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Community Land and Water Coalition (CLWC) Holds Rally in Wareham To Stop Sand Mining in Southeastern Massachusetts

Groups and residents demand enforcement of the laws to protect land, water, residents from illegal sand and gravel mining

A.D. Makepeace Cranberry Co. sand and gravel mining to supply Read Custom Soils is illegal says group

(Wareham, MA) - A group of local residents and regional environmental organizations gathered in front of Wareham Town Hall to demand action by state and local officials to stop the sand and gravel strip mining operations going on across Southeastern Massachusetts and to end the public subsidies supporting the industry, including agricultural subsidies from the Department of Agricultural Resources and solar subsidies from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

The rally organizers chose Wareham Town Hall because the [Town's Selectboard refuses to enforce](#) the Town's laws against sand mining despite [years of demands and two Town Meeting votes asking them to do so](#).

Wareham is also the corporate headquarters of A.D. Makepeace Cranberry Co. ("Makepeace"), owner and operator of reportedly the Northeast's largest sand and gravel extraction and sales and distribution center, [Bead Custom Soils, LLC](#) located in the Town abutting Wareham, at 46 Federal Road, in Carver. Makepeace is the world's largest cranberry grower and Massachusetts' largest private landowner with about 13,450 acres of land including the [Red Brook Development](#) in Plymouth. Every acre is a source of sand and gravel for [Bead Custom Soils](#), yet the [company's website](#) claims it is "Inspired by Nature." The company has plans to [mine out retired bogs](#) under the claim of building agricultural ponds at locations in Plymouth.

Recent satellite images and photographs released by rally organizer [Community Land & Water Coalition](#) show new industrial scale logging by Makepeace off Tihonet Road near the company's headquarters in Wareham. This is part of a corridor of over 400 acres of the last remaining pristine forested Pine Barrens forest stretching from the iconic, biodiversity hotspot at the Frogfoot Reservoir in Plymouth down the Wankirko River to Buzzards Bay. AD Makepeace has started strip mining and logging in Plymouth and plans to continue through Wareham to Charge Pond Road.



Photo: A.D. Makepeace Cranberry Co., Wareham MA, July 2023. Industrial scale logging operation that has no record of required state and local approvals.



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Makepeace, the cranberry company has a deal with New Leaf Energy (formerly Borrego Solar) for industrial ground mounted solar projects and [sand mining](#) involving 200 acres in Wareham. Permits for the solar projects are stalled by [legal and local regulatory challenges](#). The company's CEO and President describes the cranberry growers development plans that consist of clearing the land and sometimes mining, leasing for solar, then when the solar company takes out its "junk" putting in subdivision roads.

In November 2022, a Ten Residents Group issued a [Notice of Intent to Sue](#) the Town, AD Makepeace and Read Custom Soils under the state's Citizen Suit Law in November 2022, to stop Makepeace's destructive mining operations and for the back payment of over \$600,000 in fees for historic unpermitted mining operations. Despite a nearly unanimous Town Meeting vote to audit Makepeace's sand removal in 2022, and a vote in April 2023 to allocate the money to do so, the Town of Wareham has done nothing.

The Town of Carver Earth Removal Committee that issues permits for sand and gravel mining to cranberry companies under the [ruse of "agriculture"](#) is under investigation by the [Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General](#) for fraud. Several mining companies and local officials are also under investigation. Carver's Earth Removal Committee recently [quit](#), following the sudden resignation of other members including the long-time chair, John Garretson III of Slocum Gibbs Cranberry, who is a business associate of Makepeace.

In 2019, the Carver Earth Removal Committee issued Makepeace a permit to extract about \$ 8 million worth of sand and gravel under the pretense of creating a water supply pond for cranberry bogs at one of the many many sites around the region. The 27-acre pond on Hammond Street is one of many bog projects that have never been shown to be a legitimate "agricultural" and that has obliterated pristine upland Interior Forests listed on the state's natural resource inventory. New [drone video from July 21, 2023](#) shows the vast expanse of Makepeace's destruction claiming this 27-acre pond is cranberry agriculture. In 2021, Makepeace's CEO and President told the Carver Zoning Board of Appeals that even though the company has been mining the land in Carver for over a decade, the [cranberry bogs are ongoing](#).



Photo above: Jade, who has multigenerational roots in Wareham wants to see forests and ponds preserved not strip mined, holds a sign at the July 22, 2023 rally in Wareham MA.

At its annual Town Meeting in April, 2023, Carver Concerned Citizens petitioned for a [moratorium on sand and gravel mining](#). Fierce opposition from the cranberry industry revealed that the true lifeblood of the [Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association](#) members is sand and gravel mining, not real cranberry farming in almost every instance.

CLWC announced that it has launched a campaign, Sand Wars: Southeastern Massachusetts, and a website identifying at least 70 active and historic mines in the region. Local laws prohibit stand alone commercial mines. All mining must obtain a local permit and qualify as "necessary and incidental" to an agricultural use of the land or a subdivision. According to CLWC, cranberry companies like Makepeace have been falsely claiming that their mining operations are "agriculture" or conducted as ["site preparation"](#) for large solar projects.

Over 55 million cubic yards have been extracted – enough to fill 2.3 million tractor trailer trucks that would circumnavigate the globe 1.3 times. Corruption at the local level has also resulted in permits for massive operations under the ruse of "site preparation" for a subdivision.

