

Cultural Easements by Nature

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Land absorbs history yet most of our American folklore that is embedded in the earth is being lost.

The primary reason cultural easements should exist is to tell those stories to the general public to preserve the local culture. Many of the existing land conservation areas hold such a local legacy yet untold. The Native Land Conservancy, Inc. (NLC) is a private, non-profit organization founded in 2012 that is dedicated to rescuing land and its stories. NLC proposes to invite towns, private land owners and conservation trusts to illuminate their cultural legacies by establishing a cultural easement with a commitment to share the lands' story with the general public at least once a year.

Indigenous people of this country have oral histories of events including perhaps even phenomena that have happened upon the land. For example, the place in Cotuit, MA where a Wampanoag massasoit and his wife were standing when they witnessed a lightning bolt spin a circle in the sky. The clay pounds of Truro where for thousands of years indigenous potters gathered and processed clay to make cooking pots, pipes, and smaller vessels. Just as culturally significant is the West Barnstable brick clay pits. The company fired bricks for about thirty profitable years before the clay pits were flooded by a poorly placed well.

Clay pounds are unique natural land features that are considered cultural resources. Cultural resources are determined by special land features based on scarcity, value to human life ways, and typically classified as renewable or non-renewable by Native American traditions. In Algonquin languages place names are specific to cultural resources. These names describe the resource or feature such as Mashtuxet: *place of the reeds/cat o nine tails* (used to make summer lodge roof covering and mattresses); Copacut: *a place where the trees grow close together*; Aquidneck: *place beyond the hill*; and, Metemesik: *place of the black earth*. Those spellings are likely to be incorrect, but are meant to give one the idea of how places were named by the New England tribes that speak Algonquin languages.

These place names gave early travelers an array of locations to place them in the natural world around them. These too deserve recognition as Cultural Easements because they identify areas where cultural resources can be found for harvesting, restoration, and educational programs. There are a number of natural cultural resources that are rare and needed by Native American people of New England, such as bulrush reeds or hickory stands. A renewable yet hard to find natural cultural resource may be on your property. We ask to be granted access to these resources with a commitment of the utmost respect for your property to gather seeds or harvest an annual bloom or simply honor the legacy.

The Native Land Conservancy is very interested in establishing Cultural Easements in the eastern New England area to begin local oral traditions presenting special land stories for all citizens to carry on for centuries to come. We are also interested in facilitating Cultural Easements to preserve natural cultural resources that have intrinsic value to indigenous cultures. If you know of such a place, please contact us at (508) 477-1361 or info@nativelandconservancy.org