted unanimously to support its federal designation
Religious Communities		
Barrington UCC Church (p, los)	"The White Church" has been a landmark in Barrington for almost two centuries, and its congregation dates back to the site of the first Baptist meeting house in the US	Participated in Sowams Community Conversations, contributed to Sowams outreach in the religious community, and hosted the first meeting of the reconstituted Sowams Board of Directors
Bristol First Congregational Church (p, los)	The founding of the church in 1680 enabled the incorporation of the town of Bristol, RI	Participated in Sowams Community Conversation; is a featured site in Sowams Heritage Area as "Bristol's Founding Church"
New England Quakers (Friends)	Provides programs and services to Quaker Monthly Meetings	Resource for the Quaker communities in Sowams; historically on the vanguard of religious tolerance, one of the five Sowams Interpretive Themes
Newman Church (p, los)	Listed in the National Register of Historic Places; the congregation of the Newman Church first gathered in 1641 in Rehoboth, now Seekonk, MA	Hosted the final Community Conversation; church leaders previous Sowams Community Conversations and Sowams events
First Baptist Church in Swansea (p, los)	Founded by John Myles in 1662, is the third oldest surviving Baptist congregation in the Americas	The Church's retired pastor was a member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee and is currently a member of the board; the church hosted the first community conversation

APPENDIX E – SOWAMS RESOURCE INVENTORY

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Aaron Wheeler House	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	371 Fairview Avenue	Built c. 1745, the house is one of the town's best-preserved examples of the gambrel-roof style.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Abiah Bliss House	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	154 Agricultural Avenue	Built as early as 1666, making it one of the oldest houses in the region and one of the few to survive King Philip's War, which ravaged the area in the 1670s.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Abram's Rock	C, H, N	Town of Swansea	Swansea, MA	Swansea	The largest of several rock formations in the immediate area, located in a park behind Swansea Town Hall. Accessible during daylight hours. Good walking and off-road bike paths surrounding it.		Y	Two Worlds

*Type Key: C=Cultural | E=Educational | H=Historical | N=Natural | R=Recreational

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Alfred Drowne Road Historic District	H	Private	Barrington, RI	Alfred Drowne Road, Annawamscutt Road, Washington Road	Suburban area developed between about 1860 and 1910, during significant growth in Barrington spurred by the connection of the town by rail to Providence in 1855.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Allen-West House	H	Private	Barrington, RI	153 George Street	Part of the Nockum Hill site close to the Baptist Church marker. While the house is from c. 1763, the land around it was farmed in the 17th century.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Anawan Clubhouse and Caretaker's House	H, R	Private	Rehoboth, MA	13 Goreham Street	Private clubhouse built as a hunting and fishing lodge in late 19th century. The caretaker's house dates to the mid-18th century.	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Anawan Rock Historic Site	C, E, H, N, R	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Rehoboth	Site of capture of the Pokanoket war leader Anawan by Captain Benjamin Church on August 28, 1676, thus ending King Philip's war.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Ancient Little Neck Cemetery	H	City of East Providence	Riverside, RI	South end of Read Street below Allen Avenue in Riverside	Contains the graves of Mayflower passenger John Brown, Jr., who purchased Wannamoisett from Osamequin in 1643, and Captain Thomas Willett, Mayor of New York City in 1665 and 1667.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds
Ancient Oak Trees	H, N	Joetta Chace Brigham Farm	Warren and East Providence, RI	Warren and East Providence	Purported to be over 350 years old, trees are located on the edge of Brigham Farm along Birch Swamp Road on the northwest border of the farm.		Y	Two Worlds
Arcade Woods Conservation Area	N	Private	Seekonk, MA	100 Peck Street	348 acres of land with conservation restrictions, which remain privately owned but are protected from development.		N	Land and Water
Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge	E, N, R	Audubon Society of Rhode Island	Bristol, RI	1401 Hope Street	The natural history museum offers interactive exhibits that explore local habitats and wildlife. It is situated in a 28-acre preserve that features trails, a boardwalk to Narragansett Bay, and a variety of natural habitats.		Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Audubon Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge	N, R	Audubon Society of Rhode Island	Warren, RI	99 Touisset Road	Offers views of the Kickemuit River amid forests and fields. Activities include hiking, bird watching, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.		Y	Land and Water
Baptist Church Marker	C, E, H	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	George Street	John Myles' church in Swansea, MA in 1663, now in Barrington, is the oldest Baptist congregation in Massachusetts and one of the oldest in the U.S. Undergoing research through an American Battlefield Protection Grant.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience
Barneyville Historic District	C, H	Private	Swansea, MA	Old Providence and Barneyville Roads	Site of a successful shipbuilding operation during the early 19th century, the area then became a local center for jewelry making.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Barrington Civic Center Historic District	H	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	283 County Road	Includes an 18th century cemetery, a late 19th century town hall and library, an early 20th century school, and a pond and park along the crest of Prince's Hill. The town hall originally housed Barrington's high school and library as well as the town meeting hall and clerk's office.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Barrington Congregational Church	C, H	Private	Barrington, RI	461 County Road	The current church building, built in 1806 is often referred to as the "White Church." It was established in 1711, when it separated from the Baptist Church.		Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
Barrington Town Museum	C, E, H	Town of Barrington, managed by the Barrington Preservation Society	Barrington, RI	On the lower floor of the Barrington Public Library, 281 County Road	The Barrington Preservation Society's museum traces the town back to early settlement.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Benjamin Church House	H	Bristol Housing Authority	Bristol, RI	1014 Hope Street	A Colonial Revival house that opened in 1909 as the "Benjamin Church Home for Aged Men."	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Blackstone Canal	C, E, H, N, R	Private	Various Towns, RI	From Steeple and Promenade Streets to the Ashton Dam, north to the MA state line	Early 19th century waterway linking Worcester, MA, to Providence, RI (and Narragansett Bay) through the Blackstone Valley via a series of locks and canals.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Blackstone Park Historic District	C, H, N, R	City of Providence	Seekonk River, Laurell Ave., Blackstone Boulevard, and S, RI	Seekonk River, Laurell Avenue, Blackstone Boulevard, and S. Angell Street	Constructed in 1894 to provide better access to nearby Swan Point Cemetery, the park in the center was planned and suggested by the Olmsted Brothers.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Blithewold Mansion, Gardens and Arboretum	C, E, H, N	Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island	Bristol, RI	101 Ferry Road	Established in the 1890s by Augustus and Bessie Van Wickle as their summer retreat. The grounds include species from North America, Europe, China and Japan.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Bold Point	C, H	City of Providence	Providence, RI	Providence	Location of 17th century wharves from which John Brown began shipping tea and spices from the East and West Indies. Today park is used for a variety of activities and events.		Y	Two Worlds, Enslavement, Land and Water
Boston and Providence Railroad Bridge	H	East Providence	East Providence, RI	Spans the Ten Mile River and Roger Williams Avenue in East Providence	Built is 1884 and listed in the National Register in 1980. The bridge continues to be used for freight trains connecting East Providence, RI and Seekonk, MA.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Brayton Home- stead	H	Private	Somerset, MA	159 Brayton Avenue	Built about 1796, it is one of Somerset's oldest surviving houses, and a rare local example of Georgian, Federal residential architecture.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Bridgham Farm	H, N, R	City of East Providence	East Provi- dence, RI	East Providence	Bridgham Farm is the last sizable tract of undeveloped farmland, once part of the ancient Rehoboth "Ring of the Green."	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds/ King Philip's War
Briggs Tavern	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	2 Anawan Street	Built about 1780 and now used as a pri- vate residence, it is the town's only sur- viving 18th-century commercial building.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Bristol County Courthouse	H	State of Rhode Island	Bristol, RI	High Street	Originally one of five locations in Rhode Island which hosted the state legislature on a rotating basis, and served as the county courthouse through the 1980s.	NRHP	Y	Land and Wa- ter

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Bristol County Jail	E, H	Town of Bristol	Bristol, RI	48 Court Street	The jail was built on the site of a previous jail dating to 1792, and salvaged materials were used extensively in the new construction.	NRHP	Y	Enslavement, Land and Water
Bristol Customshouse and Post Office	H	Town of Bristol	Bristol, RI	420-448 Hope Street	A historic Italian palazzo style building that was used as a post office and customshouse.	NHRP	N	Land and Water
Bristol Ferry Lighthouse	H	Private	Bristol, RI	Ferry Road	The two-story square brick lighthouse was built in 1855, along with an attached 1 story brick keeper's house	NHRP	N	Land and Water
Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker	C, H	Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project	Bristol, RI	Independence Park, Bristol, RI	A UNESCO Routes of Enslave Peoples Project "Site of Memory," the memorial features Spencer Evans sculpture, "Our Ancestors Come With Us."	UNESCO Site of Memory	Y	Era of Enslavement and the Slave Trade

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Bristol Water-front Historic District	H	Private	Bristol, RI	Bristol Harbor to Wood Street, north to Washington Street, and south to Walker Cove	A historic district encompassing the original heart of Bristol, Rhode Island, which was laid out in 1680 by the town's original proprietors.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, Enslavement, Land and Water
Brown University	E, C, H	Brown University	Providence, RI	East Side	Founded in 1764, Brown is a leading nonprofit research university.		Y	Soul Liberty, Enslavement, Land and Water
Burial Place Hill	H	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Rehoboth	Presumed to be the oldest cemetery among the 53 in Rehoboth. The oldest known burial is of Richard Bowen, who died just before King Philip's War began in 1675.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Burr's Hill Park	C, H, R	Town of Warren	Warren, RI	540 Water Street	Maintained by the town of Warren, RI, the park spans seven acres situated alongside the Warren Town Beach.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Cahoon Brick-works	H	Swansea Historical Society	Swansea, MA	160 Old Warren Road	William Colquhoun came from Dunbartonshire, Scotland, and opened a brick-works in Swansea, MA, on the Palmer River in 1673. He was killed in the opening conflicts of King Philip's War.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Land and Water
Caleb Cushing House and Farm	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	186 Pine Street	Established about 1750, includes a pre-Revolutionary Georgian farmhouse and an 1836 Federal-Greek Revival Cape house.	NHRP	N	Two Worlds
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge	N, R	Audubon Society of Rhode Island	Seekonk, MA	301 Brown Avenue	With nearly 200 acres of fields, forests, streams, and ponds, Caratunk offers miles of well-marked trails.		Y	Land and Water
Carpenter Bridge	H	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Carpenter Street	Built in 1873, it is the only surviving 19th-century stone bridge in the town.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Carpenter Homestead and Osamequin Farm	C, E, H	Private	Seekonk, MA	80 Walnut Street	This colonial house and farm in Seekonk, MA, includes a farmhouse and outbuildings whose construction history begins c. 1720.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds
Carpenter House	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	89 Carpenter Street	Probably built in 1789 by Thomas Carpenter III, reusing elements of an older (c. 1750) structure that is known to have stood at the site	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Carpenter Museum	C, E, H	Rehoboth Antiquarian Society	Rehoboth, MA	4 Locust Avenue	The museum preserves over 6,000 artifacts, photographs, and archival materials related to historic Rehoboth—encompassing parts of present-day southeastern MA and RI—and offers exhibits and a genealogical research center.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Enslavement, Land and Water
Church of Christ	C, H	Swansea Church of Christ	Swansea, MA	Route 6 at Maple Avenue	In 1693, the Church of Christ in Swansea was organized with seventeen members. Thomas Barnes of Plymouth was ordained as pastor.	NHRP	Y	Soul Liberty

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Coggeshall Farm Museum	C, E, H	Coggeshall Farm Museum	Bristol, RI	1 Colt Drive	Located on 48 acres of land in Bristol, the museum features interpreters and authentic reenactments of farm life in the year 1799.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
College Hill Historic District	C, E, H	Private	Providence, RI	Roughly bounded by the Providence and Seekonk Rivers, Olney, Hope, and Governor Streets, Carrington and Whittier	Original 120 acres of the city of Providence, laid out by Roger Williams. Contains many well-preserved 18th and 19th-century buildings and homes, as well as Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design.	NHL	Y	Soul Liberty
Colt State Park	E, N, R	State of Rhode Island	Bristol, RI	Route 114	A public recreation area that occupies 464 acres on Poppasquash Neck in the town of Bristol		Y	Land and Water
Corliss-Carrington House	H	Private	Providence, RI	66 Williams Street	Home of an early mercantilist and industrialist, now used as an event venue.	NHL	N	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Crescent Park Looff Carousel	C, H, R	Captain Rocky Incorporated	East Providence, RI	Riverside Park	Hand-carved carousel built in 1895 by Charles I. D. Looff his NY factory, installed at Crescent Park Amusement Park in the Riverside section of East Providence.	NHL	Y	Land and Water
DeWolf Warehouse (DeWolf Tavern)	H	Private	Bristol, RI	259 Thames Street	The DeWolf Tavern is located in the historic building once known as DeWolf Rum Distillery on the Thames Street Landing, along the historic waterfront in Bristol, RI.		Y	Enslavement, Land and Water
Douglas Rayner Wildlife Refuge	N, R	Barrington Land Trust	Barrington, RI	111 George Street	A network of trails guides walkers through woodlands and meadows bordering Hundred Acre Cove.		Y	Land and Water
Downtown Providence National Historic District*	C, H	Private	Providence, RI	Roughly bounded by Washington, Westminster, Empire, and Weybosset Streets; also along Friendship, Pine, and Richmond Sts.; also 250 and 254 Washington Streets.	Originally known as "Weybossett Neck" or "Weybossett Side", Downtown was first settled by religious dissidents from the First Congregational Society in 1746.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
East Bay Bike Path	N, R	State of Rhode Island Dept. of Transportation	East Providence, Barrington, Warren, and Bristol, RI	Between Providence and Bristol, RI	A multi-town bike path that travels 14.5 miles from India Point Park in Providence to Independence Park in Bristol, passing many state and local parks and recreation areas.		Y	Land and Water
Echo Lake	N, R	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	South Lake Drive	Echo Lake is approximately 20 acres in size and provides a place for good fishing.		Y	Land and Water
Eddy-Cutler House	H	Private	Warren, RI	30 State Street	Built on the Warren waterfront c. 1806-1812 by Benjamin Eddy, merchant and trader of enslaved people.		N	Enslavement
Elm Farm	H	Private	Bristol, RI	1382 Hope Street	The farmhouse, built c.1687, sits at the corner of Hope and Elm Farm Road. The front section of the house dates to 1740, but the east portion of the ell behind it dates to 1695.		N	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Ephraim Hunt Ministerial Land	N	Rehoboth Land Trust	Rehoboth, MA	69 Pond Street, Rehoboth, MA	This 63-acre parcel contains classic post-glacial landscape features, streams, and trails frequented and enjoyed by hikers from throughout the Sowams area and beyond. The historic former property of the Rehoboth Congregational Church borders the former Providence and Taunton Street Railway line (c. 1901), now a hiking path to Rehoboth Village.		Y	Freedom of Conscience, Land and Water
First Baptist Church in America	C, H	First Baptist Church	Providence, RI	N. Main Street between Thomas and Waterman Streets	The oldest Baptist congregation in Massachusetts and one of the oldest in the U.S., founded in 1663 by John Myles.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
First Baptist Church, Swansea	C, H	First Baptist Church	Swansea, MA	21 Baptist Street	The oldest Baptist congregation in Massachusetts and one of the oldest in the United States founded in 1663 by John Myles.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
First Congregational Church	H	Private	Bristol, RI	281 High Street	The first meeting house in Bristol was built in 1684 on the Town Common where the historic Court House now stands. Contains a museum of early artifacts.		Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Fleur-de-lys Studios	C, H	Private	Providence, RI	7 Thomas Street	Home to the Providence Art Club, which is the premiere artist organization in Rhode Island; an historic art studio, and an important structure in the development of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States	NHL	N	Land and Water
Gamino Pond Conservation Area	N, R	Town of Seekonk	Seekonk, MA	463 Newman Street	A passive recreation area with trails, fishing, water access, and a picnic area at the trailhead on Newman Avenue.		Y	Land and Water
General Thomas Allin House	H	Private	Barrington, RI	Lincoln Avenue	The Allin family was among the leading slave-owning families in Barrington. Thomas Allin served as a town and state government official in the 18th century.	NRHP	N	Enslavement
Goff Homestead	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	40 Maple Lane	Built c. 1750–80, an extremely rare local example of a Georgian period house with end chimneys rather than a single central chimney	NRHP	N	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Governor Henry Lippitt House	H	Preserve Rhode Island	Providence, RI	199 Hope Street	Mansion built in the 1860s by one of RI's leading textile manufacturing families, the Lippitts, who were active in public service for generations.	NHL	N	Two Worlds, Enslavement
Haile-Nunes Farmhouse	H	Private	Warren, RI	384 Market Street	A rare surviving representative of a 17th century Narragansett Bay saltwater livestock farm. The original house was erected by Obadiah Bowen c. 1682 as a story-and-a-half house.		N	Two Worlds
Haines Memorial State Park	N, R	State of Rhode Island	Barrington, RI	Haines Park Road	This public recreation area in Barrington, RI, on the northeast side of the Narragansett Bay offers picnicking, playing fields, fishing, and boating facilities, and is a stop on the East Bay Bike Path.		Y	Land and Water
Hampden Meadows Greenbelt	N, R	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	Linden Road west of Sowams Road	The appendage of "Hampden" to the New Meadow Neck area was given by the Rhode Island Historical society, in honor of John Hampden, who visited Massasoit with Edward Winslow in 1623.		Y	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Herreshoff Marine Museum	C, E, H	Private	Bristol, RI	1 Burnside Street	Maritime museum in Bristol, RI, dedicated to the history of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, yachting, and America's Cup.		Y	Land and Water
Hornbine Baptist Church	H	Holy Cross Catholic Church	Swansea, MA	141 Hornbine Road	Built in 1753, it is the oldest Baptist meeting house in southeastern MA.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
Hornbine School	E, H	Hornbine School Association	Rehoboth, MA	136 Hornbine Road	One-room Hornbine School was built in 1845-46 and offered an education through grade 9 until 1937. Today the building is overseen by the Rehoboth Historical Commission.		Y	Land and Water
Hugh Cole Well	E, H	Town of Warren	Warren, RI	Along the bike path east of the Broken Bridge	The site on Crab Pond includes a monument to Cole and an explanatory historical marker about King Philip's War.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Hundred Acre Cove	N, R	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	Wampanoag Trail, Route 114	Part of the tidal Barrington River, which flows south into the Warren River and then to Narragansett Bay.		Y	Land and Water
Hunt's Mills , Ten Mile River	E, H, N, R	City of East Providence	Providence, RI	65 Hunts Mill Road	The Ten Mile River provided water power to a series of mills built along its banks from 1643 to 1893 by Stephen Payne early as 1645.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Independence Park	N, R	Town of Bristol	Bristol, RI	419-459 Thames Street	The scenic 4-acre park is located at the head of the East Bay Bike path on Bristol Harbor.		Y	Land and Water
India Point Park	H, N, R	City of Providence	Providence, RI	Fox Point	India Point was Providence's first port. It was established in 1680 and flourished as a center of maritime trade for 250 years. The park is a part of the Washington- Rochambeau Revolutionary Route.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Indian Oven	C, H, N	Private	Rehoboth, MA	Near Homestead Avenue and Perryville Road	The oven is a natural cylindrical hole in the southern face of a large rock out-cropping thought to be used by the Indigenous Tribes to parch their corn.		N	Two Worlds
Ingalls–Wheeler–Horton Homestead Site	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	214 Chestnut Street	A house was built c. 1730 on this property, which survived until the early 20th century; a new house was built on the property in 1895.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Jacob's Point Preserve	N, R	Warren Land Conservation Trust	Warren, RI	East Bay Bike Path and the Warren River	The site is approximately 35 acres along the northeast shore of Narragansett Bay as the bay narrows to form Warren harbor. It borders Audubon's Clair D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge.		Y	Land and Water
James Driscoll House	H	Private	Warren, RI	26 State Street	A three-story Federal Mansion built by James Maxwell, a sea captain and slave trader in the Triangle Trade and reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in Warren.		N	Two Worlds, Enslavement, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Jennys Lane Historic District	C, H	Private	Barrington, RI	Jennys Lane and Mathewson and Rumstick Roads	The Jennys Lane Historic District is a residential historic district encompassing a well-preserved subdivision in Barrington, Rhode Island, which was developed between 1860 and 1920. It is representative of the town's development as a suburb of Providence following the introduction of passenger rail service in 1855.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Jeremiah Dexter House	H	Private	Providence, RI	957 North Main Street	A gambrel-roofed wood-frame structure, built in 1754 for printer Jeremiah Dexter on farmland that was originally granted to his ancestor Gregory Dexter, a friend and printer for Roger Williams.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Johannis Farm Wildlife Preserve	N, R	Barrington Land Trust	Barrington, RI	461 Sowams Road	Johannis Farm includes open fields, farmland, saltwater marshes and wetlands, as well as woodlands. There is bird watching and other recreational activities, and the site is home to egrets, ospreys, geese, ducks, and bald eagles.		Y	Land and Water
John Brown House	H	RI Historical Society	Providence, RI	52 Power Street	The first mansion built on College Hill, where it borders the campus of Brown University, and named after one of the early benefactors of the university, merchant, statesman, and slave trader John Brown.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Enslavement

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
John Corliss House	H	Private	Providence, RI	201 South Main Street	A rare survivor of a major 1801 fire and one of only a few remaining houses in the area constructed prior to the American Revolution	NHRP	N	Two Worlds
John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor	C, E, H, N, R	Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc.	Various Towns, MA and RI	670 Linwood Avenue	This NH Corridor overlaps Sowams Heritage Area in the region between the Moshassuck and Seekonk Rivers; works with community partners to preserve, promote, and celebrate the Valley's historic, natural, and recreational resources.	NHA	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Enslavement, Freedom of Conscience, Land and Water
John Hunt House	E, H	East Providence Historical Society	East Providence, RI	Hunts Mill Road	The house serves as hub of activities associated with the East Providence Historical Society and as a house museum and repository for articles of significance to the city.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
John Martin House	H	Private	Barrington, RI	127 Massasoit Avenue	Built c. 1680, as one of Rhode Island's two-story stone-enders, originally consisted of only a few rooms.		N	Two Worlds
Joseph Haile House	H	Private	Providence, RI	106 George Street	A free-standing 1806 townhouse restored extensively in the 1930s to house a collection of furniture and paintings	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Joseph Reynolds House	H	Private	Bristol, RI	956 Hope Street	Built by Joseph Reynolds on land his father, Nathaniel Reynolds, a leather worker from Boston, had bought in 1684.	NHL	N	Two Worlds
Juniper Hill Cemetery	H	Private	Bristol, RI	24 Sherry Avenue	A historic cemetery in Bristol, RI, founded by George R. Usher, James D'Wolf Perry, Byron Diman, Ambrose E. Burnside, James H. West, Charles H. R. Doringle, and Lemanuel W. Briggs.	NRHP	Y	Enslavement, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Kee Farm	H	Private	Warren, RI	Long Lane and Barton Avenue	60-acre family farm in Touisset that is believed to have begun before 1700		N	Two Worlds
Kickemuit Cemetery	H	Town of Warren	Warren, RI	Serpentine Road	Graves include those of some who fought in the King Philip's War, 1675-1676, including that of John Luther in 1697.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
King Philip's Seat on Potumtuk	C, H, N	Pokanoket Tribe	Bristol, RI	Tower Road	A hollow at the base of a large quartz outcropping, reputed to be King Philip's "seat". Items found on the property confirm that the site was occupied by aboriginal people for thousands of years.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
King's Rock	C, H, N	Private	Warren-Swansea, MA	Route 136 at the Warren-Swansea Town line	Sachem's Knoll, where Native people from across New England celebrated victories in Tribal wars and discussed peace treaties. Rock has a hollow where women ground corn.		Y	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Kingsley House	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	108 Davis Street	The oldest portion of this house is estimated to have been built around 1680, making it the oldest structure in Rehoboth.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Linden Place	E, H	Friends of Linden Place	Bristol, RI	10 Wardwell Street	Built in 1810 by slave trader, merchant, privateer and ship owner General George DeWolf and designed by architect Russell Warren		Y	Enslavement, Land and Water
Luther House	H	Private	Swansea, MA	177 Market Street	Built c. 1740, probably by Hezekiah Luther, son of John Luther, the first of that name to settle the area.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Luther Store	C, H	Swansea Historical Society	Swansea, MA	Old Warren and Pierce Roads	The store was built in 1815 by John Brown Luther, and was operated by the Luther family as a store until 1903.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Margaret's Cave and Devil's Rock	C, H, N	Private	Swansea, MA	Off Birch Swamp Road	Two natural features have ties to Pokanoket history. The cave may have been tied to Roger Williams' recuperation by Tribal members. Nearby, a smooth area of stone at the top of the outcropping was thought to have been used for signal fires.		N	Two Worlds
Martin Farm-house	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	121 Martin Street	Built c. 1750–80 and expanded organically over the next 120 years	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Martin House	H	Private	Seekonk, MA	940 County Street	The house was built c. 1799–1801, and is stylistically similar to houses built at the time in Newport, Rhode Island.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Martin House and Farm	H	Colonial Dames of Massachusetts	Swansea, MA	22 Stony Hill Road	The main house is a one and one-half story gambrel-roofed wood-frame structure with a crosswise ell at the rear. The oldest portion was built in 1728 by John Martin.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Mason Street Conservation Area	N	Rehoboth Land Trust	Rehoboth, MA	80 Mason Street	The 12-acre area was a portion of the Brayton Mill farmstead and the historic Elisha D. Pearce house, which is now the site of Moonrose Farm, the Trust's agricultural tenant, a family-operated, organic, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm.		Y	Land and Water
Massasoit Spring	C, H, N	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	Opposite 169 Rumstick Road	It is believed that Massasoit, while at peace with the Narragansetts, had his principal village near this spring [Bicknell, p. 194].		Y	Two Worlds
Massasoit Spring	C, H, N	Massasoit Historical Association	Warren, RI	Baker Street	A monument to the Massasoit Ousamequin, Chief of the Pokanoket tribe in the 17th century until 1661 at the site of one of the reputed aboriginal villages.		Y	Two Worlds
Miery Swamp	C, H, N	Private	Bristol, RI	Near Mt. Hope Farm	King Philip was killed in Miery Swamp a half mile southwest of King Philip's Seat on August 12, 1676. A monument, placed by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1877, now stands by the spring on the site of his death.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Miller Bird Sanctuary	N, R	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Lake Street	Over 45-acre parcel of conservation land on Lake Street in Rehoboth.		Y	Land and Water
Moses Brown School	C, E, H	Private	Providence, RI	250 Lloyd Avenue	The original Moses Brown School began in Portsmouth, Rhode Island in 1784, closed four years later, and re-opened in Providence in 1819.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Soul-Liberty, Enslavement, Land Water
Mount Hope Bridge	H	Rhode Island Bridge and Turnpike Authority	Bay, RI	RI 114 over Narragansett Bay	A two-lane suspension bridge spanning the Mount Hope Bay in eastern RI at one of the narrowest gaps in Narragansett Bay. The bridge connects Portsmouth and Bristol.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Mount Hope Farm	C, E, H, N, R	Mount Hope Trust	Bristol, RI	Metacom Avenue	The grounds have been farmed since the 1680s. The present 211 acres are a remnant of a much larger property that included Potumtuk (Mount Hope), the traditional seat of the Wampanoag people.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Enslavement

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Myles Garrison Site	H	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Swansea, MA	Barneyville and Old Providence Roads	Site of the garrison house used at the opening of King Philip's War in 1675 to house Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colony troops.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Nathaniel Bosworth House	H	Private	Bristol, RI	814 Hope Street	Deacon Nathaniel Bosworth constructed the first house in Bristol, RI, in 1680-81 using material shipped from England.		N	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Nathaniel Daggett House	H	Private	East Providence, RI	74 Roger Williams Avenue	Dates to prior to 1700, originally a two-story, gable-roofed, timber-framed, end-chimney dwelling, probably with only one room on each floor.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Nayatt Point Light	H	Private	Barrington, RI	Nayatt Point	The current light was built of brick in 1856 and contains an 1828 keeper's house.	NRHP	N	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Nelson W. Aldrich House	H	Rhode Island Historical Society	Providence, RI	110 Benevolent Street	Nelson W. Aldrich was a leading wholesale grocer who entered politics in 1869 and was elected to the US Senate in 1881.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Neutaconkanut Hill*	C, H, N, R	City of Providence	Providence, RI	Killingly and Duxbury Streets	Location where the leaders of four Indigenous Tribes once gathered for council: Pokanoket, Narragansett, Nipmuc and Massachusett.		Y	Two Worlds
Newman Cemetery	C, H	Newman Congregational Church	East Providence, RI	100 Newman Avenue	One of the oldest cemeteries in RI, established in 1643, when the area was part of Rehoboth, MA. Its first recorded burial was in 1658. Contributes to the Newman Congregational Church NRHP listing.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience
Newman Congregational Church and the Ring of the Green	H	Newman Congregational Church	East Providence, RI	100 Newman Avenue	The Newman Church congregation was organized in 1643 by the Reverend Samuel Newman of Weymouth, MA. The Meeting House was built across the street from today's church in the center of what was the Ring of the Green.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Newman Oak Tree	H, N	East Providence Land Conservation Trust	East Providence, RI	Bridgham Farm	One of four trees believed to be over 400 years old designated as "Champion Trees" by the RI Tree Council. Named after Rev. Samuel Newman who led 58 Puritans from MA to settle nearby in 1643.		Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience, Land and Water
Nightingale-Brown House	E, H	Brown University	Providence, RI	357 Benefit Street	The house is architecturally significant as the largest surviving wood-frame house of the 18th century, and is historically significant as the longtime seat (from 1814 to 1985) of the Brown family.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Enslavement
Nockum Hill	H, N	Town Of Barrington	Barrington, RI	Near the Hundred Acre Cove estuary	Site of the first Baptist meetinghouse in North America, the area where English settlers were attacked by Pokanoket warriors prior to the start of King Philip's War.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience, Land and Water
Nockum Hill Cemetery	C, H	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	671 Warren Avenue	The site of the earliest burial ground in Barrington, RI containing graves of English settlers who settled the area in the 17th Century and fought in the King Philip War.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
North Burial Ground	C, H	City of Providence	St., RI	Between Branch Avenue and N. Main Street	The first public cemetery in Providence, RI, dating to 1700.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
Obadiah Bowen Lot Cemetery	H	Town of Warren	Warren, RI	Southeast corner of School House Road and Market Street	The second cemetery in Warren with burials prior to 1700. Named for Obadiah Bowen, Jr., the grandson of Richard Bowen and Ann Born/Bourne, who immigrated in 1640 from Wales.		Y	Two Worlds
Oddfellows Hall	H	Private	East Providence, RI	63-67 Warren Avenue	Oddfellows Hall is a rare surviving element of Watchemoket Square, a village that was the heart of the East Providence business community during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Old Colony History Museum*	E, H	Old Colony Historical Society	Taunton, MA	Old Colony Historical Society	Founded in 1853, Old Colony stewards an extensive collection of artifacts from southeastern MA, prior to its merger with Massachusetts Colony in 1691.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Old State House	C, E, H	State of Rhode Island	Providence, RI	150 Benefit Street	Brick Georgian-style building largely completed in 1762 used as the meeting place for the colonial and state legislatures for 149 years. Home to the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Osamequin Nature Trails and Bird Sanctuary	C, E, H, N, R	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	Wampanoag Trail, Route 114	The reserve on the west shore of the Hundred Acre Cove includes a 1.5 mile trail through the inland estuarine system.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Palmer River Cemetery	H	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Lake Street just north of Palmer Meadow Lane	Earliest burial is 1717. Site of Christian burial rite for William Cahoon in June 2000. Cahoon, Swansea brickmaker, was killed near here in the early days of King Philip's War. His true burial site is unknown.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Perryville Dam (Butternut Falls)	H, N	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	131 Perryville Road	Just north of the dam, are the ruins of Jonathan Bliss's sawmill, built in 1720 on the East Branch of the Palmer River.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Philip Walker House	E, H	Preserve Rhode Island, East Providence Historical Society	East Providence, RI	432 Massasoit Avenue	The original house was built on the edge of the Ring of the Green in 1643, burned in King Philip's War, and rebuilt on the foundation in 1679.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Phillipsdale Historic District	C, H	Private	East Providence, RI	Roughly bounded by Seekonk River, Roger Williams Avenue and Ruth Avenue	Encompasses a historic mill village along the Seekonk River in East Providence, RI. The village grew up around the Richmond Paper Company Mill Complex.	NHRP	Y	Land and Water
Pierce Athletic Complex	C, H, R	City of East Providence	East Providence, RI	201 Mercer Street	Built in 1939 with WPA funds, the complex has long been host to recreational and cultural events and activities, including the annual Heritage Festival.		Y	Land and Water
Pomham Rocks Lighthouse	H	American Lighthouse Foundation	Providence, RI	Riverside Road	A historic lighthouse in the Providence River off the shoreline of the Riverside neighborhood of East Providence, RI.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Poppasquash Farms Historic District	C, H, N, R	State and private	Bristol, RI	Off Route 114	Encompasses most of Colt State Park and 50 acres of private lands on northern Poppasquash Neck. The area was occupied by the Pokanokets for hundreds of years, and settled by British colonists after King Philip's War.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Potumtuk	C, H, N	Pokanoket Tribe	Bristol, RI	Near Mt. Hope Farm	A Traditional Cultural Property also known as Mt. Hope, a quartz outcropping overlooking Mt. Hope Bay where the Pokanoket Massasoit presided over territory prior to first contact with colonists and through King Philip's War.		N	Two Worlds, King Philip's War
Providence City Hall*	C, H	City of Providence	Providence, RI	Dorance and Washington Streets	Constructed between 1875 and 1878, and designed by Samuel J. F. Thayer in the Second Empire style.	NHRP	Y	Land and Water
Redway Plain	C, H	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	401 Winthrop Street	This field was part of the Farm of Captain James Redway, commander of the Rehoboth militia which used Redway Plain as a training ground in the mid-1700s. Today, the grounds are used for community events, including Tribal powwows.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Rehoboth Dam	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	Junction of Locust Avenue and Bay State Road	The Bliss gristmill stood near this dam for about 180 years, starting sometime before 1690. The dam is a contributing structure to the Rehoboth Village Historic District NRHP listing.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Land and Water
Rehoboth State Forest	N, R	State of Massachusetts	Rehoboth, MA	90 Peck Street	Includes a gentle 1-mile loop trail and a spur trail leading to an Atlantic white cedar swamp.		Y	Land and Water
Rehoboth Town Forest	N, R	Town of Rehoboth	Rehoboth, MA	Fairview Avenue	The forest has a 1.5 mile hiking trail.		Y	Land and Water
Rehoboth Village Historic District	C, H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	Bay State Road and Locust Avenue	Encompasses the historic rural village center of Rehoboth, MA. Period of significance stretches from 1700 to 1899.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Revolutionary Heritage Byway	C, E, H, R	Town of Bristol and Private	Bristol, RI	Bristol	This historic byway travels through the quintessential New England town of Bristol, Rhode Island, a community rich in history and culture.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Rhode Island School of Design	C, E, H	RISD	Providence, RI	20 Washington Street	Founded as a coeducational institution in 1877 by Helen Adelia Rowe Metcalf, who sought to increase the accessibility of design education to women.		Y	Land and Water
Rhode Island School of Design Museum	C, E, H	RISD	Providence, RI	20 Washington Place	The RISD Museum offers ongoing programming and a global collection of fine art, design, and decorative arts that range from ancient Chinese sculpture to French Impressionist paintings and contemporary art in every medium.		Y	Land and Water
Rhode Island Slave History Medallions	E, H	RISHM	Various Towns, RI	Various Sites in Rhode Island	RISHM's mission is to highlight the overlooked histories of RI's free and enslaved African American and Indigenous communities through statewide installation of interactive bronze medallions.		Y	Enslavement

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Rhode Island State House*	C, E, H	State of Rhode Island	Providence, RI	90 Smith Street	The state house has the Charter Museum, a visitor center, and tours. The museum holds the 1663 Rhode Island Royal Charter. The neoclassical building features the fourth largest structural-stone dome in the world.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Richmond Paper Company Mill Complex	H	American Electrical Works	East Providence, RI	310 Bourne Avenue	The first seven of the surviving buildings were built between 1883 and 1887 by the Richmond Paper Company.	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Roger Williams National Memorial	E, H	National Park Service	Providence, RI	282 North Main Street	Commemorates the life of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island and a champion of the ideal of religious freedom.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience, Enslavement
Roger Williams Park Historic District	C, H, N, R	City of Providence	Providence, RI	Roger Williams Park	Elaborately landscaped 427-acre city park in Providence, RI, an NRHP historic district.	NRHP	Y	Soul Liberty, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Roger Williams Spring	E, H	City of East Providence	East Providence, RI	Roger Williams Avenue	Roger Williams first settled here after he was banished from Salem, MA, in 1636.		Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
Roy Wheaton Horton Preserve	C, H, N	Rehoboth Land Trust	Rehoboth, MA	North of Old County Street and borders Maple Lane in Rehoboth	The 433-acre tract comprising a portion of the historically and environmentally important Squannakonk Swamp that adjoins Anawan Rock, site of a pivotal event in the conclusion of King Philip's War. Roy W. Horton was the last logger to work in Rehoboth's once iconic Atlantic white cedar swamps.		N (anticipated at a future date)	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Royal Charter of 1663*	E, H	State of Rhode Island	Providence, RI	Charter Room, State House, 82 Smith Street	The original charter along with other historic documents of the period can be seen at the Charter Museum in the Rhode Island State House in Providence.		Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Royal Pokanoket Burial Ground on Burr's Hill	C, E, H, N	Town of Warren	Warren, RI	Warren	An ancient Pokanoket royal burial ground containing dozens of grave sites, including those of people who occupied the area in the 1600s.		Y	Two Worlds
Rumford Chemical Works and Mill House Historic District	H	Private	East Providence, RI	N. Broadway, Newman, and Greenwood Avenues	A historic district encompassing the remnants of the Rumford Chemical Works, a historical chemical plant in East Providence, RI.	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Rumford Historic District	H	Private	Aves, RI	Pleasant Street and Greenwood and Pawtucket Avenues	Rumford has been part of three towns and two states: Rehoboth and Seekonk, MA, and, since 1862, East Providence, RI.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Runnins River Trail	N, R	Seekonk Land Conservation Trust	Seekonk, MA	100 Peck Street	Trail on 4.3 acre parcel that includes wetlands and upland forest and crosses the Runnins River. Area has bog bridges, boardwalks, and a footbridge over the river. The greenway connects several other area trails.		Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Saint Andrews Farm	N, R	Barrington Land Trust	Barrington, RI	101 Middle Highway	Property features walking trails through open fields and woodlands, maintained through a partnership with the Town of Barrington and the Barrington Land Conservation Trust.		Y	Land and Water
Saint Mary's Episcopal Church	C, H	Saint Mary's Episcopal Church	East Providence, RI	83 Warren Avenue	The congregation traces its history to a Bible school formed in 1867. It was admitted into the Episcopal Diocese of RI in 1871, and became an independent parish in 1894.	NHRP	No	Soul Liberty
Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church	C, H	Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church	Barrington, RI	5 Chapel Road	Historic Episcopal church is an active parish in the Episcopal Diocese of RI. The congregation began as a mission in 1880,	NHRP	N	Soul Liberty
Short's Tavern	H	Private	Swansea, MA	282 Market Street	Built c. 1742 as a farmhouse, and acquired in 1851 by James Short, who operated a tavern on the premises.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Slave Monument, Princes Hill Cemetery	E, H	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	North of Town Hall	A marker placed in the Princes Hill Cemetery in Barrington in 1903 (oldest in the country), memorializes enslaved people and their descendants who "faithfully served" Barrington families.		Y	Enslavement
Somerset Historical Society Museum	C, E, H	Town of Somerset	Somerset, MA	274 High Street	The museum interprets local history from pre-contact to the present and includes a collection with Indigenous items from Barnaby's Cove, Peace Haven, Mother's Brook, and Terryland across the Taunton River.		Y	Two Worlds, King Philip's War, Freedom of Conscience, Enslavement, Land and Water
Somerset Village Historic District	C, H	Private	Somerset, MA	Somerset	Settled in the 17th century, the village developed around a shipyard and pottery works, and became the town center when it was incorporated out of Swansea in 1790.	NHRP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
South Coast Bikeway	N, R	South Coast Bikeway Alliance	Swansea and Somerset, MA	Swansea and Somerset	Connecting to the East Bay Bike Path in Warren, RI, a 50-mile system of bike paths, multi-use paths, and bike lanes that creates a contiguous route through ten towns between RI and Cape Cod, MA.		Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Sowams Woods	N, R	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	South Lake Drive	The area around Sowams Woods is believed to be an area set aside hundreds of years ago by the Native population for women and for childbirth, a place of peace. In 2011, the Barrington Land Conservation Trust (BLCT) purchased the Sowams Woods.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Squantum Association	H	Squantum Association	Bristol, RI	947 Veterans Memorial Parkway	This private club is in a Colonial Revival building constructed in 1900 by Martin & Hall.	NRHP	N	Land and Water
Stephen Hopkins House	E, H	State of Rhode Island	Providence, RI	15 Hopkins Street	The house was the home of Stephen Hopkins—a governor of Rhode Island and signatory of the Declaration of Independence—as well as at least six of his slaves.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Enslavement
Swansea Friends Meeting House and Cemetery	C, H	Private	Somerset, MA	223 Prospect Street	Oldest extant Quaker meetinghouse in the state. The oldest portion of the building dates to 1702, when Somerset was part of Swansea.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Swansea Village Historic District	C, H	Private	Swansea, MA	Roughly Main Street from Gardners Neck Road to Stephens Road and Ledge Road	The district encompasses what emerged in the late 18th century as the principal municipal center of the town.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds
Tall Cedars	N, R	Barrington Land Trust	Barrington, RI	35 Townsend Street	Offers walking and hiking experience for outdoor enthusiasts. The park features trails and picturesque landscapes.		Y	Land and Water
The Three Sisters	C, N	Pokanoket Tribe	Bristol, RI	Near Mount Hope	The Three Sisters consists of three rock outcrops that for the Pokanoket people represented the corn, beans, and squash sent by the Creator. The stories that nature provides for the Pokanoket are integral to their spirituality.		N	Two Worlds
Thomas P. Ives House	E, H	Brown University	Providence, RI	66 Power Street, College Hill	Thomas Poynton Ives was a wealthy merchant who formed a partnership with Nicholas Brown Jr., for whom Brown University was named. The brick structure is an extremely well-preserved and little-altered example of Adamesque-Federal style.	NHL	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Tobey Site on the Palmer River	C, H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	Undisclosed location on private property	Using radiocarbon dating, researchers concluded that some of the tools found were used by people who lived here around 3,700 years ago.		N	Two Worlds
Tyler Point Cemetery	H	Town of Barrington	Barrington, RI	South end of Tyler Point Road	This cemetery was established by Rev. John Myles in 1702 at the end of Tyler Point Road, adjacent to the second Baptist meetinghouse.		N	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience
University Hall, Brown University	H	Brown University	Providence, RI	Brown University Campus	The first and oldest building on the campus of Brown University. Built in 1770, the building is one of only seven extant college buildings built prior to the American Revolution.	NHL	Y	Two Worlds, Freedom of Conscience, Enslavement, Land and Water
Veterans Memorial Auditorium*	C, H	Veterans Memorial Foundation	Providence, RI	Brownell and Park Streets	The performance space features a gilded proscenium arch, as well as allegorical and heraldic ceiling murals. The Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra holds several concerts at The VETS each year.	NHRP	Y	Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Wannamoissett Marker	C, H	City of East Providence	East Providence, RI	3237 Pawtucket Avenue	Marks the original boundary between the Wannamoissett section of the Pokanoket settlement of "Sowams" in 1620, purchased by John Browne from the Massasoit Ousamequin in 1643.		Y	Two Worlds
Warren Middle Passage Project	E, H	Warren Middle Passage Project	Warren, RI	Various sites in Warren, RI	Volunteer research and interpretive initiative on the history of trading and enslavement in Warren. Their work has included the placement of a marker on Water Street that gives a brief history of Warren's involvement in the trade of enslaved people.			Enslavement
Warren United Methodist Church	C, H	Warren United Methodist Church	Warren, RI	27 Church Street	Church and house established in 1789 under the Rev. Daniel Smith, the first Methodist congregation in RI.	NRHP	Y	Soul Liberty
Warren Water-front Historic District	C, H	Private	Warren, RI	Bounded roughly by the Warren River, Belcher Cove, and the old town line (includes Main Street to Campbell St)	Area is a densely built residential, commercial, and civic area that has been the center of Warren since the mid-18th century.	NRHP	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail	E, H, R	Mostly private, managed by National Park Service	Bristol, Warren, Barrington, East Providence, Providence, RI	In RI, the trail extends from Newport to Providence	In 1781 General Rochambeau's French Army joined forces with General Washington's Continental Army to fight the British in Yorktown. The Revolutionary Route traces the path they took from Newport, RI, to Yorktown, VA.	National Historical Trail	Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Waypoysset Preserve	C, H, N, R	Town of Bristol	Bristol, RI	Narrows Road	Land trust property with recreational trails and evidence of human occupation dating back 7,000 years.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Weybosset Bridge	H	City of Providence	Providence, RI	College Street	A bridge has stood on this site since the colonial era, prior to 1660. Originally it was a wooden toll bridge across the Providence River at the entrance to the Cove.		Y	Two Worlds, Land and Water
Wheeler–Ingalls House	H	Private	Rehoboth, MA	51 Summer Street	One of the least-altered houses of the period, may have been built before 1710 by Samuel Millard.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
Whitcomb Farm	H	Private	East Providence, RI	36 Willett Avenue	Historic farmhouse built c. 1780–1805, a well-preserved example of Federal architecture.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds
Wildlands Trust (formerly Swansea Land Trust)	N, R	Wildlands Trust	Swansea, MA	Swansea	Protects and stewards six conservation parcels formerly held by the Swansea Land Trust, including Jarabeck Preserve, Tierney Preserve, and Barney-Bell Preserve, which are critical to interpreting the Swansea Purchase.		Y	Land and Water
William Hunt House	H	Private	Seekonk, MA	385 Jacobs Street	Originally a roadside tavern between Providence and Taunton-Brockton. Later the building was used as a residence and the land for farming.		N	Two Worlds
Winsor–Swan–Whitman Farm	H	Private	Providence, RI	416 Eaton Street	When it was constructed in 1742, the property was located on the northwest limit of the Providence city line, in a region commonly referred to as Elmhurst.	NRHP	N	Two Worlds

Resource Name	Type*	Owner/ Manager	Town, State	Address	Brief Description	Listing or Status	Open to Public	Themes
World War I Memorial	H	City of East Providence	East Providence, RI	Junction of Taunton Avenue and Weldon Street	The World War I Memorial is a bronze sculpture by Pietro Montana modeled on Charles Atlas and depicts a dynamically posed soldier standing on a granite base. This is a cherished landmark in East Providence representing centuries of service to the nation, going back to King Philip's War.	NRHP	Y	Land and Water
Ye Olde Eddy Burial Ground	H	Private	Swansea, MA	100 Ledge Road	The burial ground was established as early as 1687, twenty years after Swansea was established. The earliest known burial belongs to Samuel Eddy.		N	Two Worlds

APPENDIX F – SOWAMS AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Population and Socio-economic conditions

The preliminary area for the proposed Sowams NHA encompasses modern-day communities in both Massachusetts (Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, and Swansea) and Rhode Island (Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Warren, and portions of Providence). These communities include a mix of compact urban landscapes, suburban developments, and rural towns with fewer than 20,000 residents.

