

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SENATE

University Environment Committee

Meeting of September 10, 2025, 12:30-2:00 pm

Virtual meeting on Zoom.

In attendance: H. Resit Akcakaya, Malcolm Bowman, Barbara Boyle, Katy Fallon, Monique Fitzgerald, Jennifer Gilday, Timothy Gonzalez, Angela Gupta, Gary Kaczmarczyk, Jessica Koos, Julian Maceren, Christine Pash, Christopher Percival, Sian Piret, Michelino Puopolo, Chris Sellers (co-chair), John True (co-chair), Frederick Walter, Thomas Wilson, Neha Yousuf.

1. Co-chair Sellers called the meeting to order at 12:38 pm, welcomed all to the first meeting of the fall semester. All participants introduced themselves.
 - a. Timothy Gonzalez: undergraduate student representative, senior majoring in Environmental Studies, minoring in Biology.
 - b. Rashid Achakaya: member of the committee, professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolution.
 - c. Chris Sellers: co-chair of committee, professor at the History department.
 - d. Chris Percival: member of the committee, associate professor in Anthropology.
 - e. John True: co-chair of the committee, professor at Ecology and Evolution.
 - f. Fred Walter: liaison to the University Senate Executive, professor of Astronomy.
 - g. Tom Wilson: recording secretary and former chair of the committee, semi-retired affiliate at School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences.
 - h. Katie Fallon: here to talk about the Setalcott proposal, department of Sociology.
 - i. Neha Yousuf: helping with the Brookhaven Landfill Action and Remediation Group (BLARG) presentation today.
 - j. Katie Fallon: Department of Pharmacology, helping with the Setalcott presentation today.
 - k. Michelino Puopolo: member of the committee, associate professor in the department of Anesthesiology.
 - l. Barbara Boyle: member of the committee, Director of Healthcare, Safety, and Sustainability at the hospital.
 - m. Jessica Koos: member of the committee, Director of the Health Sciences library.
 - n. Gary Kaczmarczyk, Associate Vice President for Environmental Health and Safety.
 - o. Christine Pash: graduate student, helping with the Brookhaven Landfill Presentation today.
 - p. Sian Piret: member of the committee, associate professor in the department of Medicine, division of Nephrology.

2. Proposal for Setalcott Stewardship; Visitor: Kathleen Fallon.
 - a. Proposal to grant land access and stewardship rights to the Settecot Nation on Stony Brook University campus land, focusing on preservation and educational use.
 - b. Target land areas: Two wooded plots near the main campus entrance, proposed for preservation and indigenous stewardship without clearing or new construction.
 - c. Stewardship approach: Emphasis on working with existing native plants and wild gardening methods; no large-scale clearing or planting of non-native species; no fencing anticipated.
 - d. Educational integration: Use of the land for courses and programs within Native American Indigenous Studies, focusing on indigenous knowledge of native plants and herbalism.
 - e. Fallon: interested in land access and two parking spaces.

Questions and discussion:

- f. Wilson: great horned owl nesting site identified in northern plot; any plan should avoid disrupting this habitat.
- g. Percival: would there be removal of invasives or fencing? Fallon: specific questions would need to be directed to Setalcott members.
- h. Resit: where are plants to be planted? Where would they be sourced from? Fallon: locally

Next steps:

- i. Committee members requested a more detailed proposal outlining specific stewardship activities, plant management, potential invasive species removal, and educational components.
- j. Proposal to include information on assessment procedures prior to any land manipulation and clarity on plant use.
- k. Fallon expressed concern regarding imposing reporting burdens on Settecot Nation members; focus on supportive collaboration rather than administrative demands. Committee members and Kaczmarczyk responded that a certain amount of process was unavoidable given State laws and University regulations.
- l. Suggested walkthroughs of the land for committee members with Settecot representatives to better understand site and plan.
- m. Updated proposal from Setalcott to be circulated to committee co-chairs (Chris Sellers and John True) for distribution and scheduling of future discussions including potential votes to advance to University Senate.
- n. Engagement with senior administration, including deans, provost, and president, planned by proposers to build support.
- o. Legal and operational frameworks like revocable permits and real estate involvement will be necessary; coordination with CPDC (Campus Planning, Design and Construction) and Enterprise Risk Management anticipated.

