

Statement of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe Opposing Holtec's Proposed Dumping for 11/28/22 NDCAP Meeting

Good evening.

For thousands of years, the Native people of this region have fished in the waters in and around Cape Cod Bay. To us, the land, water, plants, and wildlife that we co-exist with are alive and sacred. We feel a deep responsibility to our tribal youth to ensure that they and their children inherit a planet that has been nurtured, not destroyed.

Holtec's proposal to illegally dump over a million gallons of radioactive waste into these sacred waters would damage our shellfish, our finned fish and all the gifts of the sea that give us sustenance. To us, there is no level of radioactive water that can be considered safe. That is why, since the start of this year, we have opposed the dumping. To the Herring Pond Wampanoag, this is a continuation of centuries of colonial domination and expropriation in the heart of our unceded territory. We expressed our protest formally in a letter dated March 15, 2022.

We, the Herring Pond Wampanoag – the original inhabitants of these lands, and the original stakeholders; we who live right next to Pilgrim Station, built on our unceded territory – have been rudely overlooked, and ignored as if we did not exist! But we do exist – we have existed and will continue to exist. We are still here.

Article 32 (Paragraph 2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that *ALL* Indigenous people have a right to good faith consultation and cooperation “prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories, and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water, or other resources.”

This includes, by any measure of justice, the Herring Pond Wampanoag.

In fact, it is precisely on the issue of justice that we take issue with a particularly spurious argument from Holtec and their allies. In his June 15th letter to Senator Markey, Holtec's CEO Kris Singh proclaimed his company's commitment to environmental justice. He wrote: "The suggestion...to ship the water to another location for discharge runs counter to our basic tenets of environmental justice, which has led us to discard the idea."

These words ring hollow in the face of Holtec's apparent intention to dump radioactive wastewater into our ancient and sacred waters. They ring hollow when Holtec fails to acknowledge and consult our Herring Pond community, the first inhabitants and stewards of these lands and waters. Holtec is ignoring the very indigenous voices whose dispossession made the plant possible. How can this possibly be understood as justice? It is not justice, it is colonialism – from our perspective, Singh's words make a mockery of environmental justice.

For over 400 years we have witnessed repeated assaults on our traditional homelands and our environment. When will it stop? Holtec's behavior shows blatant disregard for the rights, needs and feelings of our indigenous community. It continues to inflict a multi-generational legacy of trauma, abuse and exploitation and municipalities throughout Massachusetts have also sent correspondence opposing this action. The dumping of toxic waste into the waters that sustain us could have a grave impact on not only our life ways, but all of yours. Once again, we, the first inhabitants of Plymouth, say No to Dumping! It is not just, it is not legal, and it must not happen.

kutâputash - Thank you

Melissa Ferretti
Chairwoman Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe