Sowams Heritage Area Project



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Sowams Heritage Area Project Hosts the Next Round of Community Conversations**

The Sowams Heritage Area Project invites members of the community to participate in a community conversation to discuss the significance of Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621, and the extraordinary array of resources that can be found on its landscape.

Free to the public, the conversation will be held twice: Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at 3:30pm at the Seekonk Public Library, 410 Newman Avenue, Seekonk, MA and Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 7:00pm at Mt. Hope Farm, 250 Metacom Avenue, Bristol, RI. Seats can be reserved online at [Sowams.org/community-conversations-march-2024/](https://sowams.org/community-conversations-march-2024/).

Sowams is the setting of one of America’s origin stories, the critical alliance that established 50 years of peace between the Indigenous Tribes that had fished, farm and hunted the region for millennia and the English settlers arriving on the Mayflower. Sowams is also ground zero for the fracturing of that alliance during the devastating King Philip’s War (1675/76). At the heart of that conflict lay divergent worldviews of law, land ownership, and personal freedom. In Sowams, the legacy of those differences has shaped the region's complex history from prehistory to the present.

Last fall, the Sowams Steering Committee introduced the Sowams Project to the public at events in Swansea, MA and Warren, RI. These next Community Conversations will focus on the natural, historic and cultural resources in the region and the themes that flow from that watershed period in our nation’s history. “The story of Sowams is really many stories,” says Project Advisor, Andrea Rounds. “Not only is it about a time and place where two worlds met, but Sowams is also about colonization, war, religious toleration, enslavement, and commerce—each is defined by the landscape where land meets the water.”

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are living, working, landscapes, which are designated by Congress to honor the important role of a region in our country’s development and celebrate its contributions to American history and culture. The Community Conversations are part of a comprehensive and inclusive feasibility study required by the National Park Service for NHA designation, and are being conducted under the auspices of the Sowams Heritage Area Project Steering Committee.

The participants will discuss what the needs are in their own communities and how a National Heritage Area could benefit them. Says Rounds, “This is an opportunity to leverage the national significance of Sowams to showcase all the different communities in the region, each in its own way, with its own voice.”

**About the Sowams Heritage Area Project:**

Led by a regional coalition of town planners, tourism entities, historical societies, environmentalists, Tribal leaders, and other volunteers, the Sowams Heritage Area Project is undertaking an initiative to develop a National Heritage Area (NHA) in Sowams, the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin who welcomed the Pilgrims in 1621. Today the Sowams region comprises Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, a portion of Providence, and Warren, RI, as well as Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, and Swansea, MA. NHAs protect and promote a region’s history, heritage and culture and use those assets to advance local economies through tourism, recreation and community development. For more information, go to [sowams.org](https://sowams.org).