Census data from 2020 show demographic differences between the more densely populated Providence/East Providence and the suburban and rural areas that abut them.¹⁷² With the exception of Warren, median age, median income, employment, and education levels tend to be higher outside the urban areas. The median age in suburban and rural areas is 43-48, but Providence has experienced notable growth in its under-18 population since 2020. Median household income in East Providence (~\$80k), and Warren (~\$90k) is significantly lower than the other areas (~\$110k-\$150k).

In Providence, per capita income is lower, and unemployment is higher, than in other parts of the area. Providence's unemployment is consistently higher than the national average and the city's rate of poverty is one of the highest in the nation. Much of this data applies to the western side of the city, which is beyond the proposed boundary.

The largest employers in the region are private companies (trade and transport), private not-for-profit organizations, and local, state, and federal government. Approximately one third of residents in Rehoboth and Seekonk work in education and healthcare. Because of the proximity to Providence and Boston, some residents commute to larger cities for employment.

Most of the area's population identifies as white (non-Hispanic), many of whom trace their ancestry to early immigrants from Italy, Ireland, and Portuguese-speaking countries (Cape Verde Islands, Azores, etc.). The percentage of people who identify as Black is higher in Providence (13.4%) than other areas (average 5.4%). Since the early 2000s, the percentage of Hispanic residents, mostly Dominican, has grown significantly in and around Providence. Today, 44.3% of Providence residents identify as Hispanic.

Land Use and Transportation

Water is the dominant feature in the region's physical landscape and it shapes all aspects of life for the plants, animals, and people found here. The proximity of the Atlantic Ocean means this part of New England is warmer than other inland areas and experiences hot, humid summers as well as cold, snowy winters. Narragansett Bay, New England's largest estuary, is adjacent to the Sowams area, bringing maritime ecosystems and opportunities for transport to its shores. Freshwater rivers and wetlands are plentiful throughout the region. The land is mostly flat with patchworks of farms, meadows, and oak-hickory forests among the communities.

¹⁷² U.S. Census Bureau. "Explore Census Data." <https://data.census.gov/>. Accessed August 5, 2025.

Waterways have always shaped human settlement and continue to be important for the movement of people and goods. Many shoreline communities still have working waterfronts that support marine-based industries and pleasure boaters. Most of the roads that connect the smaller towns are two-lane. While I-95 is adjacent to the heritage area, the only major road to cross the region is I-195.

Air and Water Quality

The region's geographic diversity supports multiple ecosystems that sustain a broad range of marine, aquatic, and terrestrial plants and animals.¹⁷³ Several of these species are federally endangered or threatened, including hawksbill and leatherback sea turtles, roseate terns, piping plovers, and northern long-eared bats.

Efforts to protect natural resources in Sowams have resulted in a significant number of conservation, preservation, and restoration initiatives. The outcome of these initiatives is evident in the thousands of acres of private and public lands that have been set aside for wildlife refuges, outdoor recreation, and education.

Tourism, Business, and Industry

Tourism

Visitors are drawn to the area for its historic towns and neighborhoods, working waterfronts, cultural events, extensive waterfronts, and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. Providence also boasts a vibrant culinary scene that is supported by its culturally diverse population as well as access to local seafood and farm products.

Pleasure boating is immensely popular here. All manner of private watercraft and charters are common in the warmer months. Because of its proximity to larger population areas, day visitors come to spend a day on the water, walk the trails, or cycle rural roads and bike paths. Providence has a major airport that makes access easier, and often more affordable, than Boston's.

Business and Industry

Approximately one third of the area economy is based in trade, transportation, utilities, and educational and health services.¹⁷⁴ As the state capital, Providence also has a large percentage of government services for a city of its size. Higher education institutions include the Rhode Island School of Design, Roger Williams University, and Brown University, which supports first class medical facilities.

Providence was one of the first cities to industrialize in the United States. A number of prominent companies are headquartered there today including Fortune 500 Textron, an advanced technologies industrial conglomerate; United Natural Foods, a distributor of natural and organic foods; Fortune 1000 Nortek Incorporated; and Gilbane, a construction and real estate company.

¹⁷³ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "ECOS – Environmental Conservation Online System." [https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-listings-by-state?stateAbbrev=RI&stateName=Rhode Island&statusCategory=Listed](https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-listings-by-state?stateAbbrev=RI&stateName=Rhode+Island&statusCategory=Listed). Accessed August 5, 2025.

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Providence Area Economic Summary." https://www.bls.gov/regions/northeast/summary/bls-summary_providence.pdf. Accessed August 5, 2025.

Sowams Heritage Area

Bodies of Water and Public Protected Open Spaces

Square Mile Summary:							
Sowams Heritage Area	139.57						
Sowams Protected Open Space	12.15						
Sowams Water	3.49						
Sowams Wetland	19.47						
Wetland Type	Square Miles						
Estuarine and Marine Deepwater	0.296000004						
Estuarine and Marine Wetland	2.152750015						
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	1.154610038						
Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland	16.1595993						
Freshwater Pond	0.644461989						
Lake	1.400370002						
Riverine	<u>1.147930026</u>						
Total Water	3.488762021						
Total Wetland	19.46695936						
Open Space Site Name	Public_Access	State	Square_Miles	DataSource	SourceYear	NBEPYear	
	Yes	MA	0.17695086	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
100 Acre Cove	Yes	RI	0.00361525	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Aaron Avenue	Yes	RI	0.00065915	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Abbott Street	Limited	RI	0.00097197	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Agawam-Flynn Playground	Yes	RI	0.04613399	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Allen Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01334278	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Allen Avenue CR	Yes	MA	0.02024462	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Almeida /McCaffrey Woods	Yes	RI	0.00047133	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Almy Ave	Limited	RI	0.00308013	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Anawan Rock Historic Park	Yes	MA	0.01263687	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Andreozzi Park	Yes	RI	0.00070299	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Angus Street Right-of-Way	Yes	MA	9.2981E-05	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Annawamscutt Brook	Yes	RI	0.00279851	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Annawamscutt Brook / Kilham	Limited	RI	0.00751353	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Arcade Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.0006941	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Arnold Street Playground	Yes	RI	0.00065138	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ashton Fields	Yes	MA	0.02207455	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Aurora Neck	Yes	RI	0.00105807	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Avila	Limited	RI	0.0087355	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Barney Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.0358272	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Barneyville Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01012295	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Baron Salt Marsh	Limited	RI	0.0183055	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Baron Salt Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00773503	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

Sowams Land and Water
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Sowams Heritage Area

Bodies of Water and Public Protected Open Spaces

Barrington Town Beach	Yes	RI	0.00549622	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Barrington/Veterans Parkway	Yes	RI	0.07593821	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Belcher Cove	Yes	RI	0.04291485	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Belcher Cove area	Yes	RI	0.00334181	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bell Preserve	Yes	MA	0.05120836	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bicknell Park	Yes	RI	0.00855926	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Birch Stevens Farm	Yes	MA	0.04141215	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Birch Swamp Area	Limited	RI	0.00084299	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Birch Swamp Area	Yes	RI	0.01626991	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Blackledge	Limited	MA	0.00182717	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Blackstone Boulevard	Yes	RI	0.00107205	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Blackstone Park	Yes	RI	0.06919518	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bliss Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01759223	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Blithewold	Yes	RI	0.0471113	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bold Point Park	Yes	RI	0.00575284	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Borge Preserve	Yes	MA	0.01461102	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bosworth Street	Yes	RI	0.01590803	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bourne Lane Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00640776	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Boyden Heights	Yes	RI	0.01692526	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bradley Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00874324	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Brayton Point WMA	Yes	MA	0.00309444	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bricknell Park	Yes	RI	0.014541	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Brickyard Pond / Nugent Wetland	Yes	RI	0.00691418	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Brickyard Pond / Robertson	Limited	RI	0.00057988	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bridgham Farm	Yes	RI	0.02812932	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Briggs Corner Cemetery	Limited	MA	0.02485052	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol County Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00066357	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol County Land	Yes	MA	0.00245536	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol Greenway	Limited	RI	0.00163442	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol Town Beach	Yes	RI	0.03892618	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol Town Park	Yes	RI	0.00988471	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bristol Town Woods	Yes	RI	0.00607331	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Britto Park	Yes	RI	0.03708057	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Broad Cove	Limited	MA	0.00151504	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Broad Cove	Yes	MA	0.02566484	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Brookside Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00824846	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Buffington Park	Yes	MA	0.04228777	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Bullocks Cove Playground	Yes	RI	0.02121744	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Burrs Hill Park	Yes	RI	0.01277299	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Camp Ramsbottom	Limited	MA	0.25381434	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Camp Ramsbottom	Yes	MA	0.00467608	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge	Yes	MA	0.30160531	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

Sowams Heritage Area

Bodies of Water and Public Protected Open Spaces

Carousel Park	Yes	RI	0.01504637	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Carpenter Bird Sanctuary	Yes	MA	0.01338396	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Carpenter Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00114606	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Central Avenue Playground	Yes	RI	0.00390373	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Chace St School	Limited	MA	0.01809105	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Chase Preserve	Yes	MA	0.0098767	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Chestnut Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01744397	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Chianese Field	Yes	RI	0.01642287	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Child Street	Limited	RI	0.00076577	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Children's Grove	Yes	RI	0.01302897	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Church of the Holy Cross Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.01030061	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Claire D. McIntosh Refuge	Yes	RI	0.03950159	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Colt State Park	Yes	RI	0.71188033	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Connolly Ave Marsh	Limited	RI	0.00531333	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Correia	Yes	RI	0.00106169	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
County Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02770097	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Crescent Beach	Yes	RI	0.01649654	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Crestwood Country Club	Limited	MA	0.28616366	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Cummings Donation	Yes	RI	0.00653842	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Cushing Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01545181	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Danforth Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.04063019	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Delle Femine Playfield	Yes	RI	0.0142855	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Devine / Vargas Conservation Area	Yes	RI	0.06632262	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
DiOrio Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00147178	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Douglas Rayner Wildlife Refuge	Yes	RI	0.10762781	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Downing	Yes	RI	0.00065518	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Drown Cove	Yes	RI	0.00405246	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
East Providence High School	Yes	RI	0.02555302	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Echo Lake	Limited	RI	0.01891468	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Echo Lake	Yes	RI	0.00513057	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Echo Lake / Lombardi Park	Yes	RI	0.00562014	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Edna Martin Wildlife Refuge	Yes	MA	0.05106939	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Elm Street Acres	Yes	MA	0.08776653	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Etelvina Court	Yes	RI	0.00187488	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Etter Preserve	Yes	MA	0.00969277	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Fairview Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02743821	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ferreira CR	Limited	MA	0.13403301	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Fiedler Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00036069	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Fillessey Preserve	Yes	MA	0.01352198	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Footte Street Park	Yes	RI	0.00070913	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Fox Lea Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00689922	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Fox Point	Yes	RI	0.00169336	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

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Francesca Street	Yes	RI	0.00417785	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Freedom Park	Yes	RI	0.00152444	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Front St Property	Limited	MA	0.00094237	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gano Street Park	Yes	RI	0.01951535	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gardner	Limited	RI	0.00939404	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gardner Ave Property	Yes	MA	0.00295984	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gardner Woods	Limited	RI	0.00047852	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Garret and Janet Dewey Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02844008	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gibbs Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.00461864	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Girl Scouts Of Ri Land	Limited	MA	0.19405417	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Girl Scouts Of Ri Property	Limited	MA	0.061736	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gladys Potter Park	Yes	RI	0.00194623	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Glenlyon Playground	Yes	RI	0.01538539	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Glenview	Yes	RI	0.0315065	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Gooding Avenue	Yes	RI	0.04387884	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Grant Woodland	Limited	RI	0.00286579	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Grassy Plains	Yes	RI	0.02585638	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Greenwood Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.04575086	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Greenwood Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.00324049	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Guiteras Park	Yes	RI	0.01129271	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Haines Memorial State Park	Yes	RI	0.12533595	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Halfmile Hill	Yes	RI	0.16363195	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hammond Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01285504	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hampden Meadows	Yes	RI	0.13045959	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Harding Estate	Limited	RI	0.00120954	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Heritage Pake	Yes	RI	0.11736389	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hidden Hollow Golf Club	Limited	MA	0.10722117	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hope Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00122033	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hopeworth Ave	Yes	RI	0.01080728	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hopeworth Ave Conservation Area	Yes	RI	0.024003	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hugh Cole	Yes	RI	0.02170176	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hull Street Playground	Yes	RI	0.0140942	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove	Yes	RI	0.07003419	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove / Adams Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00674129	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove / Beauregard	Yes	RI	0.00736149	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove / Daniels	Yes	RI	9.2846E-05	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove / Esther Hill Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00051404	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hundred Acre Cove Tidal Marsh	Limited	RI	0.06557121	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hunts Mills	Yes	RI	0.07680824	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Hurley Middle School Athletic Fields	Yes	MA	0.02873912	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Iadaveia Swamp and Woodland	Yes	MA	0.08228778	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Independence Park	Yes	RI	0.00809751	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

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India Point Park	Yes	RI	0.01991425	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
India Point Park / Community Boating	Yes	RI	0.00163544	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Industrial Way Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02111781	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Isaiah Hunt Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.0001528	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Jacobs Point / Hanley Farm Marsh	Yes	RI	0.05938782	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
James V Turner Reservoir	Yes	RI	0.03622504	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Jamiet Park	Yes	RI	0.01765789	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Jarabek Preserve	Yes	MA	0.0649567	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Johannis Farm	Limited	RI	0.04751564	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Johannis Farm	Yes	RI	0.00130006	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Joseph Cash High School	Yes	MA	0.06358226	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Kent Heights Field	Yes	RI	0.03752299	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Kent Street Park	Yes	RI	0.00164063	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Kezia Perry Swamp	Yes	MA	0.00308658	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Kickemuit River	Yes	RI	0.00976701	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Kingsley Estates Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02030704	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Lagerquist Memorial Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.11756022	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Latham Park	Yes	RI	0.00452759	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Leahys Pond	Yes	RI	0.00904637	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ledgemont Country Club	Limited	MA	0.31999743	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ledgemont Hill Estates Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01499019	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Leon F Walker Jr Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03056058	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Lincoln Avenue Mini Park	Yes	RI	0.00014698	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Lincoln Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03088136	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Lions Head	Yes	RI	0.00232548	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Lippitt Park	Yes	RI	0.00942376	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Little Squannakonk Swamp	Yes	MA	0.04995096	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Littlefield Estates Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.05455966	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Long Point	Limited	MA	0.00960597	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mallard Point	Yes	MA	0.00398393	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Maple Road	Limited	RI	0.00014773	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Market Square Park	Yes	RI	0.00076109	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Market Street	Limited	RI	0.0068764	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Market Street	Yes	RI	0.03587881	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Marnoch Drive Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02276052	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Martin Luther King Playground	Yes	RI	0.00303506	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mason Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01637771	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mauran Avenue Playground	Yes	RI	0.00055925	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
McCaffrey Woods	Limited	RI	0.00022373	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Medeiros Swansea Preserve	Yes	MA	0.04976208	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Middle Road & Upland	Yes	RI	0.00567133	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Middlebrook Country Club	Limited	MA	0.07563754	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

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Mill Pond	Yes	RI	0.00044408	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mill Pond / Pire	Yes	RI	0.00097477	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mill Pond Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.0005382	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Miller Bird Sanctuary	Yes	MA	0.0751778	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Missile Loop	Yes	MA	0.01434461	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Monast Island	Yes	RI	0.00591827	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Moriarty	Yes	RI	0.00425863	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mount Hope	Limited	RI	0.07634608	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mount Hope Bay	Limited	RI	0.08133353	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mount Hope Farm	Yes	RI	0.19626865	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Mussachuck Creek	Yes	RI	0.00656714	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Naomi Street	Yes	RI	0.02841419	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Nathan Slade Cemetery	Limited	MA	0.00498325	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Nathan Slade Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.01705573	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Nayatt Road Park	Yes	RI	0.03806946	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
New Meadow	Yes	RI	0.06258737	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Newman Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01718597	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
North Elementary School Fields	Limited	MA	0.01943537	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
North Main Street Park	Yes	RI	0.00176231	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
North Street Landing	Yes	MA	0.00022064	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Nyatt Road Park / Colley	Yes	RI	0.0058715	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Oak Hill Beagle Club CR	Limited	MA	0.13902083	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Birchwood Ave Property	Limited	MA	0.00039242	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Circuit Dr Property	Yes	MA	0.00050051	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Front St Property	Yes	MA	0.00057002	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Long Point Property	Yes	MA	0.00131284	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Pearse Rd Property	Limited	MA	0.00078598	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Off Seaview Ave Property	Yes	MA	0.00105464	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Old Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.0005737	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
ONeil Playground	Yes	MA	0.00895856	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ormand Park	Yes	RI	0.00320117	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ossamequin Woods	Yes	RI	0.00168955	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Palmer Ave Marsh	Yes	RI	0.01340151	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Palmer River	Limited	RI	0.00205713	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Palmer River	Yes	RI	0.0859881	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Palmer River Burial Ground	Yes	MA	0.00261198	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Palmer River Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02706046	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pamden Lane Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01020708	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Paquette Farm	Yes	MA	0.12652537	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Park	Yes	RI	0.00478719	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Patricia Ann Drive	Limited	RI	0.0007505	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Paull Park	Yes	RI	0.03183579	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

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Pawtucket Country Club	Limited	MA	0.14570516	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Peck	Yes	RI	0.00696838	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Peck Avenue Park	Yes	MA	0.01709595	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Peck Burial Yard	Yes	MA	0.00015048	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Perna	Yes	RI	0.0090429	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Perry / StAngelo	Yes	RI	0.06488791	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Perryville Pond Mill Site	Yes	MA	0.00186564	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Perryville Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.022279	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
PIC-WIL Nature Preserve	Limited	RI	0.03007868	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pierce Beach Park	Yes	MA	0.02246049	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pierce Beach Playground	Yes	MA	0.01538133	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pierce Field	Yes	RI	0.03885629	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pine Valley Golf Club	Limited	MA	0.08776511	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Poppasquash Woods	Limited	RI	0.00651686	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Pratt Avenue Beach	Yes	MA	0.00037495	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Primrose Hill	Yes	RI	0.00720633	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Priscilla Drive Park	Yes	RI	0.03896277	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Prospect Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.13005133	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Prospect Terrace Park	Yes	RI	0.00305334	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Quirk Mello Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01417372	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Read Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00241245	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Read Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.11352815	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rehoboth Country Club	Limited	MA	0.19020727	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rehoboth Fire Tower	Yes	MA	0.00207112	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rehoboth State Forest	Yes	MA	0.21870618	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rehoboth Town Forest	Yes	MA	0.23989393	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Reynolds Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.05414478	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rhode Island Boy Scouts	Yes	MA	0.05464699	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ripley Street Parcel	Yes	MA	0.00023833	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
River Oak	Limited	RI	0.00369886	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rockwell Park	Yes	RI	0.00084877	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rocky Meadow Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02427527	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Roger Williams National Park	Yes	RI	0.00738862	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rose Garden Playground	Yes	RI	0.01999975	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rosewood Ave Property	Yes	MA	0.00120776	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rotundo Sanctuary	Yes	MA	0.00778357	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rumford Hunting and Fishing Club	Limited	MA	0.01461195	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Rumstick Point	Yes	RI	0.05054949	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Runnins River	Limited	RI	0.0011442	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Runnins River	Yes	RI	0.01564545	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sabin Point	Yes	RI	0.01056731	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Saint Andrews Farm	Yes	RI	0.00116033	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

