

# UPPER MATTAPONI INDIAN TRIBE REACQUIRES ANCESTRAL LANDS

KING WILLIAM, VA, USA, August 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe](#) reacquired 855 acres of its ancestral lands along its namesake Mattaponi River in Virginia. Three adjoining parcels within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed will be preserved as part of the Tribe's Return to the River program, which aims to restore the Tribe's role as environmental steward of its homelands. The Tribe will use its indigenous knowledge to enhance the environment for culturally significant fish, wildlife, and plants through restoration of wetlands, forest habitats, native grasslands, and streams on the site of a former sand and gravel mine.



The 855 acres reacquired by the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe are located alongside the Mattaponi River in Virginia.

The new Tribal lands fall between three state Wildlife Management Areas upriver and the Zoar State Forest and Sandy Point State Forest downriver and are adjacent to privately-owned conserved property. The Tribe's acquisition connects more than 3,000 acres of conserved lands.

Chief Frank Adams celebrated the long-dreamed of reacquisition, stating: "Today we begin anew our ancestor's thoughtful caretaking of these important lands and waters." He added, "Restoring our territory enables our citizens to reconnect to their cultural heritage. I can't overstate how important it is for our youth to have these ties to the land."

The return of the land to Tribal stewardship comes as climate change and sea-level rise threaten Chesapeake Bay wetlands. Other Tribal Nations in Virginia and around the country are gaining ownership and management roles as part of a nationwide land-back movement recognizing the wisdom of entrusting Native leadership to protect lands stolen during colonization as those lands suffer the effects of sustained environmental carelessness. "This reacquisition is a milestone for Tribal sovereignty and conservation," stated Leigh Mitchell, Environmental and



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*Chief Frank Adams, Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe*

Cultural Protection Director for the Tribe.

[Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC](#), general legal counsel to the Tribe and five other Tribal Nations headquartered in the Commonwealth, donated its services to the purchase. "Restorative justice and smart environmental strategy are at the heart of projects like this," observed attorney Jessica Krauss. Richard Hairfield of Hairfield Morton also provided critical legal support for the acquisition.

The Tribe purchased the property with grant funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program's Habitat

Protection and Resilience Fund, and the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, and with acquisition support services from the Trust for Public Land.

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The Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe is a federally recognized tribe based in what is now King William, Virginia. The Algonquian Mattaponi people had their home in the Mattaponi watershed and the Tribe's community base still resides in their traditional lands of Tsenacomacah. As part of the Powhatan chiefdom, the Upper Mattaponi played a fundamental role in the first permanent English settlement in the Americas and several Mattaponi villages were visited and recorded by English colonist John Smith. By the 19th century, a group of Mattaponi Indians not living on the state Mattaponi reservation were living in a settlement known as Adamstown in north King William County. This group comprised the ancestors of the modern-day Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe.

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