



BLOG

A Step Toward Equity: Sugar Loaf Hill Summit — Sacred Land of Shinnecock People Protected

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CONSERVATION NEWS

Learn more about the recent conservation of Sugar Loaf Hill

“This acquisition is about a hill, a summit, the most sacred place to the Shinnecock people, a place where their ancestors were buried 3000 years ago. It acknowledges for all parties involved that the land we live on here in Southampton is the ancestral land of the Shinnecock people,” said John v.H. Halsey at the Southampton Town Council meeting when it voted unanimously to purchase the development rights on 4.6 acres at the peak of Sugar Loaf Hill on Tuesday, June 8, 2021.

After years of work with the Shinnecock Graves Protection Warrior Society (SGPWS), and months of negotiations with the Town and the owners of Sugar Loaf’s summit, the Trust acquired this most sacred land on July 22 in a simultaneous transaction wherein the Town purchased the development rights on the property, thereby protecting it from any residential development in the

future. Roger Waters, an advocate for the Shinnecock people, provided the bulk of the private funds necessary for the Trust to purchase the property and restore it to its natural state, for which we are most grateful.

"I want to thank the Shinnecock people, especially the Graves Protection Warrior Society for their guidance and patience throughout. This would not have happened without the leadership of Tela Troge, Becky Genia, and Shane Weeks. It is our intent to manage this land with the SGPWS until such time that we can return it to the Shinnecock people, the ultimate stewards, as a place for their ancestors to rest in peace as well as a place for the public to learn about the history and culture of the Shinnecock Nation," added John.

The Trust will work closely with the SGPWS to restore the land, remove the existing structures, and install a public trail in what will be a year-long restoration project. Upon completion of the restoration, the Trust will petition the Town Board for approval to transfer fee title of the parcel to the Shinnecock people. This will be the first time that land within Shinnecock Hills will be returned to and repatriated by the Shinnecock Nation.

There is much more land to protect in Shinnecock Hills in partnership with the SGPWS and the Town. In order to accomplish this, more private funds will need to be raised. To this end, the Trust has established a special fund for this purpose - the [Shinnecock Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund](#). These funds will cover the remaining costs for this project as well as future acquisitions, restoration and ongoing stewardship related to sacred Shinnecock land. *To learn more, please contact [Amanda Abraham](#), our Director of Development.*

"This endeavor is the first of many steps for a relationship built on trust and respect between Shinnecock Nation and the Town of Southampton, with Peconic Land Trust as a sturdy bridge into this new, brighter future," said Tela Troge, Shinnecock attorney and member of the SGPWS.

This acquisition would not have been possible without the support of Supervisor Jay Schneiderman and the Town Board. Thanks to Trust staff and board members who worked on this project, with special recognition to Project Manager [Julie Wesnofske](#) with strong assists from [Josh Halsey](#) and [Matt Swain](#).