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Seacunke Sanctuary	Yes	MA	0.02199013	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sears Preserve	Yes	MA	0.00254625	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seaview Marsh	Limited	RI	0.0046193	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.00742396	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk High School Athletic Fields	Yes	MA	0.0281127	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk Meadows	Yes	MA	0.01293189	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk Swimming and Tennis Club	Limited	MA	0.01163475	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk Town Forest	Yes	MA	0.02784579	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Seekonk Veterans Memorial Park	Yes	MA	0.00174784	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Senior Center	Yes	RI	0.00944398	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Shady Lane	Yes	RI	0.00495099	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sharps Lot Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02421795	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sheperton Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00340032	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sherwood Field	Yes	RI	0.00679118	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Shore Drive Park	Yes	RI	0.00020806	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Silver Spring Playground	Yes	RI	0.00923372	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Smiths Cove	Yes	RI	0.02127735	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Smoke Rise Cir Property	Limited	MA	0.00222441	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Somerset Berkley Regional High School	Limited	MA	0.03776788	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
South Boyd Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	RI	0.01927964	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
South Complex	Yes	MA	0.03549286	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
South Main Street Park	Yes	RI	0.00216134	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
South Seekonk Rod and Gun Club	Limited	MA	0.01089375	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sowams Playground	Yes	RI	0.00208912	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sowams School	Yes	RI	0.01784059	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sprague Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03762471	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Squannakonk Swamp/Roaring Brook Wood	Yes	MA	0.5410586	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Squantum Woods	Yes	RI	0.03782515	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
St Andrews Farm	Yes	RI	0.04467141	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
St. Andrews Farm	Yes	RI	0.04326694	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Summit Ave Playground	Yes	RI	0.00069823	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Sun Valley Golf Course	Limited	MA	0.26410174	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Swansea Country Club	Yes	MA	0.3223047	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tall Cedars	Yes	RI	0.06547255	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tanyard Reservoir	Yes	RI	0.00400884	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tavares Farm	Yes	RI	0.02066224	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Ten Mile River	Yes	RI	0.00028124	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
The Bluffs	Yes	MA	0.00831218	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Thomas Park	Yes	RI	0.00161868	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Thomas Park (Silver Creek)	Yes	RI	0.00525114	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tina Court	Yes	RI	0.0014951	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Touisset Country Club	Limited	MA	0.08255529	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	

Sowams Land and Water
Revised: 02.03.25
Page 9

Sowams Heritage Area

Bodies of Water and Public Protected Open Spaces

Touisset	Yes	RI	0.00060869	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge	Yes	RI	0.10944074	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tower Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.0254041	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Town Beach	Yes	RI	0.0036004	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Town Common	Yes	RI	0.01360973	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Town Fields	Limited	MA	0.0067743	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Town Golf Course	Yes	RI	0.03478068	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Town Hall Cove	Yes	RI	0.00019049	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Towne Cyr	Yes	RI	0.0040893	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Tremont Street Ballfield	Yes	MA	0.00754328	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Turner Reservoir	Yes	RI	0.19523267	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Un-Named	Limited	MA	0.00039845	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Usher Cove Marsh	Limited	RI	0.01298864	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Vendituoli Farm	Limited	RI	0.00531163	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Veterans Memorial Park	Yes	RI	0.14737122	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Veterans Park	Yes	RI	0.00691162	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Village Cemetery	Yes	MA	0.02656904	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Village Park	Yes	MA	0.08883502	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Village School Fields	Limited	MA	0.00314063	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Village Waterfront Park	Yes	MA	0.00436347	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Vineyard Road Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00529612	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Walker Farm	Yes	RI	0.1160105	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Walley Park	Yes	RI	0.00088408	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Walnut Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01974632	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Wampanoag Rod and Gun Club	Limited	MA	0.02856601	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Warren Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03372991	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Warren Bike Path	Limited	RI	0.00870438	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Waypoysset Preserve	Yes	RI	0.06866878	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
West Hill Playground	Limited	MA	0.00273403	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Wildflower Drive Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.00174864	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Willett Pond	Yes	RI	0.02562786	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Windquist Marsh	Yes	RI	0.00136672	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Winthrop Street Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03707558	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Witherby Park	Yes	RI	0.0026944	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Woodland Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.01096687	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Woodward Avenue Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.02535443	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
Young Farm Conservation Area	Yes	MA	0.03244146	RIGIS; MassGIS	2024; 2024	2024	
TOTAL			12.1585226				

APPENDIX G – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I. Shared Purpose and Engagement

A. *Shared Vision, Mission, and Core Values*

- Sowams Heritage Area and its partners will adhere to a shared mission and vision statement, along with core values articulating the goals and purpose of their collaboration. This shared understanding will guide all efforts, ensuring the Sowams Heritage Area's priorities remain at the forefront.

B. *Inclusivity and Diversity*

- Embrace diversity, including cultural, ethnic, social, economic backgrounds, and geographic representation. Ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and respected in decision-making processes.

C. *Stakeholder Engagement*

- Foster active and meaningful engagement with local communities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, educational institutions, Tribes, and other relevant stakeholders. Encourage their participation in the planning, preserving, and promoting heritage resources.

D. *Public Awareness and Advocacy*

- Engage in public awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts to grow support for the Sowams Heritage Area's objectives and secure the necessary resources for its success.

II. Stewardship and Sustainability

A. *Sustainable Practices*

- Commit to sustainable practices that protect and conserve the natural, historic, and cultural resources within Sowams Heritage Area. This includes responsible tourism, environmental stewardship, and adaptive management strategies.

B. *Resource Stewardship*

- Collaborate on the responsible management, preservation, and restoration of heritage resources. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for partners in maintaining the integrity of Sowams Heritage Area.

C. *Sustainable Economic Development*

- Support local economies through heritage-related initiatives, such as heritage tourism and adaptive reuse of historic properties, while respecting the Sowams Heritage Area's values and resources. Seek a balance between economic growth and conservation.

III. Education and Capacity Building

A. *Education and Interpretation*

- Promote education and interpretation programs that enhance public understanding of the Sowams Heritage Area's significance. Provide opportunities for learning, research, and storytelling to connect people with their heritage.

B. Capacity Building

- Invest in the capacity building of partner organizations and individuals to ensure their ability to contribute effectively to the Sowams Heritage Area's goals. Share knowledge, training, and resources to strengthen the partnership.

IV. Collaboration and Accountability

A. Collaboration and Cooperation

- Pledge to work collaboratively, pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise. Together, we shall achieve more than we can individually, advancing our shared mission.

B. Transparency and Accountability

- Maintain transparency in decision-making processes, funding allocation, and reporting. Establish mechanisms for accountability to ensure that all partners fulfill their commitments.

C. Conflict Resolution

- Establish a straightforward process for resolving conflicts and disputes among partners. Encourage open dialogue and mediation to maintain a harmonious working relationship.

V. Timely Execution and Meeting Responsibilities

A. Responsibility and Deadlines

- Commit to fulfilling responsibilities on time and ensuring that work is conducted as scheduled. Partners are accountable for completing their assigned tasks promptly and contributing to the overall progress of Sowams Heritage Area. Delays, missed deadlines, or lack of participation must be addressed proactively to ensure the smooth functioning of the heritage area's operations.

B. Efficiency in Workflows

- Promote efficient workflows by setting clear timelines and deliverables for projects and activities. Encourage regular communication to monitor progress, identify potential challenges, and take corrective action where needed.

VI. Adaptability and Long-Term Commitment

A. Adaptability and Innovation

- Embrace adaptability and innovation to respond to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. Encourage experimentation and creative solutions to heritage preservation and promotion.

B. Long-Term Commitment

- Recognize that heritage preservation and promotion are long-term endeavors. Commit to sustained collaboration and the continuation of the Sowams Heritage Area's mission beyond short-term goals.

C. Evaluation and Review

- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership and make adjustments as needed. Use feedback and lessons learned to continuously improve collaboration and achieve shared goals.

VII. Data and Research

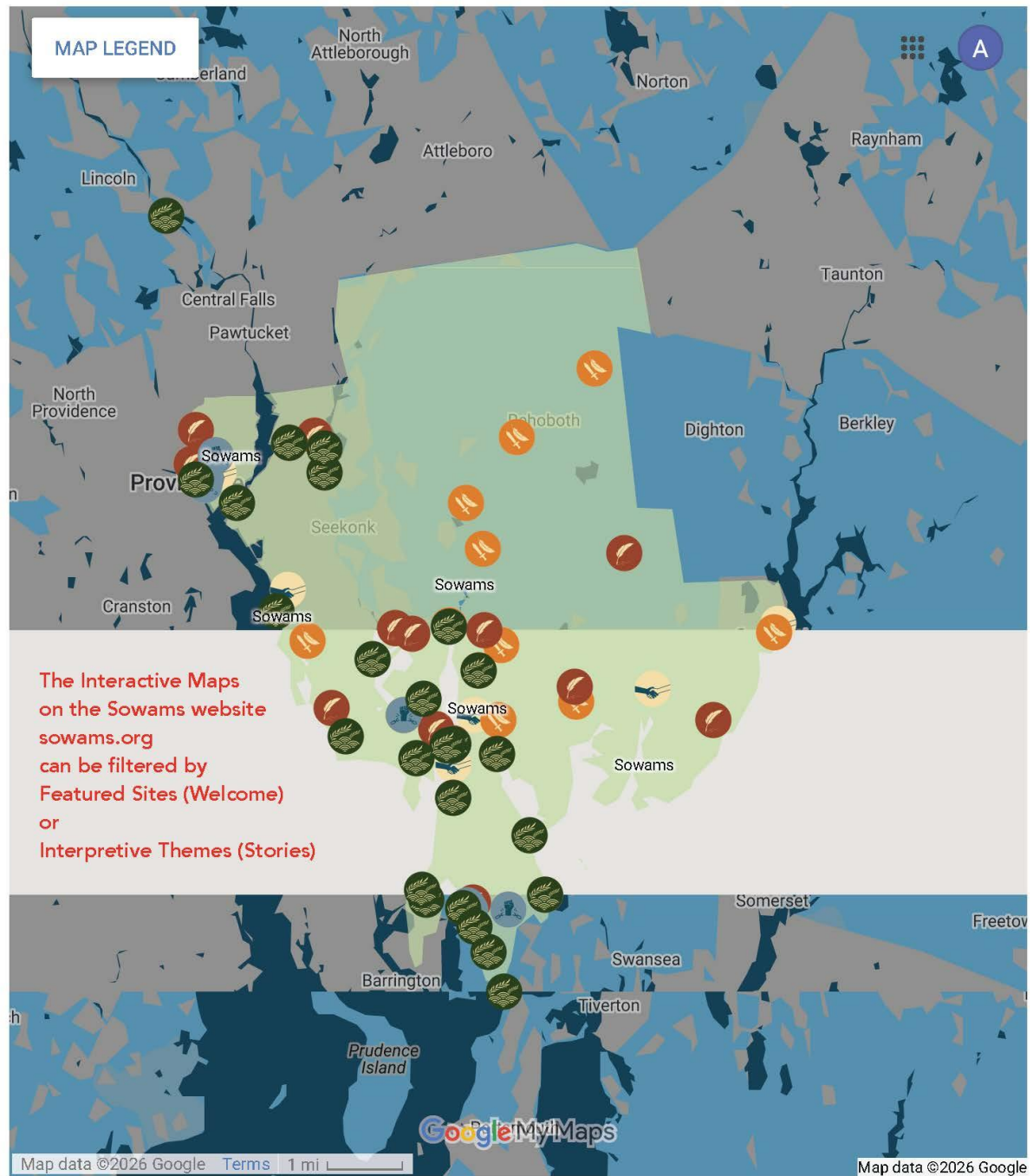
A. Data and Research

Prioritize data collection and research to inform decision-making and measure the impact of collaborative efforts. Share findings and insights to enhance the Sowams Heritage Area's effectiveness.

APPENDIX H – MAPS

Sowams: Stories On The Landscape - Google My Maps

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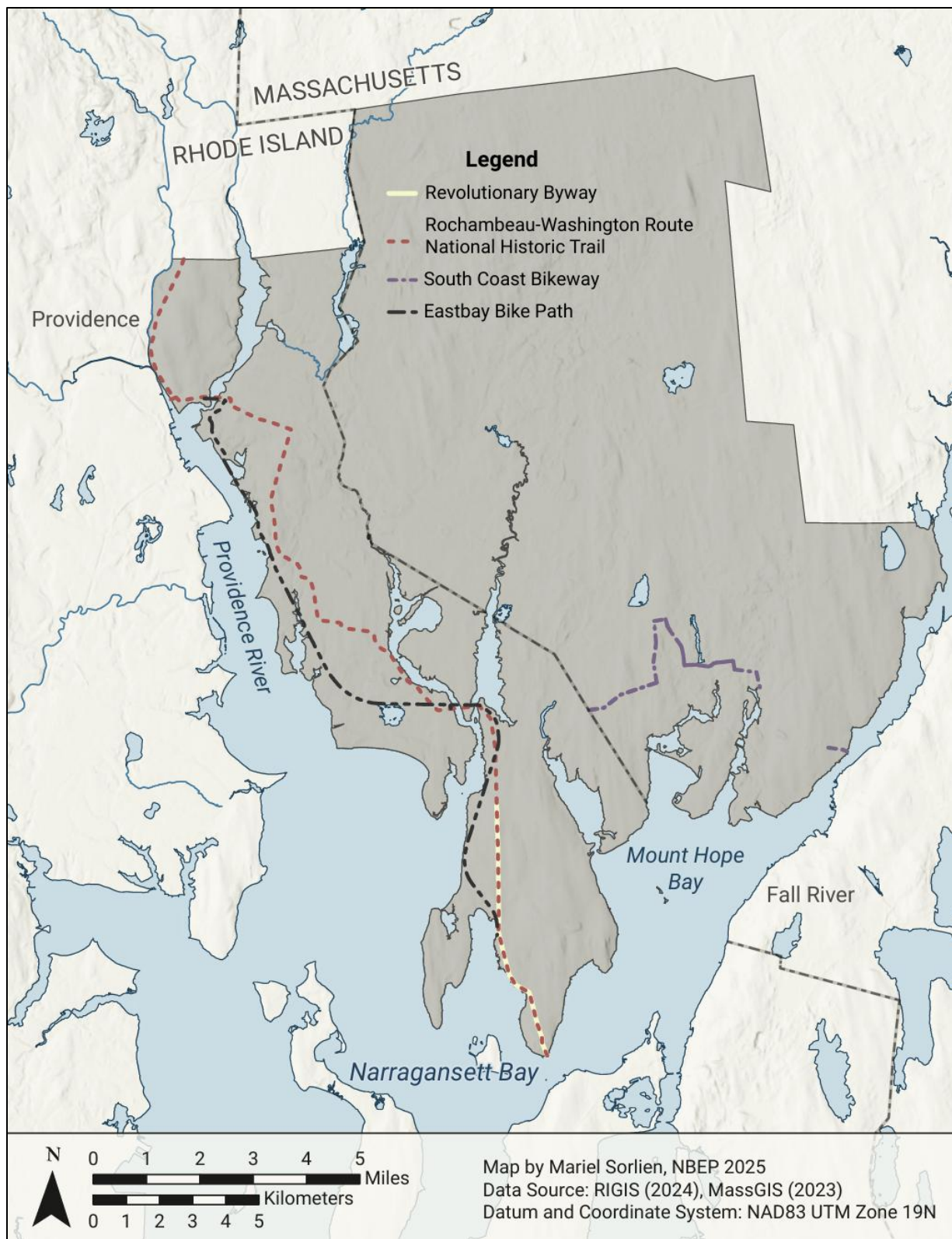


<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1LUAv-6svNiE7pdQbyivQngfpDzTocms&ll=41.7852874588423%2C-71.25187540181642&z=11>

Page 1 of 1







APPENDIX I – COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT FOR SOWAMS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Letters

- MA State Representative (Third Bristol District)
- MA State Representative (Fourth Bristol District)
- MA State Senator (First Bristol and Plymouth District)
- MA State Senator (Fifth Bristol and Plymouth District)

State of Rhode Island Letters

- RI Commerce Corporation
- RI Secretary of State
- RI State Assembly Joint Session, Pokanoket Recognition Resolution
- RI State Representative (District 68)
- RI State Senate President
- RI State Senator (District 10)

Tribal Governments, Organizations, and Members

- Center for Indigenous People's Rights
- Friends of the Pokanoket Tribe
- Mashapaug Nahaganset Chippissuog Tribe
- Pokanoket Tribal Council and Tribe
- Ruth Major, artist, Nauset Tribal Council member

Municipal Government Resolutions and Letters

- Barrington, RI Town Council Resolution
- Barrington, RI Planning, Building and Resilience Department
- Bristol, RI Town Council Resolution
- East Providence, RI City Council Resolution
- East Providence, RI Mayor of the City of East Providence
- Providence, RI Mayor of the City of Providence
- Providence, RI City Council, land acknowledgement
- Rehoboth, MA Select Board
- Seekonk, MA Select Board Resolution
- Seekonk, MA Planning Board
- Somerset, MA Economic Development Committee
- Somerset, MA Historical Commission
- Somerset, MA Select Board Resolution
- Swansea, MA Select Board Resolution

- Swansea, MA Conservation Commission
- Swansea, MA Planning Board
- Warren, RI Town Council Resolution

Economic Development, Tourism, and Business

- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Blount Boats
- Discover Newport
- East Bay Chamber of Commerce
- Explore Bristol
- Hope and Main Culinary Incubator
- Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Southeastern Mass Visitors Bureau
- Southeastern MA Planners Roundtable
- Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District

Environment and Recreation Organizations

- Blithewold Manor and Arboretum
- Coggeshall Farm Museum/Old Sturbridge Village
- Tony Morettini, environmental activist, Bristol, RI
- Mt. Hope Farm
- Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
- Osamequin Farm
- Rehoboth Land Trust
- Save the Bay
- Taunton River Stewardship Council
- Warren Land Trust

Historic Preservation and Humanities Organizations

- Barrington Public Library
- Bristol Historic & Preservation Society
- East Providence Historical Society
- Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation
- George Hail Free Library
- Herreshoff Marine Museum and America's Cup Hall of Fame
- Linden Place Historic Estate and Arts Center
- Massasoit Historical Association
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Plimoth Patuxet Museums

- Rehoboth Antiquarian Society (Carpenter Museum, Blanding Library)
- Seekonk Public Library
- Somerset Historical Society
- Somerset Public Library

Religious Organizations

- First Baptist Church of Swansea, MA
- First Congregational Church of Barrington, RI
- First Congregational Church of Bristol, RI
- Newman Congregational Church

Arts and Culture Organizations

- Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project
- Bristol Art Museum
- Providence Cultural Equity Initiative



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1063

January 15, 2026

Executive Board
Sowams Heritage Area Project
23 Bridge Street
Warren, RI 02885

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Executive Board,

As the elected officials representing the Massachusetts House of Representatives 4th Bristol District and the Senate Third Bristol and Plymouth District, which are comprised, in part, of some of the nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of the Narragansett Bay that comprise the Sowams Heritage Area, we write to express our support for the designation of the Sowams as a National Heritage Area by the United States Congress. This ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history, serves a vital and integral part of the history of our districts.

This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in the history of our nation, such as the beginning and end of King Philip's War, the founding of the state of Rhode Island by Roger Williams, where the seeds of religious freedom took root, the business of slave trading igniting a trans-Atlantic economy and moral outcry, and the dynamic interplay of land and water, which defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

We recognize that National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage and are designated by the U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government. Further, these designations are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration, which we are confident would be beneficial to the Sowams Heritage Area.

We are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area. Please feel free to contact our offices with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Steven S. Howitt
State Representative
4th Bristol District
(617) 722-2305
Steven.Howitt@mahouse.gov

Kelly Dooner
State Senator, Assistant Minority Leader
Third Bristol and Plymouth
(617) 722-1551
Kelly.Dooner@masenate.gov



SENATOR MICHAEL J. RODRIGUES
First Bristol and Plymouth District

CHAIR
Committee on Ways and Means

MICHAEL.RODRIGUES@MASENATE.GOV
WWW.MASENATE.GOV

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 212
BOSTON, MA 02133-1053
TEL: (617) 722-1114
FAX: (617) 722-1498
WAYS & MEANS: (617) 722-1481

ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER
ROOM 235
FALL RIVER, MA 02722
TEL. (508) 646-0650
FAX. (508) 646-0656

SOMERSET TOWN HALL
140 WOOD STREET
SOMERSET, MA 02726
TEL. (508) 673-8408

February 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

I write to express my strong and unequivocal support for the official designation of the Sowams National Heritage Area. This historically significant landscape, situated along the borders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, is the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe and the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin Tribe who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621. This encounter started a strong friendship and forged a 50-year alliance that was upended by the King Philip's War, also called the First Indian War of 1675. The region encompasses compelling history including the fundamental principle of the separation of church and state, enshrined in Rhode Island's Charter.

The designation as a "National Heritage Area" would provide many opportunities to promote and highlight the stories of how the distinctive places in this area provided a backdrop and a compelling narrative of a complex period of American history. The hope is to expand community dialogue and collaboration about its interpretation for the benefit of future generations. This in turn would enable expanded access for public engagement with educational resources that describe and recognize the historical significance of the Sowams region with national recognition.

As a National Heritage Area, the nine (9) cities and towns that make up the Sowams would tell a revealing story about America's complex and often difficult beginnings. Typically, National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage. While they are designated by U.S. Congress, they are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government in any way, and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration,

As a strong proponent of the Sowams National Heritage designation, I hope their proposal is approved.

Please feel free to contact me at (617) 722-1114 if you would like to discuss their application further.

Sincerely,

State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

JUSTIN E. THURBER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
FIFTH BRISTOL DISTRICT

STATE HOUSE ROOM 443
Justin.Thurber@MAHouse.gov

Dear Members of the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic and unwavering support for the designation of the Sowams National Heritage Area. This initiative offers a transformative opportunity to preserve and interpret the region's profound contributions to American history while driving sustainable economic growth across the nine communities that comprise Sowams.

The Sowams region holds significant historical importance as the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe (also known as the Wampanoag), centered on the northeastern watershed of Narragansett Bay. It was here that Massasoit Ousamequin resided and forged a vital alliance of friendship with the Pilgrims in 1621, an agreement that ensured the survival of the early Plymouth colony for decades. Communities like Swansea and Somerset were integral to the original Sowams lands, acquired in key 17th-century purchases from Indigenous leaders. Dighton adds further depth through landmarks such as Dighton Rock—a boulder bearing ancient petroglyphs long associated with Indigenous peoples and early speculative theories of pre-Columbian contact—symbolizing the region's mysterious and layered human story. Sowams also bore witness to the devastating conflicts of King Philip's War (1675–1676), which reshaped New England, and served as a cradle for American religious freedom (through figures like Roger Williams) and a hub of maritime innovation and exploration. Designating Sowams as a National Heritage Area would illuminate these pivotal, interconnected stories and honor the complex origins of our nation, for generations to come.

Equally compelling are the economic benefits this designation would deliver. National Heritage Areas are proven catalysts for heritage tourism and community revitalization, without federal land ownership or control. This would translate to increased visitors supporting local businesses, restaurants, hotels, and the hospitality sector in towns like Swansea, Somerset, and beyond. It would also unlock consistent federal resources for job-creating projects, including historic site restorations, and recreational trail expansions.

The Sowams Heritage Area project, led by a dedicated nonprofit and supported by local boards and towns—including strong representation from Swansea, Somerset, and adjacent areas. I urge swift action to secure congressional designation and stand ready to collaborate with our congressional delegation, state and local leaders, and fellow community members to bring this vision to fruition.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this important matter. Preserving Sowams honors our shared past, and invests in a stronger, more vibrant future for our region.

Sincerely,

State Representative Justin Thurber



November 17, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of Rhode Island Commerce enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

Our mission is to help you achieve yours. At Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, we understand that each business requires different kinds of support at different times. Our team of Business Engagement Specialists are here to assist your business in navigating any obstacles you may face. Whether you are considering launching a startup, seeking to expand your existing company or looking for assistance with red tape reduction, Rhode Island Commerce's mission is to help you achieve your goals. We offer business assistance, access to funding and red tape reduction for companies of all sizes.

As a quasi-public agency, we serve as a government and community resource to help businesses expand in, and relocate to, Rhode Island. Our Specialists work with Rhode Island businesses in all industries and at all stages.

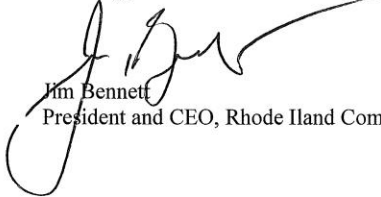
In fact, we are already working collaboratively with you on Sowams Heritage area.

Providence is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history. This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia. National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration.

We see opportunities for collaboration with Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area and proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,



Jim Bennett
President and CEO, Rhode Island Commerce

315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, RI 02908
Phone: 401.278.9100 • Fax: 401.273.8270 • CommerceRI.com



State of Rhode Island
Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State
Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

April 22, 2026

To the Board of Directors of the Sowams Heritage Area,

Thank you for your commitment to highlighting the rich history of the Sowams region. As you know, prior to being elected as Secretary of State, I spent nearly thirty years as a public high school history and civics teacher. I shared the story of Rhode Island and how it has shaped our country.

Now, in my role as the Chair of the RI250 Commission, I continue to support efforts across the state to highlight the vibrant history of Rhode Island, its role in the nation's founding, and ongoing work to preserve those stories for generations to come. I also believe the Semiquincentennial is an appropriate time to advance legacy projects that will continue to foster civic engagement.

I appreciate and support your efforts to continue to highlight the history of Sowams by pursuing a Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area. As the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor highlights the beginning of the American Industrial Revolution, Sowams would elevate Rhode Island's role as the birthplace of religious freedom, its critical contributions to the American Revolution, and the intersection of all people who have shaped the region over time.

If you have any questions as you pursue the National Heritage Area designation, feel free to reach out to our RI250 Program Coordinator, Lauren Fogarty, at lforgarty@sos.ri.gov. Thank you again for your dedication to preserving Rhode Island's important history.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

State House, Room 218, Providence, RI 02903
Phone: 401-222-2357 | Fax: 401-222-1356 | secretaryamore@sos.ri.gov | www.sos.ri.gov

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

SENATE RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING THE RECOGNITION OF THE POKANOKET TRIBE AS THE ANCIENT
AND ONGOING STEWARDS OF THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMELAND, AND
ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING THE REGION'S PAST,
PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Introduced By: Senators Ujifusa, Urso, Britto, McKenney, Gu, Appollonio, Sosnowski,
Raptakis, DiPalma, and Murray

Date Introduced: May 07, 2025

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe is the ancient and continuous steward of the lands now
2 known as Bristol, Warren, Barrington, East Providence, and parts of Providence, including Mount
3 Hope (Montaup), the seat of Pokanoket government and the home of Massasoit (Great Sachem)
4 Ousamequin; and

5 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe was the headship tribe of the Pokanoket Confederacy,
6 which included over 60 Tribes and Bands united by cultural, linguistic, and historical ties, and
7 continue to uphold traditions, protect sacred sites, and revitalize languages across Rhode Island
8 and southeastern Massachusetts; and

9 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket people developed sophisticated systems of governance,
10 diplomacy, and environmental stewardship long before European contact, values they continue to
11 uphold through formal tribal structures and spiritual practice; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1524, Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano described the Pokanoket
13 peoples at Mount Hope Bay as "the goodliest people" he had seen, noting their strength, dignity,
14 and generosity; and

15 WHEREAS, In March 1621, Massasoit Ousamequin entered into a treaty with the
16 Plymouth Colony, ensuring mutual protection and peaceful coexistence that lasted for more than
17 fifty years; and

18 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket sheltered and nursed an ailing Roger Williams back to

1 health, contributing to the founding of Rhode Island in 1636; and

2 WHEREAS, Massasoit Ousamequin was laid to rest at Burr's Hill in Warren, Rhode
3 Island, a sacred site, and in 2017, the Wampanoag Repatriation Confederation secured the return
4 of sacred items from the Smithsonian under the 1990 federal Native American Graves Protection
5 and Repatriation Act; and

6 WHEREAS, Members of the Pokanoket tribe, including Simeon Simon in 1781, served
7 in the Revolutionary War, fighting with American soldiers; and

8 WHEREAS, Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Pokanoket leaders like Princess
9 Red Wing (Mary E. Glasko Congdon), Frederick Weeden, and Sagamore William "Winds of
10 Thunder" Guy have advanced Indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and sovereignty, including
11 helping to secure the return of sacred lands from Brown University in 2017; and

12 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe continues to engage in educational initiatives, land
13 stewardship, and cultural celebrations across their homeland, ensuring their history remains vital
14 to Rhode Island's identity; and

15 WHEREAS, In 2021, the Tribe marked the 400th anniversary of the 1621 treaty, and
16 dealing with centuries of challenges, including the erosion of land rights, broken treaties, and
17 unfulfilled promises—with enduring strength and resilience; and

18 WHEREAS, In November 2024, Brown University, as part of its commitment to
19 preserving the land and ensuring sustainable access for Native tribes with ties to it, transferred
20 ownership of 255 acres of its Mount Hope property in Bristol to a preservation trust established
21 by the Pokanoket Tribe; and

22 WHEREAS, This land holds significant ancestral importance for the Tribe, being the
23 home of Metacom (King Philip) and the site of his death during King Philip's War, and the
24 transfer ensures access to this historically and spiritually vital land and water; now, therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby supports the
26 recognition of the Pokanoket Tribe as the ancient and ongoing steward of its ancestral homeland,
27 and acknowledges its central role in shaping the region's past, present, and future; and be it
28 further

29 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby honors the Pokanoket Tribe's ancestors and living
30 descendants, and commits to promoting and protecting their cultural heritage, sacred lands, and
31 rightful place in Rhode Island history; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
33 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Senator Jack Reed, the
34 Honorable Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, the Honorable Congressman Seth Magaziner, the

- 1 Honorable Congressman Gabe Amo, the Honorable Governor Dan McKee, the Honorable Lt.
- 2 Governor Sabina Matos, the Honorable Treasurer James Diosa, the Honorable Secretary of State
- 3 Gregg Amore, and Sagamore William Guy.

=====
LC002775
=====



State of Rhode Island

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE JUNE S. SPEAKMAN, *District 68*
Second Vice-Chair, Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Committee on Health and Human Services
Committee on Oversight
Chair, Housing Affordability Commission

February 5, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

As a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, I strongly support designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. This historically important region is in, and adjacent to, the House district in Bristol and Warren that I am honored to represent.

I am pleased to join the many partners inside and outside of government, throughout the Sowams region, in supporting this measure that will provide stewardship for the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

It is essential that current and future residents and visitors to our beautiful area not only enjoy it as it is today, but also have access to resources that help us all understand the important stories of America's complex beginnings. Much of this history is found in the Sowams area and helps us understand the arc of events that bring us to today.

The proposed designation of Sowams National Heritage Area, across the nine towns and cities that comprise it, in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts will facilitate the telling of this history. I am honored to support the Sowams NHA initiative and commend the experts, community members and advocates who are dedicated to achieving it.

Sincerely,

June S. Speakman, Ph.D.

Representative, District 68

Bristol/Warren

54 SEYMOUR STREET
WARREN, RHODE ISLAND 02885

SENATOR
VALARIE J. LAWSON
District 14

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

State of Rhode Island



Room 318
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Office: 401-222-6655
Fax: 401-222-2967

sen-lawson@rilegislature.gov

Senate Chamber

April 28, 2026

To the Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

As a former history and civics teacher, and a proud resident and elected representative of the City of East Providence, I write to convey my strong support for the proposal to designate the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

I believe strongly in the importance of preserving and celebrating the historical and natural resources that have defined our state. The Sowams region, which has been home to many people and cultures over the course of centuries, is a place where the diverse threads of Rhode Island's story truly come together. Securing its designation as a National Heritage Area will demonstrate that we collectively embrace our stewardship of this land and its legacy.

This year, as we join in the celebration of the nation's semiquincentennial, we have a special opportunity to bring Rhode Islanders together around our shared heritage. Designation of the Sowams as a National Heritage Area will generate enthusiasm and engagement among citizens of our state, and I am grateful for the opportunity to support this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valarie J. Lawson".

Valarie J. Lawson
President, Rhode Island Senate

SENATOR
WALTER S. FELAG
District 10

51 Overhill Road
Warren, Rhode Island 02885

Room 318
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RESIDENCE: 401-245-7521
OFFICE: 401-276-5599
FAX: 401-222-2967

sen-felag@rilegislature.gov

State of Rhode Island



Senate Chamber

CHAIRPERSON
Committee on Special
Legislation & Veterans' Affairs

2ND VICE CHAIRPERSON
Committee on Finance

March 11, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

I wish to express my strong support for the proposed designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. Securing this important recognition will help ensure the continued protection and celebration of this nationally significant region, along with its natural landscape and rich cultural heritage.

As a member of the Rhode Island Senate who represents two of the communities within Sowams, Warren and Bristol – as well as the adjacent community of Tiverton – I am proud to call this region my home, and to stand alongside so many local partners who serve as its stewards. For thousands of years, countless people have built lives and communities within the nine cities and towns in Massachusetts and Rhode Island that we identify today as part of Sowams. Honoring that incredible legacy is a great responsibility, and I am committed to ensuring that residents and visitors alike can fully access and experience the many natural and historic resources that make our region so special, now and for many years to come.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026, I believe it is more important than ever for us to honor the landscapes and cultures that have played a central role in the rich, complex story of our country. In doing so, we express our appreciation for all our predecessors on this land, while achieving a deeper understanding of ourselves. For these reasons, I am grateful to lend my voice to the call for Sowams to be designated as a National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Walter S. Felag Jr.", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Walter S. Felag Jr.

Senator, District 10

Warren, Bristol, Tiverton



January 30, 2026

Re: Support for Congressional Designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area

To whom it may concern,

I write in my capacity as Co-Director of the Center for Indigenous Peoples Rights and General Counsel to the Pokanoket Tribe, the ancestral inhabitants of the Sowams region, to express unequivocal support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area (NHA).

The Sowams Heritage Area represents a distinct and historically significant living landscape spanning portions of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, encompassing the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket People, where relations between Indigenous communities and early European settlers played a formative role in the history of this nation. The area's history includes the 50-year peace between the Pokanoket under Massasoit and Plymouth Colony settlers beginning in 1621, as well as pivotal events such as King Philip's War, the birth of principles of religious freedom around Providence, and the long intersection of land, water, and multiple cultural communities. These narratives are irreplaceable elements of the American story and merit federal recognition and support for preservation and interpretation.

A National Heritage Area designation by Congress would not impose federal ownership, control, or management within the Sowams region, but would enable dynamic public-private partnerships to preserve cultural, historic, and natural resources, to support heritage tourism, educational initiatives, community development, and collaborative stewardship by local and tribal partners. This framework aligns with the structure and purpose of NHAs, which honor regions that have made meaningful contributions to the development of the United States while retaining community-based governance.

The Pokanoket Tribe's recent reclamation of Potumtuk from Brown University underscores the living nature of Indigenous connections to this landscape and reinforces the need for sustained recognition and preservation of Indigenous heritage within Sowams. A federal designation would affirm Indigenous history as central rather than peripheral to the American historical record.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully urge support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area. Such designation would strengthen preservation efforts, enhance public understanding of the region's layered histories, and support equitable community engagement with heritage resources.

info@thecipr.org | www.thecipr.org | P.O. Box 10337, Cranston, RI 02910

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a horizontal line, positioned above the printed name.

Dr. Taino J. Palermo, Esq., Co-Director
Center for Indigenous Peoples Rights



FRIENDS OF THE POKANOKET TRIBE
41 FALES AVENUE
BARRINGTON, RI 02806 USA

May 6, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board,

The Friends of the Pokanoket Tribe enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

The Friends was organized 2021 to educate the larger community about the history, culture and folkways of the Pokanoket Tribe through publications, public events, advocacy and direct support in order to increase awareness of and support for the Tribe.

Over the past five years, the Friends have organized public education efforts in coordination with Roger Williams University by publishing and distributing over 5,000 booklets about the Tribe and its history. It has also sponsored three annual Pokanoket Heritage Days to give visitors a perspective on Pokanoket life in the East Bay through dancing, singing, drumming, storytelling, presentations and displays on Pokanoket history and culture. These and other efforts have helped to support the return of Mount Hope Lands (Potumtuk) from Brown University to the ownership of the Tribe.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams will tell important stories about America's complex beginnings, and we are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

David S. Weed
President

A 501(c)3 organization EIN# 85-3985247



Mashapaug Nahaganset Chippissuog

Neechanoag toh Kawtawntawitt

DESK OF THE CHIPPINUONK SÂCHEM

June 15, 2026

Re: Support for Congressional Designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter of support is submitted on behalf of the Mashapaug Nahaganset Chippissuog (the "Mashapaug Tribe"), a sovereign American Indian Tribe of Nanhigganêuck Peoples, and is intended to confirm the Mashapug Tribe's full support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area.

The Sowams Heritage Area represents a distinct and historically significant living landscape spanning portions of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, encompassing the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket People, where relations between Indigenous communities and early European settlers played a formative role in the history of this nation. The area's history includes the 50-year peace between the Pokanoket under Massasoit and Plymouth Colony settlers beginning in 1621, as well as pivotal events such as King Philip's War, the birth of principles of freedom of speech and religion, and the long intersection of land, water, and multiple cultural communities. These narratives are irreplaceable elements of the American story and merit federal recognition and support for preservation and interpretation.

Specific to the Mashapaug Tribe, the Moshassuck territory of Sowams—contemporarily referred to as the East Side of Providence, Rhode Island—was a boundary of the traditional Nanhigganêuck territories and played a key role in the formation of the colony of Rhode Island and of America as a whole. After the Pokanoket were ravaged by the diseases introduced by European settlers, the Nanhigganêuck began to encroach upon much of the traditional Pokanoket territories. Despite this advance by the Nanhigganêuck, the Massasoit adamantly disavowed the notion that Moshassuck was ever properly removed from Pokanoket jurisdiction. Considering this ongoing controversy, when the Nanhigganêuck Sagamores from Pawtuxet, Neutoconkanut, and Mashapaug protested William's companions' ongoing incursions into their jurisdictions, Moshassuck was where Mianotnomi, at the behest of Canonicus, directed Roger Williams to settle in. Aware of the Pokanoket's claim to Moshassuck, Miantinomi directed Williams to cross the Moshassuck River into Moshassuck; a decision that enabled Canonicus and Miantinomi to

maintain their trade relations with Williams while simultaneously preventing retaliatory actions against Williams and his companions by the Nanhigganêuck Sagamores. This decision allowed Williams to strengthen his ties with Canonicus and set the stage for the growth of the colony of Rhode Island.

In this historical context, the Mashapaug Tribe strongly supports a National Heritage Area designation for Sowams as a means of properly acknowledging the role the territory played in Williams' development of the euro-colonial concepts of freedom of religion and freedom of speech, which are not only indigenous in origin, but also foundational and fundamental elements of contemporary American society. The Mashapaug Tribe further asserts that a National Heritage Area designation by Congress would enable dynamic public-private partnerships to preserve cultural, historic, and natural resources, while supporting heritage tourism, educational initiatives, community development, and collaborative stewardship by local and tribal partners. This framework aligns with the structure and purpose of NHAs, which honor regions that have made meaningful contributions to the development of the United States while retaining community-based governance. Ultimately, the Mashapaug Tribe affirms that a National Heritage Area designation would affirm Indigenous history as a central factor in rather than a peripheral narrative to the American historical record.

For the foregoing reasons, on behalf of the Mashapaug Tribe, I respectfully urge support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area, and affirm that such designation would strengthen preservation efforts, enhance public understanding of the region's layered histories, and support equitable community engagement with heritage resources.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any further information or support in this regard.

Cordially,


Neesu Wushuwunoag
Chippinuonk Sâchem
MAshapaug Nahaganset Chippissuog



January 31, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of the Pokanoket Tribal Council and the Pokanoket Tribe to express our strong support for the designation and continued development of Sowams as a National Heritage Area. This corridor represents a vital opportunity to preserve, interpret, and celebrate the rich historical, cultural, and natural resources that have shaped our region and the nation as a whole.

National heritage areas play a critical role in safeguarding stories that might otherwise be lost: stories of the people, industries, landscapes, and traditions that define our shared heritage. Sowams, the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Pokanoket Tribe, uniquely reflects these themes through its historic sites, working landscapes, waterways, and communities, offering meaningful connections between the past and present.

For these reasons, we strongly support the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area. This initiative is a meaningful investment in preservation, education, and community resilience, and it will continue to yield lasting benefits for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to protecting our nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

Sachem Po Pummukaonk Anogqs

P.O.Box 172 • Barrington • RI • 02806

Subject:Letter of Support

Date:Mon, 9 Mar 2026 10:29:04 -0400

From:Ruth Major <rmajorarts@gmail.com>

To:David Weed <drweed@cox.net>

Dr. David Weed
Project Historian
Sowams Heritage Area

Dear Dr. Weed,

About ten years ago, I recall meeting you. Our shared intense interest in Pokanoket History and Culture led us in different directions, but it was clear that we were both serious about our work to further the history and culture of Sowams. While in graduate school at the Massachusetts College of Art, I planned an Independent Study and created a 4- course program supervised by MCA and Museum of Fine Arts School faculty. The program resulted in successful completion of the courses, and an exhibit of 100 pieces that I researched and made, using local materials and New England indigenous methods. The exhibit and coursework prepared me well for a career in oil painting of historical figures and artifacts. All of the 100 pieces exhibited had a historical reference, so viewers could read and know that similar pieces were made by Late Woodland Stage People who lived in New England prior to 1620.

By the time I met you, Dr. Weed, you had a dream to turn Sowams area into a National Heritage Site, which I have supported and imagined for years. You said it would take much work and commitment to have the 9-Town area of Sowams, half in Massachusetts and half in Rhode Island, designated as a National Heritage site. You were right! I have received your newsletters for years now and watched with excitement as new cultural sites and historical places were added, researched, documented and celebrated.

I repainted and corrected my large oil portrait of Massasoit Ousamequin wearing a gifted red English horseman's coat and copper beads. The painting was purchased by the Town of Warren and hangs in the **George Hale Library** in Warren. Subsequently, the town commissioned a painting of Ousamequin's Winter Campsite just beyond Mowag's Pond, as

commissioned a painting of Ousamequin's winter campsite just beyond Margaret's Rock, as the site was chosen as a likely location which could easily be defended if needed. In the painting of the Winter campsite, I depicted many details, related to Pokanoket Ousamequin and his Nikmuc in-laws, celebrating and feasting together at the Pokanoket winter campsite. Viewers of the painting may study the indigenous housing structures, method of burning out log boats, of storing water for the community, manner of dress and of removing and carrying skins with tails on, communal fire making for feasts, and some types of pottery and bark containers.

Since completing those historical paintings, I have completed several others for the Pokanoket people, who have shared so much of their rich and significant history and culture with me. Sowams was the homeland of the last four Pokanoket Massasoits or Great Leaders (Ousamequin's father, Ousamequin, and his sons Wamsutta and PoMetacom). Prior to the "Great dying" (1616-1619,) in times of distress or of needing or providing defense, these Pokanoket leaders called on their confederacy of at least 67 sachemships, villages and tribes. The confederacy spanned the territory from Sowams' easterly boundaries all the way out to the Nauset Sachemships and villages on the Outer Cape Cod.

Our American History begins in Sowams, a place so rich in history, nearly every street, valley, wooded path or hill-top tells a piece of New England's history. Where else in this great country can one truly say, "SOWAMS - This is the birthplace of today's America?!"

