



### **National Congress of American Indians support the permanent protection of Nantucket Sound as a sacred site**

**Washington, DC** – The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has endorsed creation of a National Historic Landmark for Nantucket Sound in Massachusetts to permanently protect Nantucket Sound. This will secure traditional laws, cultures, and the way of life for the native nations that continue to inhabit their ancestral homelands. Nantucket Sound consists of 750 square miles situated between Cape Cod and the islands of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard.

NCAI was established in 1944 and is the oldest tribal organization, representing tribal nations across the United States, including the present-day sacred ancestral lands of the Mashpee Wampanoag and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

The NCAI Members voted unanimously in support of a resolution ***Supporting the Protection and Preservation of Nantucket Sound as a Site of Historical and Cultural Significance to Tribal Nations*** consistent with efforts by a coalition of Cape Cod and Islands environmental, cultural, and historic organizations to designate Nantucket Sound as a National Historic Landmark. The Resolution reads, in part:

“WHEREAS, Members of Congress have recognized that sacred sites and burial grounds cannot be equated with other lands that can be restored, and that sacred sites that have been damaged can never be made whole again; and

WHEREAS, Nantucket Sound in the state of Massachusetts is the present-day home and sacred ancestral lands of the Mashpee Wampanoag, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), and other Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, Nantucket Sound is the first ocean-based traditional cultural property (TCP) recognized by the Department of the Interior’s Keeper of the National Register as being eligible for designation as TCP meeting historic and archaeological property that is a source of crucial information relating to American Indian exploration and settlements as well as being inseparably

associated with the cultural beliefs, identity, and spirituality of Tribal Nations since time immemorial...

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians of the United States supports all legislative and administrative efforts by the United States to protect Nantucket Sound in perpetuity.”

“This Resolution and the effort by a broad coalition of native and non-native people to protect this sacred place in perpetuity honors not only the traditions and cultures of the Wampanoag tribes, but also those of all people who treasure Nantucket Sound,” said Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Chairman Brian Weeden. “This declaration is consistent with the policies of the United States Congress and the current United States Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, who continues to be a strong voice for the protection of Native American rights,”

Secretary Haaland is a native American from the Pueblo of Laguna and the former Congresswoman from New Mexico.

“We are grateful for the support and leadership of the National Congress of American Indians and the local Wampanoag tribes,” said Audra Parker, CEO and President of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, which has fought for protective status of the Sound and is working with key local, state, and national stakeholders to designate the Sound as a National Historic Landmark. “Nantucket Sound’s rich tribal history needs to be recognized and preserved as does its unique environment, which lies at the heart of the Cape and Islands.”

### **About NCAI**

NCAI was established in 1944 in response to the termination and assimilation policies the U.S. government forced upon native tribal governments contrary to their treaty rights and status as sovereign nations. It is the oldest tribal organization in the United States and represents tribal nations across the United States, including present-day and sacred ancestral lands of the Mashpee Wampanoag and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

NCAI’s Mission is to:

- Protect and enhance treaty and sovereign rights.
- Secure our traditional laws, cultures, and ways of life for our descendants.
- Promote a common understanding of the rightful place of tribes in the family of American governments.
- Improve the quality of life for Native communities and peoples.