



Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) was founded in 1987 to conserve and care for lands in the St. George River watershed. Today, we steward more than 5,600 acres from the headwaters in Liberty to the mouth of the river in Cushing and Port Clyde. We recognize that this work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Wabanaki peoples, who have lived on, cared for, and been in relationship with the lands of this watershed for thousands of years.

Over the past year, we have begun the work of better understanding the complex history of this place and the present-day realities facing Wabanaki communities. In Maine, the history of settler colonization, persecution, and disenfranchisement of Wabanaki peoples are inextricably linked to the development of the land conservation movement and our own organizational mission.

As a board and staff, our goal is to begin the process of righting these wrongs by supporting Wabanaki sovereignty, restoring access to their ancestral homelands, and creating a foundation for relationships built on trust, honesty, and accountability. We believe that supporting Wabanaki sovereignty, well-being, and land relationships strengthens the ecological and cultural health of the watershed.

Over the past year, GRLT has taken steps to prepare our organization for deeper partnership:

- Supported one staff member in participating in a First Light Learning Journey ('24 –'25).
- Formed an Indigenous Partnerships Working Group (IPWG) of Board and staff in 2025, meeting monthly to build shared understanding and strengthen our organizational readiness to support relationships with Wabanaki communities. In September 2026, this working group was established as a standing committee.
- Sent Board and staff representation to participate in *Interacting with Wabanaki–Maine History* (June '25) and First Light's *Walking Together* event (October '25).
- Submitted a letter of support for state legislation aimed at restoring Wabanaki tribal sovereignty (March '26).
- Facilitated 4 lunch-and-learn presentations during which Board and staff members dedicated time to discussing the roots of conservation and its relationship to colonialism, Wabanaki sovereignty and leadership in environmental activism, and the Owl's Head Bay Massacre.

As we join the First Light community, GRLT commits to the following actions, knowing that our approach will evolve as learning and relationships deepen:

Organizational Change

- Develop and nurture relationships with Wabanaki organizations, governments, and individuals.
- Appoint staff and Board members to serve on our Indigenous Partnerships Committee to ensure these commitments are sustained over the long term and to explore further steps GRLT can take.
- Encourage Board and staff members to contribute annually to Wolankeutomone kisi apaciyewik, "Let us take good care of what is returned" Fund and share information about the fund with our community members.
- Continue learning together as a Board and staff through such channels as First Light gatherings, Wabanaki REACH trainings, and internal education, and peer-to-peer conversations with other organizations.
- Review and rewrite this letter annually as our commitments evolve.

Land Stewardship, Land Access, and Land Return

- Encourage Stewardship staff to seek opportunities to learn about Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).
- Facilitate and expand access for Wabanaki peoples to GRLT's conserved lands for cultural, ceremonial, and traditional uses.
- Explore opportunities to support land return, co-stewardship, and similar projects within our watershed.
- Seek partnerships to facilitate educational programming on Wabanaki history, culture, and stewardship for the public, including signage and interpretive materials at our preserves.

We understand that this work begins with relationships, and that relationships move at the speed of trust. As we continue to step into this work, we intend to approach it with humility, curiosity, open minds, and a commitment to listening. We recognize that our understanding will evolve over time, and we will allow our relationships with Wabanaki communities to guide our pace and direction. We also hope to engage a broader range of people in our towns and watershed, inviting our wider community to learn alongside us as we deepen this work.