Respectfully,

Ruth Major

- Historical Painter and retired Educator, BFA, MS
 - Co-Author, **Connecticut River Shipbuilding**
 - 2025 Recipient of a **MA Cultural Council Grant**
for creative work with the Pokanoket Tribe
 - Documented Nauset and Nauset Council Member
-

**TOWN OF BARRINGTON, RI
RESOLUTION**

SOWAMS, NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Whereas,

The Town of Barrington is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history,

Whereas,

This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

Whereas,

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, education, and regional collaboration,

Therefore,

We, the Barrington Town Council, are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Approved at the Town Council meeting on December 1, 2025



Braxton H. Cloutier
Town Council President

Attested by



Stephanie Bernardo, CMC
Town Clerk





BARRINGTON
RHODE ISLAND

Planning, Building, and Resilience Department
Barrington Town Hall | 283 County Road | Barrington, RI 02806
(401) 247-1900, ext. 4 | hdurfee@barrington.ri.gov

May 18, 2026

Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors
Attn: Andrea Rounds, Sowams Project Advisor
23 Bridge Street
Warren, Rhode Island 02885

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

The Planning, Building & Resilience Department of the Town of Barrington, Rhode Island is pleased to express its support for your effort to obtain Congressional approval designating Sowams as a National Heritage Area. With such designation the Sowams area could benefit from activities supporting sustainable economic development, a healthier environment and people, an improved quality of life, community connection via education and stewardship, and strengthening the area's sense of place and community pride.

Currently, Barrington is updating the Town's *Comprehensive Plan*. One of the plan's statutorily requirement elements must include consideration for cultural and historic resources. The purpose for such chapter is focused on protecting the architectural, archaeological, and cultural heritage of the Town and its surrounding region. Within that draft element, for reasons the Sowams Board of Directors well-understands, the plan specifically supports the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Also, as a specific example of the need to obtain such designation, the Town of Barrington owns several parcels off George St on the eastern shore of One Hundred Acre Cove – with the general area known as "Nockum Hill". The site is where the first Baptist meeting house in America was built in 1643 and later burned when the first shots were fired in the King Philip's War – aka Metacom's Rebellion. Based on funding from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program, the Nockum Hill Historic Site is now regarded as the site of the inception of the 1675-1676 war between Metacom and the settler-colonists – the bloodiest per capita conflict in American history. The war was sparked by rising tensions over land, English encroachment, and cultural differences. The conflict's inception and Nockum Hill are at the heart of Sowams – the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket.

Given the above information and other factors affecting the area's history, culture, and the like, the department strongly supports designation of the Sowams Heritage Area and recognizes the value-added benefit such designation would afford the region.

Sincerely

Herbert A. Durfee, III, Director
Planning, Building & Resilience

**BRISTOL TOWN COUNCIL
RESOLUTION
2025-12-10-F2**

Endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area

WHEREAS, The town of Bristol, RI is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history; and

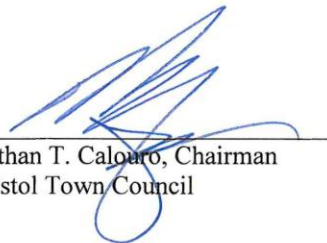
WHEREAS, This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia; and

WHEREAS, National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, education, and regional collaboration; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED We are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

ADOPTED this 10th day of Dec, 2025.

ATTEST: 
Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk


Nathan T. Calouro, Chairman
Bristol Town Council



RESOLUTION NO. 234

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE SOWAMS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

WHEREAS, the City of East Providence is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history; and

WHEREAS, this landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia; and

WHEREAS, National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, education, and regional collaboration; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor of the City of East Providence, Roberto DaSilva, has issued a proclamation endorsing and supporting the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the East Providence City Council is proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Adopted by the City Council: 12/2/25

Attest:

Andrew Skypworth
City Clerk of East Providence, Rhode Island

Introduced by: Council President Rodericks, Council Vice President Rego



City of East Providence
Office of the Mayor
Roberto L. DaSilva
Mayor

November 24, 2025

Sowams Heritage Area
Steering Committee

Dear Committee Members,

As Mayor of the City of East Providence, I write this letter in strong support and endorsement of designating the Sowams Heritage Area as a new federally designated National Heritage Area. East Providence is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities working together to establish this new federal Heritage Area. Sowams is the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of American history. Sowams is also the setting for many of our most pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, first landing in East Providence, before founding the City of Providence, where the seeds of religious freedom and tolerance took root.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage with the intent of encouraging heritage area conservation, community and economic development and educational opportunities, and strong regional collaboration.

I am proud to join the eight other communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

Roberto L. DaSilva
Mayor

CC. East Providence City Council
Keith A. Brynes, AICP, Director of Planning and Economic Development

145 Taunton Ave. East Providence, RI 02914 Tel: (401) 435-7521 /Fax: (401) 438-1719



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

December 9, 2025

Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee

Re: Sowams Heritage Area

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

I am pleased to support the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

Providence stands on the traditional homelands of the Narragansett and Pokanoket Tribal Nations, known historically as Maswasseut and Moshassuck. The lands east of the Moshassuck River are part of Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and who forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history.

This area in Providence, along with eight Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay, is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

National designation will not only safeguard irreplaceable resources; it will invite residents and visitors alike to engage with the complex beginnings of the American story, encouraging meaningful interpretation, reconciliation and collaborative conservation.

Sincerely,


Brett P. Smiley
Mayor

City Hall, 25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903
Phone (401) 421-2489 Fax (401) 274-8240



RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No.

WHEREAS, The Providence City Council acknowledges that it stands on the traditional homelands of the Narragansett and Pokanoket Tribal Nations, known historically as Maswasscut and Moshassuck; and

WHEREAS, The Narragansett and Pokanoket are the first peoples and ancestral inhabitants of these lands, whose presence long predates the founding of Providence and continues today; and

WHEREAS, The City Council also recognizes the Nipmuc, Niantic, and Manissean Tribal Nations as Indigenous peoples to the region now known as Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, The Narragansett and Pokanoket were not only the first people to call Providence home, but also the first to establish systems of governance, trade, and community grounded in respect and coexistence, shaping the cultural and political foundations of this country; and

WHEREAS, Despite centuries of displacement and marginalization, the Narragansett, Pokanoket, Nipmuc, Niantic, and Manissean Nations continue to maintain their traditions, leadership, and active presence in Providence and across Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, As we work collectively to create a better and brighter future for all members of the Providence community, we acknowledge the original inhabitants of these lands and their lasting contributions to the City's identity and history.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of Providence expresses its deep respect and gratitude to the Narragansett, Pokanoket, Nipmuc, Niantic, and Manissean Tribal Nations as the first peoples of these lands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council reaffirms its commitment to collaboration with Indigenous communities and to advancing inclusion, understanding, and equity for all residents of the City of Providence.

**Office of
SELECTMEN
340 Anawan Street
Rehoboth, MA 02769**



**Tel.: (508) 252-3758
Fax: (508) 252-5342**

January 28, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

I am pleased to report that during their meeting on December 1, 2025, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Rehoboth, MA voted unanimously to support Sowams Heritage Area, as follows: "Selectman Johnson re-reading the motion: motion for the Board of Selectmen to support the Sowams National Heritage Area planning going forward. Second by L. Mills. Vote 5-0."

If you would like a copy of the entire minutes of that meeting, signed by the officers, we are happy to send it to you.

Good luck with the project!

Sincerely,

Deborah Arruda
Rehoboth Town Administrator



**SELECT BOARD
100 PECK STREET
SEEKONK, MASSACHUSETTS 02771**

RESOLUTION As Passed, By Unanimous 5-0 Vote, Of The Select Board Of The Town Of Seekonk On December 3, 2025 In Support Of The Designation Of The Sowams National Heritage Area By The Congress Of The United States Of America:

RESOLVED

WHEREAS,

The Town Of Seekonk Is One Of Nine Massachusetts And Rhode Island Municipalities On The Northeastern Shore Of Narragansett Bay That Comprise Sowams, The Ancestral Homeland Of The Massasoit Ousamequin Who Welcomed The Pilgrims In 1621 And Forged A 50-Year Alliance That Changed The Course Of History,

WHEREAS,

This Landscape Is Also The Setting For Other Pivotal Events In Our Nation's History. Here, King Philip's War Began And Ended; Roger Williams Founded Rhode Island And The Seeds Of Religious Freedom Took Root; The Business Of Slave Trading Ignited A Trans-Atlantic Economy, And Moral Outcry; And The Dynamic Interplay Of Land And Water Defined The History And Culture Of The Region For Millennia.

WHEREAS,

National Heritage Areas Are Grassroots, Community-Driven Programs That Celebrate A Region's Contribution To America's Heritage; Are Designated By U.S. Congress, But Are Not Owned, Controlled, Or Managed By The Federal Government; And Are Intended To Encourage Heritage Conservation, Community Development, And Regional Collaboration,

THEREFORE,

We Are Proud To Join The Communities Of Sowams In Endorsing The Designation Of Sowams As A National Heritage Area.

Signed:


Michelle Hines, Town of
Seekonk Select Board Chair

on

Feb. 05, , 2026



Planning Board
100 PECK STREET
SEEKONK, MASSACHUSETTS 02771
1-508-336-2961

Date: December 9, 2025

Executive Board
Sowams Heritage Area Project
23 Bridge Street, Warren, RI 02885.

Sowams Heritage Area Executive Board,

As the Town of Seekonk is one of the nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history. This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

The Seekonk Planning Board recognizes that National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration,

We, the Planning Board of the Town of Seekonk, are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area by the Congress of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

David Sullivan Jr.
Chairman
Seekonk Planning Board



Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

The Somerset Economic Development Committee enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

The Somerset Economic Development Committee is responsible for advising the Somerset Selectmen regarding the cultivation of a diverse economy while recognizing the need to maintain a balance between attracting new investment to increase the local tax base, encouraging and supporting local businesses, fostering local entrepreneurship, and strengthening Somerset key businesses and industries.

We are already working collaboratively with Sowams on projects such as the Swansea Friends Meeting House, located in Somerset, which is reportedly the oldest Quaker meeting house in Massachusetts and has recently been designated as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Somerset is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history. This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Paul R. Cogley, Jr.'.

Paul R. Cogley, Jr.
Chairman



HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Somerset Town Hall
140 WOOD STREET
SOMERSET, MASSACHUSETTS, 02726

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Commissioners of the Somerset Historical Commission enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our mission is to identify, protect, and preserve the historical heritage and resources of the Town of Somerset. In fact, one of our commissioners is already working collaboratively with you by serving on the Sowams Steering Committee.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Marybeth Rua-Larsen

Chair, Somerset Historical Commission



TOWN OF SOMERSET BOARD OF SELECTMAN RESOLUTION

Adopted on December 4th, 2025

RESOLVED

Whereas,

The town of Somerset is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history,

Whereas,

This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

Whereas,

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration,

Therefore,

Be it resolved that the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Somerset, on this day, December 4th, 2025 and all day's hereafter, are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams, as a National Heritage Area, here in, and for the Town of Somerset.

Somerset Board of Selectman

Chairman Allen Smith

Selectman Jamison Souza

Selectman Todd Costa



Resolved

Whereas,

The Town of Swansea is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history,

Whereas,

This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

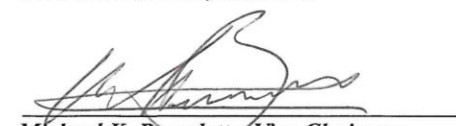
Whereas,

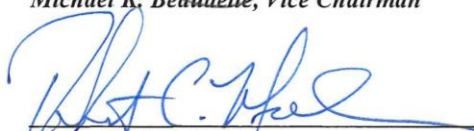
National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration,

Therefore,

We are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.



Steven H. Kitchin, Chairman

Michael K. Beaudette, Vice Chairman

Robert C. Medeiros, Clerk



TOWN OF SWANSEA
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
68 STEVENS RD
SWANSEA, MASSACHUSETTS
PHONE NUMBER: 508-674-5731 ext.5

MISSION STATEMENT

*The Swansea Conservation Commission
Is dedicated to protect all wetlands, to
preserve the water supply and all natural
resources; to protect habitats for native
wildlife, to ensure that lands bordering
rivers, streams and ponds remain as
natural watersheds.*

Date: November 14th, 2025

To: Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee

Re: Sowams Heritage Area Feasibility Study

The Swansea Conservation Commission enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. The Swansea Conservation Commission is dedicated to safeguarding wetlands, the preservation of the water supply, and the protection of all natural resources. Our goal is to protect habitats for native wildlife, to ensure that lands bordering rivers, streams and ponds remain as natural watersheds. It is the belief of the Commission that the proposed designation of the Sowams region as a Natural Heritage Area aligns with this mission.

The nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. The Swansea Conservation Commission is pleased to be part of the Sowams Natural Heritage Area initiative.

If you have any questions, please contact the Conservation Department.

Regards,

Nanci Hedgcorth

Nanci Hedgcorth, Chairperson
Conservation Commission

CC: Adeline Bellesheim, Conservation Agent



Swansea Planning Board
68 Stevens Road
Swansea, MA 02777

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Swansea Planning Board enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area (NHA).

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our recently approved Comprehensive Plan speaks to this project in Element 5: Natural and Cultural Resources. Specifically, goal 5.2 explores ways to protect and preserve Swansea's natural, scenic, historical and cultural resources with strategy 5.2-3 calling out the need to coordinate with the Sowams Heritage Area Project to conduct an inventory of important scenic and cultural landscapes.

We believe that as an NHA, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "C. Parayno", is written over a horizontal line.

Christopher C. Parayno
Town Planner on behalf of the Swansea Planning Board

TOWN OF WARREN
RESOLUTION

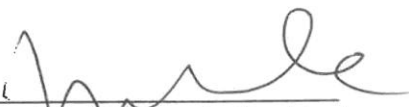
SOWAMS, NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

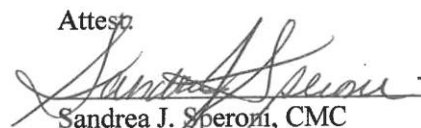
Whereas, The Town of Warren is one of nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities on the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history,

Whereas, This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal events in our nation's history. Here, King Philip's War began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, and the seeds of religious freedom took root; the business of slave trading ignited a trans-Atlantic economy, and moral outcry; and the dynamic interplay of land and water defined the history and culture of the region for millennia.

Whereas, National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage; are designated by U.S. Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government; and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration,

Therefore, We, the Warren Town Council are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.


Joseph A. DePasquale, President
Keri M. Cronin, Vice President
John W. Hanley, Councilman
Derrik L. Trombley, Councilman
Louis A. Rego, Councilman

Attest:

Sandra J. Speroni, CMC
Town Clerk

November 18, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is proud to express its full support for the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant landscape.

As an organization that played a leading role in establishing the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor forty years ago in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, we understand the commitment required to build a successful heritage area. This includes engaging partners and supporters, cataloging cultural and natural assets, developing meaningful community outreach, and demonstrating that a Sowams National Heritage Area is both feasible and sustainable for generations to come.

Our mission—to increase and inspire sustainable tourism in the Blackstone River Valley—guides all that we do. In pursuit of this mission, we continually work to:

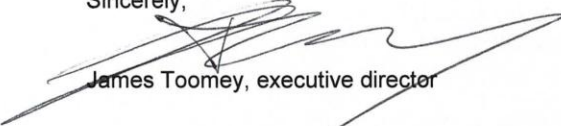
- Advance Tourism while protecting the ecological balance of the Blackstone River Valley.
- Protect the Environment through education on the river and in our RiverClassroom.
- Strengthen Community Pride by enhancing the social fabric and improving the quality of life for those who live and work in our region.
- Boost the Local Economy by promoting businesses, programs, and events across our ten cities and towns.

We already see strong opportunities for collaboration with a future Sowams National Heritage Area. Our director of events and community, Laura McNamara, has served as an active member of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee for the past three years, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to this effort.

We believe the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell vital stories about America's complex beginnings—stories that complement and enrich those of the Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor. The two regions are deeply interconnected, and together they strengthen our understanding of the nation's early history.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is pleased to support the Sowams NHA initiative and remains committed to elevating all the communities that call this remarkable place home.

Sincerely,



James Toomey, executive director

EAT | DRINK | HIKE | BIKE | LEARN | GROW | ENJOY

1420 Broad Street 3rd Floor
Central Falls, Rhode Island 02863

T: 401-724-2200
E: info@tourblackstone.com



Letter of Support for the Sowams National Heritage Area

Blount Boats, Inc.
461 Water Street
Warren, Rhode Island 02885

May 20, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board,

On behalf of Blount Boats, Inc., we are proud to offer our enthusiastic support for the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

For 77 years, Blount Boats has operated as a family-owned shipyard in the historic Sowams area, where the relationship between land, water, craftsmanship, and community has shaped generations of people and industries. Our company's roots are deeply tied to the waters of Narragansett Bay and the maritime traditions that continue to define this remarkable region.

As builders of vessels that serve commercial, research, transportation, and offshore industries, we recognize the enduring importance of preserving and celebrating the cultural and economic heritage of the Sowams region. The stories of Indigenous stewardship, maritime enterprise, industrial innovation, religious freedom, and working waterfront communities are not only central to local history — they are part of the larger American story.

We believe the creation of the Sowams National Heritage Area will strengthen public understanding of this nationally significant landscape while encouraging heritage tourism, environmental stewardship, education, and economic vitality throughout the region. We are especially encouraged by the initiative's commitment to honoring the many communities and traditions that have shaped Sowams over thousands of years.

Blount Boats is honored to stand with the many organizations, municipalities, businesses, and residents supporting this effort. We believe the designation will help preserve the unique character and working heritage of the Sowams area for future generations.

Sincerely,

Marcia Blount

Marcia Blount
President

461 WATER STREET P.O. BOX 368 WARREN, RHODE ISLAND 02885
T 401.245.8300 F 401.245.8303 E info@blountboats.com W blountboats.com



June 5, 2026

Sowams Heritage Area
P.O. Box 81
Bristol, RI 02809

Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

On behalf of Discover Newport, I am pleased to support the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

As the destination marketing organization for Newport and Bristol Counties, we proudly promote the communities of Barrington, Bristol, and Warren—three towns that are integral to the Sowams story. As the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket people and Massasoit Ousamequin, Sowams holds a unique and important place in our nation's history.

National Heritage Area designation would help elevate the region's rich cultural and historical assets, strengthen heritage tourism, and create new opportunities for community and economic development. Together, the communities of Sowams tell a powerful story that deserves broader recognition and appreciation.

We are excited by the prospect of this designation and look forward to supporting the continued success of the Sowams Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

Victoria Cimino
President & CEO
Discover Newport

BARRINGTON | BRISTOL | JAMESTOWN | LITTLE COMPTON | MIDDLETOWN | NEWPORT | PORTSMOUTH | TIVERTON | WARREN

44 LONG WHARF MALL NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND 02840 800.326.6030 DiscoverNewport.org



East Bay Chamber of Commerce
16 Cutler St., Warren, RI 02885
February 26, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board,

On behalf of the East Bay Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to express our strong support for the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

The East Bay Chamber is committed to strengthening our local economy, supporting small businesses, and enhancing the overall vitality of the communities we serve. The Sowams Heritage Area initiative aligns directly with that mission. By preserving and promoting the region's deep Indigenous, colonial, maritime, and cultural history, this designation will not only honor our shared heritage but also create meaningful opportunities for heritage tourism, education, and regional collaboration.

The nine towns and cities that comprise the Sowams region tell powerful and complex stories about the origins of our nation. Elevating those stories through National Heritage Area recognition will strengthen community identity, increase visitor engagement, and drive sustainable economic activity that benefits local businesses and residents alike.

We commend the leadership and dedication of the Sowams Heritage Area project team and look forward to continued partnership as this important initiative moves forward. The East Bay Chamber is proud to stand in support of this effort and the long-term cultural and economic vitality it represents.

Sincerely,

Andy Arruda

Chairman
East Bay Chamber of Commerce

16 Cutler St. Warren, RI 02885 | [\(401\) 245-0750](tel:(401)245-0750) | Fax: (401) 245-0110 | info@eastbaychamberri.org

EXPLORE
BRISTOL
RHODE ISLAND

February 18, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

On behalf of Explore Bristol, I am pleased to support designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

Our businesses depend on the tourists they attract. Bristol residents have a deep appreciation for the national significance of our quintessential New England town. Our manufacturers in the blue economy carry the legacy of marine trades that has defined the economy of Sowams for centuries.

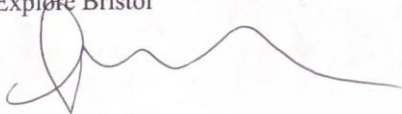
Our cultural venues—Mt. Hope Farm, Linden Place, Blithewold Manor Gardens and Arboetum, Herreshoff Marine Museum, the Bristol Art Museum, the Middle Passage Port Marker Project, and Coggeshall Farm—are part of the Sowams Heritage Area family.

What Sowams Heritage Area brings to the table is the power regional partnerships, opportunities to share resources and a network of cross-promotion. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Alayne White, Co -Chair of Explore Bristol

11 Constitution St.
Bristol, RI 02809
info@explorebristolri.com





May 20, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

As the founder and CEO of Hope and Main Culinary Incubator, I write to express my enthusiastic support for the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

I have followed this project with interest for the last four years, first advising the planning team on their outreach campaign and then hosting one of their first public input sessions at our food maker space in Warren, RI. We are all makers in our communities, whether we're producing food products or building boats or developing heritage programming. Hope and Main and Sowams Heritage Area share the same reverence for our heritage and commitment to honoring the legacy of those who have lived here.

As the founder of Hope and Main, I know the challenge of mobilizing diverse communities around a worthy cause. The Sowams planning team has earned the confidence and respect of stakeholders across two states and nine towns. NHA designation will take that to the next level and lift all boats, including ours. This landscape deserves to be recognized, not only for its unique role in the American origin story, but also for the way it is being carefully stewarded by today.

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Raiola, MPH
President & Founder

691 Main St., Warren, RI 02885 | www.makefoordyourbusiness.org | (401) 245-7400

PROVIDENCE WARWICK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

May 28, 2026

To the Board of Directors of Sowams Heritage Area,

On behalf of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau, I would like to establish our support for the Congressional designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

Tourism is one Rhode Island's largest industries, employing tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders and bringing millions of visitors to the Ocean State. As the destination marketing organization for Providence and Warwick, we sell and market nearly half of the hotel rooms in the state. Many of our visitors are drawn to Rhode Island for its rich history, vibrant culture and stunning natural beauty. This project combines all of those elements in one.

Over the last four years, Sowams Heritage Area has made tremendous progress raising awareness of the region's pivotal role in shaping the nation. Designating Sowams as an NHA will lift all boats, shining a national spotlight not only on Sowams, but also on the Ocean State and the Bay State.

We are pleased to be included in the Sowams partnership network and are excited about the opportunities to collaborate for years to come.