- p. Committee advised that ultimate decision-making lies with University Senate and Administration; Environment Committee acts in an advisory capacity.
- q. Katy Fallon and Joseph Pierce leading proposal development and communication with Setalcot Nation. Committee co-chairs Chris Sellers and John True to facilitate committee review and walkthrough arrangements. Gary Kaczmarczyk to provide guidance on administrative and legal processes related to land use and permits. Setalcot Nation representatives to participate in future discussions and possibly in committee walkthroughs

3. Proposal for Collaboration; Brookhaven Landfill group (BLARG); Visitors: Christine Pash, Monique Fitzgerald, Julian Maceren, Neha Yousuf

- a. Strategic initiative to advocate for landfill closure and promote a zero waste policy on Stony Brook University campus to model sustainable waste management and influence municipal and state practices.
- b. Brookhaven landfill is one of the last remaining on Long Island, with closure mandated by 1983 Long Island landfill law but delayed.
- c. Current waste management practices include incineration and landfill ash disposal, with significant environmental and health concerns due to toxic emissions and waste displacement.
- d. Emphasis on waste reduction, composting, plastic bans, redemption centers, repair centers, and sustainable product use as necessary components of zero waste.
- e. Stony Brook seen as a leader with past successful initiatives (e.g., tobacco-free campus) and capacity to develop a comprehensive zero waste strategy.
- f. Current recycling rates and composting programs are inadequate, with only one organic compost bin observed campus-wide recently and student-led composting programs currently on hold.
- g. Existing State policy aims to ban single-use plastics at state facilities, with some campus initiatives underway but lacking scale and coordination.
- h. Latest STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) report data available for 2022-2023 academic year; no more recent waste stream data found. [STARS Reporting Tool](#)
- i. Food waste audit in dining halls showed ~50 pounds of food waste over 2-3 hours during a student separation event.
- j. Proposal to form a working group combining BLARG members, committee faculty, and students to gather and analyze waste stream data, develop reports, and propose actionable strategies (01:07:55)
- k. Faculty members Malcolm Bowman and Christopher Percival expressed willingness to assist with technical advice and student feedback integration.
- l. Waste Management Institute at the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences noted as a potential resource.

- m. Recognition of critical landfill capacity timeline: landfill expected to close to construction/demolition debris by 2023, still open for ash for estimated additional 3-4 years; urgency stressed for waste reduction policies.
- n. Hospital and medical waste represent significant plastic waste generation driven by hygiene and infection control, complicating waste reduction efforts.
- o. Business recycling, especially restaurants, is not mandated and represents a large loophole in local recycling efforts.
- p. BLARG representatives Monique Fitzgerald, Christine Pash, Neha Yousuf, Julian Maceren leading advocacy and data gathering. BLARG petition: [March to Zero Waste - Stony Brook Waste Free Campus - Action Network](#)
- q. Environmental Committee members to support working group formation and facilitate dialogue with administration and campus bodies.
- r. Malcolm Bowman and Tom Wilson to investigate Waste Management Institute status and potential support.
- s. Committee to pursue further data access via AASHE STARS platform and campus waste data sources.

4. Following master-planning and campus development.

Campus Tree Cutting and Land Use Transparency Issue.

- a. Unscheduled tree cutting near new Tabler Residence Halls discovered without prior committee or planning staff notification, raising concerns over transparency and environmental oversight.
- b. Project to build new residential building on wooded land originally scheduled for 2020 but canceled due to COVID-19; now appears to have resumed without committee consultation.
- c. Chief master planner and associate vice president for planning (Chris Martin) reportedly unaware of recent tree cutting activities, indicating communication breakdown.
- d. Dormitory Authority (a state entity) identified as responsible for project and possibly bypassing usual university oversight.
- e. Committee lacks clarity on who holds ultimate authority to approve tree removal on campus.
- f. Calls for advance notice and public posting of tree removal and land development projects, including email notification to the Environment Committee, to allow for feedback and environmental considerations.
- g. Previous campus master plan with environmental components was initiated in 2012. Presentation about this Master Plan is in the committee archives at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Sy1kKy2uZbV6vEwJEcT0a1_S-H91o3jS/view?usp=sharing
- h. Current master plan in development includes a listening tour; however, recent tree cutting appears uncoordinated with this process.
- i. Tom Wilson to draft a resolution calling for mandatory notification and transparency regarding tree cutting and land clearing on campus, to be discussed and potentially voted on at the October meeting. John True to collaborate with Tom Wilson and gather incident reports to maintain centralized tracking of unauthorized or uncommunicated tree removal activities.

- j. Strong consensus on the need to escalate the issue to the University Senate and potentially higher administration to prevent further unnotified environmental impacts.
- k. Recognition of ongoing tension between campus development pressures and environmental preservation priorities.
- l. Historical success cited in influencing campus planning decisions through committee advocacy as precedent for effective action.

5. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 8 at 12:30 pm.
6. Without objection. Co-chair Sellers adjourned the meeting at 2:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Wilson
Recording Secretary