Sincerely,



Kristen L. Adamo
President & CEO

100 Westminster Street / Providence, RI 02903 / P: 401.456.0200

GoProvidence.com



3/12/26

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Tourism Bureau, we are pleased to express our strong support for the designation of Sowam as a National Heritage Area.

The Town of Somerset is one of nine municipalities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island located along the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that together comprise Sowam, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket leader Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and established a 50-year alliance that profoundly shaped the course of American history.

This remarkable landscape also served as the backdrop for other pivotal events in our nation's past. It is where King Philip's War began and ended; where Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and advanced the principles of religious freedom; where the business of slave trading helped ignite a trans-Atlantic economy and a powerful moral reckoning; and where the dynamic relationship between land and water has shaped the culture, livelihoods, and heritage of the region for millennia.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven initiatives that recognize and celebrate regions that have made significant contributions to America's story. Although designated by the United States Congress, these areas are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government. Instead, they encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration while strengthening cultural tourism and local economies.

As an organization dedicated to promoting heritage tourism and regional storytelling, we believe the designation of Sowam as a National Heritage Area will help preserve the region's rich history while fostering responsible tourism, education, and economic vitality for the communities that share this important landscape.

We are proud to join the communities of Sowam in endorsing the designation of Sowam as a National Heritage Area and look forward to the opportunities this recognition will bring to celebrate and share the heritage of this extraordinary region.

Chrisanne Tyrrell

Chrisanne Tyrrell

Executive Director

Southeastern Mass Visitors Bureau

25 Elm Street, Suite 101, New Bedford, MA 02740 Tel: 508-999-5231



January 15, 2026

Executive Board
Sowams Heritage Area Project
23 Bridge Street, Warren, RI 02885

RE: Support for Sowams National Heritage Area Nomination

Sowams Heritage Area Executive Board,

The Southeastern Massachusetts Planners Roundtable is pleased to express its support for the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

Southeastern Massachusetts includes several of the nine Massachusetts and Rhode Island municipalities located along the northeastern shore of Narragansett Bay that together comprise Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket and Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a fifty-year alliance that changed the course of American history. This landscape is also the setting for other pivotal chapters in our nation's past. Here, King Philip's War both began and ended; Roger Williams founded Rhode Island and advanced the principles of religious freedom; the business of slave trading helped fuel a transatlantic economy and moral reckoning; and the enduring relationship between land and water shaped the region's culture, economy, and settlement patterns for millennia.

The Southeastern Massachusetts Planners Roundtable recognizes that National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven initiatives that celebrate a region's contributions to America's heritage. These areas are designated by the United States Congress, but are not owned, controlled, or managed by the federal government. Instead, they are intended to foster heritage conservation, community development, education, and regional collaboration; goals that strongly align with the values and professional practice of planners across southeastern Massachusetts.

We are proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing its designation as a National Heritage Area by the Congress of the United States and commend the collaborative effort underlying this nomination.

Sincerely,

Sarah L. Raposa, AICP
Organizer



SRPEDD
Southeastern Regional Planning
& Economic Development District

Acushnet
Attleboro
Berkley
Carver
Dartmouth
Dighton
Fairhaven
Fall River
Freetown
Lakeville
Mansfield
Marion
Mattapoisett
Middleborough
New Bedford
N. Attleborough
Norton
Plainville
Raynham
Rehoboth
Rochester
Seekonk
Taunton
Somerset
Swansea
Wareham
Westport

May 18, 2026

Sowams Heritage Area
23 Bridge Street
Warren, RI 02885

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors:

The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) serves the 27 municipalities that make up Southeast Massachusetts, of which Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset and Swansea, MA are all in the Sowams Heritage Area. Our work is place-based and community-centered, meaning that we work collaboratively and transparently to create and implement plans alongside our professional partners.

Bill Napolitano, recently retired Senior Environmental Planner of SRPEDD, spent 35 years with the agency and was instrumental in securing the federal designation of the Taunton River as a Wild and Scenic River. He was also a founding member of the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee and continues to advise the Sowams planning team on the federal designation process.

Richard Peirce, who serves on our Executive Board, also recently joined the Sowams Heritage Area reconstituted Board of Directors, and we are proud to consider Sowams Heritage Area among our regional partners.

Sowams has built an impressive network of heritage, environmental, and civic organizations in the region, whose historic and cultural programming complement our planning efforts. NHA designation of Sowams will help us help our communities build a nationally recognized brand for heritage tourism and community development.

We enthusiastically endorse the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Walker, AICP
Executive Director

88 Broadwav. Taunton. MA 02780 • 508-824-1367 • www.srpedd.org



Blithewold

January 8, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

On behalf of the board of directors of Blithewold Manor, Gardens and Arboretum, I am pleased to support designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. As one of the most fully developed and authentic examples of the Country Place Era, Blithewold is a nationally significant tourist destination in Bristol, Rhode Island. In the long, sweeping story of Sowams, this garden estate chronicles the lives of a prominent, yet socially unpretentious family in the dawn of the 20th century.

Though seemingly worlds away from the devastating clash of cultures in the 17th century, Blithewold shares with its cultural partners in the region a commitment to educating the public about history and a deep respect for the land. We steward an exceptional collection of plants and specimen trees on the 33-acre grounds overlooking Narragansett Bay.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex history. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Lastly, by coincidence, I attended the Bristol Town Council Meeting when Andrea Rounds presented the case for support of this initiative. I was very impressed with Andrea's depth of knowledge and passion for the project. I was very pleased by the Town Council comments and the unanimous vote of support.

Sincerely,

Karen Binder, Executive Director

kbinder@blithewold.org

101 Ferry Road, Bristol, RI 02809 www.blithewold.org 401-253-2707

Mission: To preserve New England's finest garden estate through excellence in horticulture and historic preservation, and by our example to teach and inspire others.



Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

Coggeshall Farm Museum Bristol RI, enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. The Sowams Heritage Area is significant to the regional history and home to several cultural sites working together to share the importance of educating about the complete history of the area.

Coggeshall Farm Museum's mission is to preserve this 1790s Rhode Island salt-marsh farm. We serve the local community and beyond as a living museum and vital educational resource through demonstration of daily farm activity and honest interpretation that reflects its historical, multicultural influence. As part of our mission Coggeshall Farm Museum partners with many local, historical and environmental organizations to further the reach for our educational programs. This designation will further these collaborations and broaden the audience that is connected to the community cultural organizations.

Designation as a National Heritage Area would significantly strengthen these partnerships, providing greater visibility, shared resources, and new opportunities to collaborate across communities. Importantly, this designation would also support the preservation of critical cultural landscapes and historic resources, while promoting sustainable heritage tourism that benefits local economies. By connecting sites across municipal boundaries, the Sowams Heritage Area would create a cohesive and compelling narrative that encourages visitors to explore, learn, and engage more deeply with the region.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell essential and interconnected stories about America's complex beginnings, including Indigenous history, settlement, agriculture, and environmental change. This designation will help ensure these stories are preserved, interpreted with care, and shared widely for generations to come.

We are proud to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to uplifting all the communities who call this place home. Coggeshall Farm Museum strongly supports this designation and looks forward to continuing our work alongside our partners to steward and share the rich heritage of the Sowams region.

Sincerely,

Shelli Costa

Executive Director



1 Colt Drive | Bristol, RI 02809 | www.coggeshallfarm.org

From: Tony Morettini tmorettini@gmail.com
Subject: Sowams National Heritage Area
Date: December 8, 2025 at 9:02 AM
To: Nathan Calouro nathancalouro@gmail.com, Mary Parella maryp02609@gmail.com, Tim Sweeney RI timothysweeneyri@gmail.com, Aaron Ley aaron.ley@gmail.com, Tony Texiera MrTonyTeixeira@yahoo.com
Cc: Melissa Cordeiro mcordeiro@bristolri.gov, Andrea Rounds andrearounds@me.com



Dear Council Members,

Tomorrow night, you will be hearing a petition from The Sowams National Heritage Area organization (Andrea Rounds, on cc here, speaking on their behalf), to ask for Bristol's support of its establishment. National Heritage Area (NHA) is a Congressional designation for an area of particular cultural and historic significance in the US. Currently, there are 62 across the country, including the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area just north of us.

This designation brings attention to the area it encompasses, and establishes it as a significant part of our country's heritage and history. Sowams, as you know, is the homeland of the Pokanoket, and is the basis for the Land Acknowledgement you passed last year, acknowledging Bristol's part in it (thank, you, again). As a particularly important part of Sowams, culturally, spiritually, and historically, Bristol, and especially Potumtuk (Mt Hope), it's important Congress knows we support the NHA.

The NHA will bring status, reinforce our place in history and, as importantly, establish us as a national destination for heritage tourism. While not costing the Town a penny.

Bristol has a long and proud tradition of celebrating our history, back to 1680. Our town seal has on it a Pokanoket and Potumtuk. Many of us have been to Metacom's Seat, overlooking Mt Hope Bay. It only makes sense that we assert our place as an essential part of North American history, going back to, and including the original people of the area, the Pokanoket. A designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area will do that. Please support this request to support Bristol as part of the Sowams National Heritage Area.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Tony Morettini
46 Highland Rd

PS - sorry if you got an aborted version of this note. I hit "Enter," and it apparently sent the email. Again, my apologies. These things never happened when we actually had to "write" our correspondence!



MOUNT HOPE FARM

February 3, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Trustees of Mount Hope Farm enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Mount Hope Farm is a non-profit organization with a mission to steward the Farm's land, landscape and structures for long-term sustainability, while cultivating appreciation of our agrarian, Native American and Colonial history which is why being a part of Sowams is so important to the farm. We have a beautiful marker on our property signifying that we are a proud supporter of this region and the importance of acknowledging Sowams.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. Mount Hope Farm is pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Brenda Turchetta
Executive Director

May 22, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

On behalf of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP), I am pleased support the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

NBEP is a stakeholder-led National Estuary Program pursuing place-based conservation across the three-state Narragansett Bay region of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. We provide scientific data analysis and communication, independent convening, and funding for projects that advance the implementation of our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).

For the last three years, NBEP's Geospatial and Design Manager has collaborated with the Sowams planning team to map the Sowams region. Our GIS maps have helped Sowams locate contemporary boundaries and measure the area's open space, wetlands, and bodies of water.

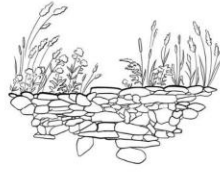
The Sowams team recognizes the critical role of the environment in history, the evolution of cultures over the centuries, and the protection of the region for future generations. Designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area would support implementation of NBEP's 2026 CCMP Revision by increasing public awareness of the many ways people have long depended on a healthy and vibrant Narragansett Bay.

We are proud to play our part in helping Sowams Heritage Area interpret the nationally significant story behind the natural features on the landscape and we enthusiastically endorse the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,



Darcy Young
Executive Director



Osamequin Farm

Nurturing Land • Connecting People

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of Osamequin Farm enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

Our mission is to share the historic land of Osamequin Farm by hosting a cooperative of small scale farmers, public gatherings, and educational opportunities for our community.

Our farm is named in honor of Massasoit Ousamequin, who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that changed the course of history. We do our best to honor this deep history and spread awareness throughout the community about the first people of this land. We see many opportunities for collaboration in the future with the other partners and players in the Sowams Heritage Area effort in order to deepen community awareness and engagement with the layers of history we are a part of today. We're enthusiastic about collaborative events, both on our site and elsewhere, opportunities for shared marketing and communication efforts, cohesive visuals and signage and language, and a general pooling of resources and expertise among the many partners.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration. We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Debbie Block
President
Board of Directors
Osamequin Farm
Seekonk Massachusetts



March 11, 2026

Subject: Proposed Sowams National Heritage Area

To Whom It Concerns:

The *Rehoboth Land Trust* (RLT) strongly supports designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area pursuant to 54 US Code Chapter 1201.

RLT has dedicated 36 years to conservation of Rehoboth's natural resources, open spaces, and scenic landscape. We continue our mission of helping residents protect their land for posterity and ensuring that Rehoboth retains natural areas for public enjoyment and environmental quality.

In our conservation efforts, RLT recognizes the importance of our location in a region of extraordinary historical, cultural, and ecological significance. The Sowams area constitutes a unique portion of New England's south coast in which pivotal European and Pokanoket interactions took place nearly four centuries ago and which has since remained the scene of a remarkable convergence of many ethnic groups that make up our society. Sowams comprises much of the Narragansett Bay's lower watershed, a vitally important area for the health of this bay, a critical natural resource that connects us with the Atlantic Ocean.

RLT takes pride in collaborating with our neighboring communities and partner organizations to advance this worthy effort. The *Sowams Heritage Area* project offers an extraordinary opportunity for us to promote a regional and national appreciation of our distinctive tangible and intangible heritage. We believe that the establishment of our own National Heritage Area represents a collective assertion of our sense of place for a broader constituency. As it has elsewhere, this designation and associated outreach should bring a variety of benefits with respect to conservation, education, recreation, arts, tourism, and other commercial interests.

With excitement at the prospect of this new designation, we thank the *Sowams Heritage Area* project for their dedication to this initiative and wish them a successful outcome.

Sincerely,

Rehoboth Land Trust



THE BAY CENTER
100 Save The Bay Drive
Providence, RI 02905
phone: 401-272-3540

SOUTH COUNTY OFFICE
8 Broad Street
Westerly, RI 02891
phone: 401-315-2709

HAMILTON FAMILY AQUARIUM
23 America's Cup Ave, First Floor
Newport, RI 02840
phone: 401-324-6020

May 22, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

Save The Bay strongly supports designating the Sowams region in the Narragansett Bay watershed as a National Heritage Area. The Sowams region has been a focus for Save The Bay's salt marsh and aquatic connectivity restoration efforts for the last 30 years from restoring river herring passage to spawning waters in the Ten Mile River and Palmer Rivers to restoring tidal flow to the upper Kickemuit River and salt marshes along the region's embayments.

Designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area ties to Save The Bay's mission to protect and restore the waters of Narragansett Bay and its tributaries. From the headwater streams to the coves and salt marshes along Narragansett Bay's shoreline, the Sowams region's waters link the diversity of habitats and the communities together. We collaborate closely with community partners including non-profits, land trusts, the Pokanoket Tribe, municipalities, and state and federal agencies on accomplishing our mission. The communities in the Sowams region are intrinsically connected to these waters and play an important role in protecting and restoring their health for future generations.

A National Heritage Area designation will build upon the grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate this region's contribution to America's heritage and will enhance regional collaboration on enhancing cultural awareness of this region and the ongoing protection and restoration of its diverse habitats. This designation will provide an opportunity to expand inclusion of indigenous, minority and underrepresented communities in plans for the future protection of its unique history, cultural heritage and natural resources.

Save The Bay looks forward to further collaboration with members of the Sowams Heritage Area Board and other community partners on supporting this federal designation.

Sincerely,

Topher Hamblett
Executive Director

savebay@savebay.org
SAVEBAY.ORG

May 20, 2026



Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

On behalf of the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council (TRSC), I am pleased to express our enthusiastic support for the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

The Taunton River, which forms the southeastern border of Sowams Heritage Area, is a designated National Wild and Scenic River. We understand the significance of Sowams and its network of rivers and estuaries to the American origin story. The Taunton River was a primary waterway between Plymouth and Sowams for the Pokanoket Massasoit and English colonists and continued to play an important role in the maritime culture that defined the region for centuries.

We recognize the Sowams designation to be consistent with the goals and objectives of the TRSC's Stewardship Plan, which promotes the following actions in the Taunton Wild & Scenic River corridor and its watershed:

"Increase Public Awareness of the historical and archaeological resources of the Taunton River and its tributaries"

"Inventory and Document historical and archaeological resources of the Taunton River and its tributaries"

"Seek Protection for threatened sites and areas of highest archeological sensitivity"

As one of the original funders of the Sowams Heritage Area feasibility, TRSC has been on the ground floor of this exciting initiative. Over the last four years, we have watched the Sowams planning team develop a comprehensive and inclusive case for NHA designation. As important, they have built a robust network of support, mobilizing environmental, heritage, and civic organizations throughout the region.

We applaud their efforts and look forward to partnering with them for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Bancroft".

Gloria Bancroft
Council Coordinator
gbancroft@savethetaunton.org
tauntonriver.org

Watershed Center- Sweets Knoll State Park, 1387 Somerset Ave, (Rt 138), Dighton MA
Mailing address- P.O. Box 1116 Taunton, MA 02780; www.tauntonriver.org

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the Warren Land Trust enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

Our mission is to protect open space in Warren and keep that land undeveloped forever. The trust preserves and restores land for the benefit of the general public and the conservation of Warren's natural resources, and recognizes the rich traditions of the native people who lived as one with the land. We are honored to be acting as stewards of these historic properties, maintaining them as much as possible in their natural state.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Pisano

Kate Pisano
President
Warren Land Trust



WARREN LAND TRUST
P.O. Box 565, Warren, RI 02885
WarrenLCT.org

Kate Pisano, President
E. Jenny K. Flanagan, Treasurer
Martha Antaya, Secretary

Kara Johnston
Max Bliss
Thomas Luthi
Anat Sagi
David Weed



January 2, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Barrington Public Library Board of Trustees strongly supports the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are honored to join other civic organizations across the region in advancing the stewardship of Sowams' heritage, environment, and diverse cultures. Through our collections, programs, and educational initiatives, the library seeks to enrich and inform the residents of Barrington and neighboring communities about the region's significant history, ensuring that these resources remain timely, relevant, and accessible to all.

We believe that the nine towns and cities comprising the Sowams region together tell vital stories of our nation's early and complex beginnings. The Barrington Public Library is proud to endorse the Sowams National Heritage Area initiative, and we look forward to partnering with you to bring educational programs about Sowams' rich history.

Sincerely,

Vincent G. Wicker
Chair, Barrington Public Library Board

Barringtonlibrary.org
401-247-1920
281 County Road, Barrington, RI 02806



BRISTOL HISTORICAL AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

48 Court St., P.O. Box 356, Bristol, RI 02809

Telephone (401) 253-7223
www.bhpsri.org

To Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee:

On behalf of the Bristol Historical & Preservation Society's Board of Directors, I am writing to express our enthusiastic and unqualified support for designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area. The histories of the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams shed important light on our nation's complex founding years. This designation will elevate and emphasize these stories by providing a long-overdue national platform and bringing them to the attention of a nation-wide audience.

As longtime supporters of the Sowams Heritage Area, we have been pleased to collaborate on educational programs that set Bristol's history in its larger context. As such, we are deeply familiar with the Sowams Heritage Area's efforts to steward the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region and are equally committed to serving all the communities who call this place home.

Thank you for offering us the opportunity to express our support for this initiative. We are looking forward to seeing this designation move forward, to the benefit of our entire nation.

Sincerely,



Catherine W. Zipf
Executive Director

Founded in 1936 to promote historical research of Bristol, to collect and preserve whatever pertains to the Town's heritage.



East Providence Historical Society
65 Hunt's Mills Road, (mailing P.O. Box 4774) East Providence, RI 02916

November 10, 2025

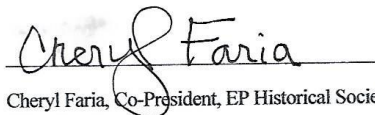
Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

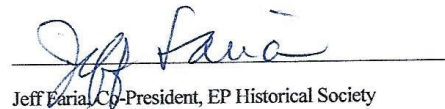
The Board of Directors of the East Providence Historical Society enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our mission is to enrich and educate the citizens of East Providence and surrounding communities about its history through excellent museum experiences and quality educational programs that are relevant and accessible to everyone. In fact, we are already working collaboratively with you on many aspects of East Providence history.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,


Cheryl Faria, Co-President, EP Historical Society


Jeff Faria, Co-President, EP Historical Society



Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation

November 15, 2025

Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation
265 Read Street
Somerset, MA 02726

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Somerset Historical Preservation. enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our mission is to the preservation of historic structures and landmarks.. In fact, one of our board members is already working collaboratively with you by serving on the Sowams Steering Committee.

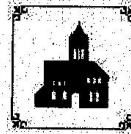
We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Peirce
Chair/Friends of Somerset Historic Preservation

The George Hail Free Library

530 Main Street Warren, RI 02885
(401) 245-7686
Fax/TTY: (401) 245-7470
www.georgehail.org



Chris Matos
Library Director
director@georgehail.org

April 22, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the George Hail Free Library enthusiastically supports the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

- Our mission is to advance intellectual discovery, foster lifelong learning, and enrich the lives of all Warren community members. The library's goals are to provide a variety of resources, innovative programs, and welcoming spaces that promote community engagement and connection while adapting to evolving needs.
- In fact, we are already working collaboratively with you, providing materials and resources regarding the history of this area.
- We see opportunities for collaboration through future exhibits, programs, and resources.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities that call this place home.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Barry, President of the Board of Directors
Board of Directors of the George Hail Free Library



HERRESHOFF
Marine Museum

AMERICA'S CUP
Hall of Fame

ONE BURNSIDE STREET ~ P.O. BOX 450
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND 02809 U.S.A.

Phone 401.253.5000
Fax 401.253.6222
Email INFO@HERRESHOFF.ORG
Web WWW.HERRESHOFF.ORG

March 13, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Herreshoff Marine Museum, I am pleased to support the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

Our museum chronicles the storied history of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company that pioneered boat building from the 1880s through the 1930s. Noted for the ingenuity and excellence of its designs, its construction methods, and its manufacturing and business efficiency, Herreshoff produced state-of-the-art steam vessels, torpedo boats, and racing sailboats, including seven America's Cup defenders—the largest, most complex and powerful racing sloops the world has ever known.

An international tourist destination, the Herreshoff Marine Museum exemplifies the legacy of marine trades that has driven the economy of Sowams for centuries. We share with our heritage partners in the region a commitment to educating the public along with a deep respect for the dynamic interplay of land and water which is a primary interpretive theme of Sowams Heritage Area.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex history. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Bill Lynn
President & Executive Director



November 26, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

Linden Place is pleased to support designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

The mission of the Friends of Linden Place is to preserve the treasured historic property for future generations and to create a welcoming environment by developing programs that enhance the artistic, cultural, and educational life of the community.

In fact, we are already collaborating with other organizations in the Sowams region to tell the complex story of the area, including Blithewold, the Bristol Art Museum, Bristol Garden Club, the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, Bristol Merchants' Association, Bristol Warren Art Night, Coggeshall Farm Museum, Discover Newport, Explore Bristol, First Congregational Church of Bristol, Herreshoff Marine Museum, Mt. Hope Farm, Mt. Hope High School, LitArts RI, The Pennfield School, RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, Rogers Free Library, Roger Williams University, and University of Rhode Island.

We see the designation of the Sowams region as a National Heritage area as an opportunity to strengthen our existing partnerships and establish new collaborations with museums, universities, schools, businesses, and other organizations across the region.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Cara Massey
Executive Director

Linden Place | 500 Hope St., Bristol, RI 02809 | www.lindenplace.org | (401) 253-0390



March 23, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the Massasoit Historical Association (MHA) enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our organization charges itself with the collection and preservation of historical data and relics pertaining to the town of Warren and its history and to care for and preserve the Maxwell House as a museum space. We also preserve and mark landmarks and other objects of historic or architectural interest and conduct events and activities, to educate, and to stimulate an interest in local history. Our mission is aligned with that of the Sowams Heritage Area and MHA is the official steward of the Massasoit Spring in Warren, RI. We are eager to support activities that bring greater attention to significant locations.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Debra Jobin
President, Massasoit Historical Association
debjobinhomes@gmail.com
Street Address: 59 Church Street, Warren, RI 02885
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 203, Warren RI 02885



January 16, 2026

Dear Members of the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

On behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, I am writing to express our strong support for the designation of the Sowams National Heritage Area. We are grateful for your leadership and dedication to the preservation of this historically significant landscape.

The history and evolution of the Sowams region tell a unique story about the many cultures, communities, and events that shaped significant moments in our nation's history. This cultural landscape situated along the borders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island is the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket Tribe and the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621 and forged a 50-year alliance that unraveled during King Philip's War. The region's layered history, including the origins of freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state principles enshrined within Rhode Island's charter, the history of forced labor and enslavement, and centuries-old cultural traditions in maritime industry and resource conservation contribute to the rich, multi-layered history of the Sowams landscape.

Designation as a National Heritage Area would provide numerous opportunities to elevate the stories of distinctive places that tell the story of a complex period of American history and expand community dialogue and collaboration about its interpretation for the benefit of future generations. Such a designation would not only expand access for public engagement with educational resources that interpret these historic resources, but also appropriately recognize the significance of the Sowams region with national recognition.

We are particularly encouraged by the strength of this initiative due to the ongoing efforts of the Steering Committee and their collaboration with key stakeholders. The development of an informative National Heritage Area feasibility study documenting the national significance of the Sowams region, executing a comprehensive public outreach and engagement strategy, securing the support of a diverse group of stakeholders, and the pursuit of a formal governance framework further contribute to the strong justification for National Heritage Area designation.

The National Trust is pleased to have joined the groundswell of public, community, and tribal support for this initiative with a contribution from our Telling the Full History Preservation Fund to assist with a feasibility study aimed at establishing Sowams as a National Heritage Area. Similarly, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with your organization and related stakeholders as these efforts move forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for the Sowams National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Bowman".

Pam Bowman
Senior Director of Government Relations
National Trust for Historic Preservation

600 14th Street NW Suite 500 Washington, DC 20005
E info@savingplaces.org P 202.588.6000 F 202.588.6038 [SavingPlaces.org](https://www.savingplaces.org)

PLIMOTH PATUXET MUSEUMS

Letter of Support for Sowams Heritage Area

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

On behalf of Plimoth Patuxet Museums, I am honored to express our wholehearted support for designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

As the Deputy Executive Director and Senior Historian of Plimoth Patuxet Museums, I have followed the Sowams Heritage Area project for several years, often collaborating with Sowams Project Historian, David Weed, on programming related to early contact between the leaders of the Separatist Pilgrims and the Pokanoket Massasoit Ousquequin.

On March 22, 2023, in the Roger Williams University Library, Don “Strong Turtle” Brown, Tribal Historian of the Pokanoket Tribe, and I commemorated the 400th anniversary of the meeting between Pilgrim ambassador, Edward Winslow, and the ailing Massasoit. This historic event cemented the friendship between the two men, thus ensuring peaceful relations in the first 50 years of Plimoth Colony. In our public conversation four centuries later, Strong Turtle and I shared the different perspectives of the Pokanoket and English on this pivotal moment in history.

Later that summer, the Pokanoket Sachem and Sagamore escorted me to King Philip’s Seat, the Miery Swamp where Philip was murdered, and other Indigenous landmarks in Sowams. Each time I visit Sowams, I am reminded of the tragic and poignant history that Plimoth Patuxet Museums shares with Sowams Heritage Area.

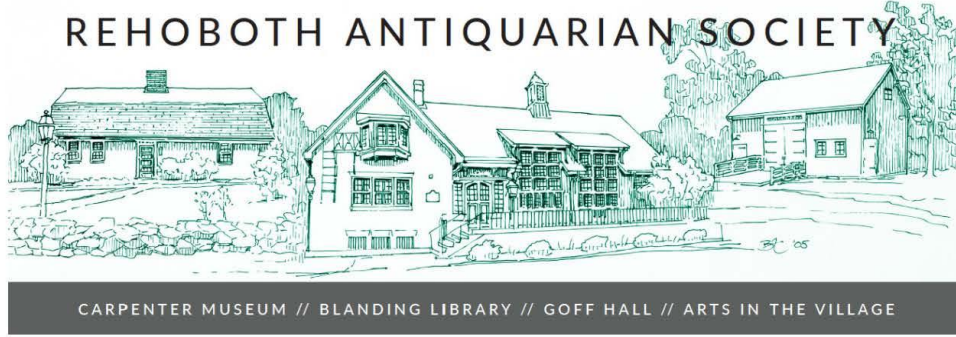
Designating Sowams as a National Heritage Area will provide necessary ballast to the colonial interpretation of history, enriching our understanding of the complex beginnings of the American story.

Sincerely,



www.plimoth.org • P.O. Box 1620 • Plymouth, MA 02362 • (508) 746-1622

REHOBOTH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY



December 5, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

As the Director of the Carpenter Museum I enthusiastically support designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

I am pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region.

- Our mission is to
 - Collect, document, preserve, and share material culture related to Rehoboth's history.
 - Connect the Rehoboth community with these artifacts and with local history in general through our exhibits and programming.
 - Provide the wider community with research support.
 - Promote learning about American history through direct experience with objects from the past.

The Carpenter Museum is already working collaboratively with you on educating our members and visitors on the history of Native Peoples in Rehoboth, hosting events, and providing our insight on the National Heritage Area Steering Committee. I see opportunities for collaboration in future educational programs and events.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven programs that celebrate a region's contribution to America's heritage and are intended to encourage heritage conservation, community development, and regional collaboration. Therefore, I am proud to join the communities of Sowams in endorsing the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

I believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. I am pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and am committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,
Danielle DiGiacomo

Director, Carpenter Museum
Rehoboth Antiquarian Society



21 May 2026

Sowams Heritage Area Project
23 Bridge Street
Warren, RI 02885

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

I write on behalf of the Board of Library Trustees at Seekonk Library in Seekonk, Massachusetts to express our enthusiastic support for the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Seekonk Library has partnered with Sowams Heritage Area, having hosted one of their first Community Conversations a few years ago. The Library property, Seekonk Meadows next door, and the Gammino Pond Conservation Area nearby, are on land that was part of the original Rehoboth Purchase in 1643. Our community values its ties to history and the land, and the Library's programming reflects that.

Over the years, Sowams Heritage Area has built an impressive network of partners from all sectors of the community. By showcasing the region's distinctive role in America's founding years, their outreach has strengthened our relationship with our regional colleagues and raised awareness of the wealth of resources in the area. NHA designation would take this to the national level.

We are proud to partner with Sowams Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Alyssa Richard'.

Alyssa Richard
Chair, Board of Library Trustees
Seekonk Public Library

410 Newman Ave., Seekonk, MA 02771 | 508-336-8230 | seekonkpl.org | library@seekonkpl.org



Somerset Historical Society

274 MAIN STREET
SOMERSET, MASSACHUSETTS

October 25, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the Somerset Historical Society, Inc. enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our mission is to collect, preserve the history of Somerset and the surrounding area for today and the future. In fact, our Director is already working collaboratively with you by serving on the Sowams Steering Committee.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Christopher Duarte

President/Somerset Historical Society



1464 COUNTY STREET
SOMERSET, MA 02726
508-646-2829

www.somersetpubliclibrary.org

December 4, 2025

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Library Board of Trustees of Somerset, enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Our mission is to serve the citizens of the Town of Somerset by providing access to books, access to presentations, access to public computers, access to a local history reference room, and a meeting place for various town boards and other organizations. We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this place home.

Sincerely,

Gayle Bradbury

Chair/Somerset Library Board of Trustees

June 16, 2026

481 County St. Seekonk, MA

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

As an educator at Roger Williams University, retired pastor of the First Baptist Church of Swansea, MA, and now Pastor in Residence at Community Church of Providence, I wholeheartedly endorse the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

In 2001 I became the 44th settled pastor of the third Baptist community established on the continent (1663). As a Baptist, it was like swimming upstream to find my origins. Here I came to appreciate who I am as a Baptist Christian and the heritage of the early Baptists. I co-authored with William H. Brackney "*Baptists in Early North America—Swansea, Massachusetts*", Mercer Univ. Press, 2013. This was significant research into early Baptist history through previously unpublished records. This ancient source, the "Ilston book" is the record written by Elder John Myles beginning in 1649 and brought to Plymouth Colony from Wales. This volume is the oldest "Baptist" congregational record. It provides essential context for the early developments of the Baptist movement in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies.

John Myles, the founder of the First Baptist Church in Swansea, MA, was my pastoral ancestor. He and his congregation built the very first "Baptist" meeting house in North America (1667) on Nockum Hill in Sowams (Barrington, RI). The structure was burned to the ground in what is regarded as the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675. Thanks to the Barrington Preservation Society, the Town of Barrington and the National Park Service Battlefield Grant program, archeological digs there have revealed the charred timbers of the meeting house, which anchored the first settlement of the town of Swansea, MA.

The Swansea congregation is also of subsequent significance through its daughter congregation, the Baptist Church in Warren, where Brown University was founded, and James Manning, with Issac Backus, worked to disestablish the church in Massachusetts in 1833.

I am proud to be a continuing part of the Swansea story, which has such profound religious and historical significance.

Sincerely,


The Rev. Dr. Charles K. Hartman





BARRINGTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ

461 County Road, Barrington RI 02806

Email office@bccucc.org

Phone (401) 246-0111

Website www.bccucc.org

The Rev. Joe Zarro
Interim Sr. Minister

The Rev. Racquel Ray
Associate Minister of Congregational Life

May 28, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

As the Associate Minister of Congregational Life at the Barrington Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, I support the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

Our congregation was established soon after the King Philip's War and in 1737 the meeting house was moved to its present site at the junction of the Barrington River and 100-Acre Cove. It stands as a quintessential historic New England Congregational church with white clapboard siding, two story windows, and towering white steeple. Known to locals as "the white church," Barrington Congregational Church, UCC has played a role in the story of Sowams for more than three centuries. It is still an active congregation which hosts community events as well as church life activities due to its excellent location, accessibility, and large commuter parking lot.

I have been keenly interested in the Sowams Heritage Area project since I attended their first community conversation in the fall of 2023. I attend Sowams Heritage Area project events on behalf of the church and the Barrington Interfaith Partners, like the dedication of the historic marker at Osamequin Nature Trails and Bird Sanctuary. This past January our church hosted the first meeting of the Sowams Heritage Board of Directors, which marked the formal transition of Sowams Heritage Area from a regional coalition to a formal regional network of partners. The planning team and their broad base of supporters have built a unique coalition of environmentalists, heritage, cultural stakeholders, and community leaders. Together, we are dedicated to telling the story of Sowams with many and diverse voices. It is an impressive accomplishment, and we have only just begun!

Barrington Congregational Church, UCC, "the white church," is a proud partner of Sowams Heritage Area. We believe the NHA designation will show the rest of the nation what we've known all along—that Sowams is the setting for seminal events in our nation's history—past, present, and future.

Sincerely

Rev. Racquel R. Ray, MDiv



AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup
nhsoukup@gmail.com

Office: 401/253-3680
Cell : 401/338-4606

June 5, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

As the Settled Minister of the First Congregational Church, UCC, in Bristol, RI, I support the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area.

I serve a congregation that was gathered in 1680, at a time when establishing a church was a precondition for founding a town. Thus, our church has been inextricably linked to the history of Bristol, RI, for nearly 350 years. We are very cognizant that our congregational gathering occurred on the ground where King Philip's War started and ended, and that we have a responsibility to be educators about this history. Furthermore, the life of this church has been intertwined with the American Revolution, the Civil War, and several international wars. Our members were Bristolians who lived and died for their country.

We have supported Sowams Heritage Area ever since we erected one of their first heritage markers in front of our church. We have invited Dave Weed to our church to talk about the Sowams history, and the importance of preserving the heritage area it embodies. Over the year, the Sowams coalition has made enormous strides showcasing Sowams' role in the early years of our nation, and the NHA designation will allow them to build on that momentum. Above all, they are shining a light on the origins of religious tolerance and the Separation of Church and State, a legacy which is a vital part of our worship today.

We are pleased to be among the partners of Sowams who believe in the power of place-making and place-keeping to help communities work together, grow together, and honor their heritage.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup
Settled Minister, First Congregational Church, UCC, Bristol, RI

Church Office (401) 253-7288 • Office@FCCBristol.org • 281 High Street • Bristol, Rhode Island 02809



Newman Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

100 Newman Avenue

Rumford, Rhode Island 02916

Telephone: 401-434-4742

Email: newmanucc1643@gmail.com

www.newmanucc.org

May 20, 2026

Dear Sowams Heritage Area Board of Directors,

We live in a unique era, when the preservation, engagement, and understanding of history is shaping our present and future possibilities as a society in unprecedented ways. This reality makes your work of laying the groundwork for a Sowams National Heritage Area so important. As the minister of a 387-year-old church in the Sowams area, I'm proud to support your work.

Newman Congregational Church has the distinction of existing in three towns, two states, and three countries without ever having moved from its original location where Rev. Samuel Newman first gathered our congregation in 1643 at the base of an oak tree. He named the place Rehoboth, which was then the westernmost point of Plymouth Colony. When Rehoboth divided in 1821, the church became part of the town of Seekonk. Then in 1862, the state line between Massachusetts and Rhode Island shifted and the church became part of East Providence. Our congregation is the oldest in Sowams.

I started as the twenty-second senior minister at Newman Church during the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War, a seminal event in the history of Sowams. The second minister of Newman, Noah Newman, was himself involved in the war, and his correspondences serve as important primary sources for today's historians. Noah Newman provided overnight lodgings to Massachusetts Bay soldiers as they traveled to what became known as the Great Swamp Massacre in Kingston, the deadliest day of the war. Getting to discuss how this history impacts us today as part of a panel in May 2025 with the Pokanoket Tribal Historian Don "Strong Turtle" Brown was a powerful moment.

Last March, Newman Church had the pleasure of hosting the final Community Conversation for Sowams Heritage Area. The turnout was impressive, both in the number of people and diversity of backgrounds and organizational affiliations. We welcomed people from all over the region—historians, environmentalists, Tribes, elected officials, and spiritual leaders. I think we all recognize that this Sowams initiative can help us productively live into the complex history of our area, and create a legacy of collaboration that will hopefully outlive all of us.

Newman Church is proud to partner with Sowams Heritage Area and we look forward to working together long into the future.

Sincerely,

Rev. Sam Lovett



BRISTOL MIDDLE PASSAGE PORT MARKER PROJECT

PO Box 871 Bristol, RI 02809

bmppmp.org

info@bmppmp.org

January 22, 2026

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Dear Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

The Board of Directors of the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project enthusiastically supports designating the Sowams region as a National Heritage Area.

We are pleased to join our partners throughout Sowams in stewarding the heritage, environment, and cultures of this nationally significant region. Last year, we successfully completed our mission to acknowledge the history and memory of Bristol's participation in slavery and the Transatlantic Human Trade and its resounding effects on African and Indigenous peoples by erecting a memorial to honor those affected by this history and their contributions to our nation. Going forward, we want this memorial to serve as a site for educating people on this history and for hosting reconciliation and healing ceremonies. We see opportunities for collaboration with the Sowams Heritage Area in this endeavor.

We believe that as a National Heritage Area, the nine towns and cities that comprise Sowams tell important stories about America's complex beginnings. We are pleased to be part of the Sowams NHA initiative and are committed to lifting all the communities who call this region their home.

Sincerely,

Bernard Freamon
President

The Bristol Middle Passage Port Market Project is a 501c3 non-profit volunteer organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.



December 2, 2025

Dear Members of the Sowams Heritage Area Steering Committee,

On behalf of the Bristol Art Museum, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the designation of Sowams as a National Heritage Area. This milestone represents an extraordinary opportunity for our region; culturally, historically, artistically, environmentally, and economically.

The establishment of a National Heritage Area in Sowams would be beneficial to all parties and a community-wide benefit for both the region and the cultural institutions that serve it. Sowams sits at the heart of a landscape shaped by Indigenous sovereignty, early colonial contact, King Philip's War, religious freedom, the business of slavery, and the intertwined histories of land and water. These narratives are foundational for honoring the history and sovereignty of the Pokanoket and remain essential to understanding who we are today.

The Bristol Art Museum believes the NHA designation would:

- **Strengthen collaboration** among cultural, educational, and historical organizations across nine towns/cities and two states.
- **Support interdisciplinary partnerships** connecting art with history, ecology, public humanities, and tourism.
- **Deepen regional impact** by expanding program reach and fostering cross-community dialogue.
- **Raise the visibility of local institutions**, including BAM, on a national platform, ultimately enriching cultural engagement for residents and visitors alike.

The Bristol Art Museum is committed to being an active and creative partner in interpreting the Sowams story. Our mission is to connect people with art, ideas, and the lived experience of place, this aligns seamlessly with the goals of the Sowams Heritage Area.

We see numerous opportunities to collaborate, including:

- **Artistic interpretation of the five defining themes** - first contact, King Philip's War, religious freedom, the business of slavery, and the dynamic relationship between land and water.
- **Exhibitions and public programs** that help animate and translate these histories for a broad public audience.
- **Creative pathways to education**, employing the visual arts as a bridge between past and present.

This partnership is already underway. BAM's curator developed the Sowams logo and branding guide pro bono and she is now creating a photographic essay exploring what the Sowams landscape continues to teach us, and the Museum hosted the Steering Committee retreat this past May.

We look forward to deepening this work and joining the growing network of organizations committed to the creation of a Sowams National Heritage Area.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the feasibility study and offer feedback. We also welcome the invitation to become a formal partner as the organization develops. We strongly support efforts to encourage the federal delegations to introduce a National Heritage Area bill in 2026 and are honored to submit this letter of support toward that goal.

Please do not hesitate to reach out as your work progresses. The Bristol Art Museum remains eager to collaborate and help bring this important designation to fruition.

With appreciation and support,

Mary Dondero
Exhibition Curator and Board Director - Bristol Art Museum

10 Wardwell Street | PO Box 42 | Bristol Rhode Island 02809



Providence Cultural Equity Initiative

“Changing how the story of Rhode Island is told and sold.”

June 15, 2026

Re: Support for Congressional Designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter of support is submitted on behalf of the Providence Cultural Equity Initiative (“PCEI”), a Providence, Rhode Island based 501(c)3 cultural consultancy, and is intended to confirm PCEI’s full support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area.

PCEI provides supports and services in the areas of cultural creation, cultural collaboration, and cultural consultation. PCEI’s mission is “*to steward and ambassador Rhode Island’s Cultural Sector & Economy.*” PCEI’s vision is “*to transform Rhode Island into New England’s premier cultural hub.*” PCEI supports and values uncompromising commitment to cultural authenticity, equity, and sustainability by promoting and presenting products, services and opportunities to engage with Rhode Island’s cultural sector, economy, and communities. Accordingly, PCEI’s Value Proposition is that PCEI is “*Changing how the story of Rhode Island is told and sold.*” PCEI achieves these goals by implementing a strategy of cultural placemaking, which 1) focuses on culture as a force that defines, connects, sustains, and distinguishes us; 2) centers the living culture of specific cultural communities; and 3) highlights the narratives that tie cultural communities to the place being made.

In this context PCEI fully supports congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area as PCEI believes that Sowams Heritage Areas as a tremendous example of cultural placemaking in southern New England. The Sowams Heritage Area represents a distinct and historically significant living landscape spanning portions of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, encompassing the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket People, where relations between Indigenous communities and early European settlers played a formative role in the history of this nation. The area’s history includes the 50-year peace between the Pokanoket under Massasoit and Plymouth Colony settlers beginning in 1621, as well as pivotal events such as King Philip’s War, the birth of principles of religious freedom around Providence, and the long intersection of land, water, and multiple cultural communities. These narratives are irreplaceable elements of the American story and merit federal recognition and support for preservation and interpretation.

Page 1 of 2

PCEI strongly believes that the combination of these elements represent a tremendous opportunity for Rhode Island and Massachusetts to strengthen their market share of the international cultural tourism market through supporting cultural communities in developing and leveraging their cultural assets for the international tourism market. This is a key opportunity because not because cultural tourism represented \$6.52 billion of the Global Market in 2023, but also because it is forecasted to reach \$15.23 billion Global Market by 2031.¹ Further, cultural tourism represents 40% of worldwide tourism, with statistics showing that approximately 49% of cultural travelers are willing to pay more for lodging with distinctive cultural or heritage component.²

It is for these foregoing reasons that PCEI respectfully urges support for the congressional designation of the Sowams Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area. PCEI is confident that such designation would not only strengthen preservation efforts, enhance public understanding of the region's layered histories, and support equitable community engagement with heritage resources, but also establish an extremely attractive cultural placemaking initiative that attracts a larger share of the cultural tourism market.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any further support or information.

Cordially,



Raymond Two Hawks Watson
CEO/President
Providence Cultural Equity Initiative

¹ *Global Cultural Tourism Market Size, Share, and Trends Analysis Report – Industry Overview and Forecast to 2031* (Data Bridge Market Services)

² *The Importance of Cultural Heritage Tourism* (American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association)



Yarmouth
Bridgewater

Wampanoag
Providence

Narragansett
at Rehoboth

Pokanoket
Country

King
County

Taunton

Phillips

Bay

Pawtucket

Dartmouth
Portsmouth

Monument Bay
Elizabeth

Rhode Island

Narragansett

Sea and