[SLT Construction's 20-acre site](#) in Carver leveled the Town's highest hill and is contaminating a great pond with windblown sand. In Plymouth, the Zoning Board of Appeals allowed a massive mining operation by G.Lopes and local developer Scott Spencer to proceed and continue despite documented violations. New drone video on [July 21, 2023](#) shows an Olympic sized swimming pool on the mining site raising questions about whether the operation is mining in the Aquifer.

Sand is the second most extracted commodity on Earth after water. It is used in concrete, glass and many industrial and commercial applications. The world is running out of sand, and over the last five years, the scarcity of this natural resource has caused the price of sand to increase, making the sand and gravel deposits in Southeastern Massachusetts extremely profitable to sell. Thousands of trucks leave the area weekly, permanently taking away trees, soil, silica sand and aggregate materials and with them the region's cultural and environmental heritage and the protection for its drinking water, according to the Coalition.

"Nothing is having a bigger impact on the future of our region than the corrupt and unregulated sand and gravel mining that is taking away the filtration and protection for our drinking water. The United Nations calls sand mining "a silent environmental crisis." It is happening right here, in America's Hometown where the Wampanoag people welcomed the Pilgrims and lived for millennia in harmony with the land. Residents of the region are asking our state leaders for assistance so that we can ensure a livable planet for future generations." These are the globally rare Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens, biodiversity and the Plymouth Carver Sole Source Aquifer, the only drinking water supply for 200,000 people and seven areas towns.

Melissa Harding Ferretti of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe said in a statement, "We have called this land home for thousands of years. -- Our ancestors are buried here -- and our descendants can still be found here today -- along with the many other tribal communities and direct descendants of other Tribes throughout the Commonwealth." A [video explains](#) the impact of sand and gravel mining on Indigenous Native American sites and culture in Southeastern Massachusetts.

Linda Coombs of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head said in a [statement](#) referring to land clearing and sand mining for solar, "In more than 400 years now, we are on the brink of complete destruction. We are not following natural law. If we have to go the extremes of erecting solar farms, wind farms, which make the beautiful world ugly, then we are doing something wrong. Solar farms cannot do for the climate what the trees can do - what the trees removed to install them can do. It simply will not work."



Photo: July 22, 2023: Wareham Town Hall. Craig Simpson of Massachusetts Peace Action joins CLWC to advocate for Indigenous rights.

Local residents living next to the mines are "prisoners in our own homes" due to emissions of silica sand that covers their homes and properties. "We cannot open our windows when we want to due the sand blowing off these open pit mines, the truck traffic a few feet from our front doors, the incessant sand and gravel processing on the site, and vibrations that shake the ground beneath our feet", said Jo Beadling a resident of Meadow Street in Carver MA abutting [the mining site](#) operated by a [defunct cranberry company](#) and [Bette J. Maki and G.Lopes Construction](#).

After a decade of trying to get the Carver Earth Removal Committee to stop the violations and being told to "Go [Find Sand](#)", according to a news report, Beadling and her husband sued the Town and the companies in April, 2023. On July 21, 2023, a Superior Court judge denied the Beadlings' request for an injunction, saying they had not met the legal standard of showing "irreparable harm" for an injunction and that the Carver Earth Removal Bylaw allows mining on land zoned residential-agricultural without showing that the use is actually agricultural. "This decision is legally and factually flawed and we will be appealing," said volunteer lawyer Meg Sheehan, representing the Beadlings. "The towns, the state and the courts all side with the cranberry industry that claims this is just cranberry farming. It is anything but. These companies use the myth of the quaint New England cranberry farmer to cover up what is a criminal racketeering enterprise exploiting our sand deposits and our communities."

"The cranberry industry has been in a death spiral for 20 years: consumers are rejecting their sugar-laden products. Ocean Spray cranberry juice has [more sugar than a cola](#) or Red Bull drink and "Craisins" are like putting sugary Mike and Ike's candy on your salad. We are dealing with what is known as the "sand mafia" according to [Forbes Magazine](#) -- not cranberry farmers. It's time for local and state officials, politicians and judges to wake up and face the facts," said Sheehan. Over the last 150 years, the cranberry industry has drained and diked over 10,000 acres in the region for bogs, and leveled hills to do so. "The market for cranberries is dead, the state is spending millions on restoring old bogs to wetlands such as [Tidmarsh Farm](#) -- yet the Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources is giving cranberry bog grants to some of the region's biggest strip miners. Even Tidmarsh Farm's bogs were created by a massive strip mining operation of up to 500,000 cubic yards under an "agricultural" permit from Plymouth to create a few acres of bogs.

"Enough is enough," said Jo Beadling. Her neighbor Judy Pratt echoed her statements holding a sign outside Town Hall on Saturday saying, "WE DON'T DIG ILLEGAL SAND MINING." Pratt, a nurse who works a night shift says she can't sleep or rest during the day due to the relentless noise and vibration from the nearby sand and gravel mining operation and the truck traffic past her home.



Photo above: Carver, MA, 2023. Sand covering car belonging to resident on Meadow Street. The residents have endured this impact from the Maki-Lopes mining site since 2011. In March, 2023, the Carver Earth Removal Committee extended the mining permit indefinitely.



Photo above: Carver MA resident Judy Pratt of Meadow Street holds a sign at the July 22, 2023 rally in Wareham, MA. Beadling lives next to an illegal mining operation excavating sand and gravel in the Plymouth Carver Sole Source Aquifer.

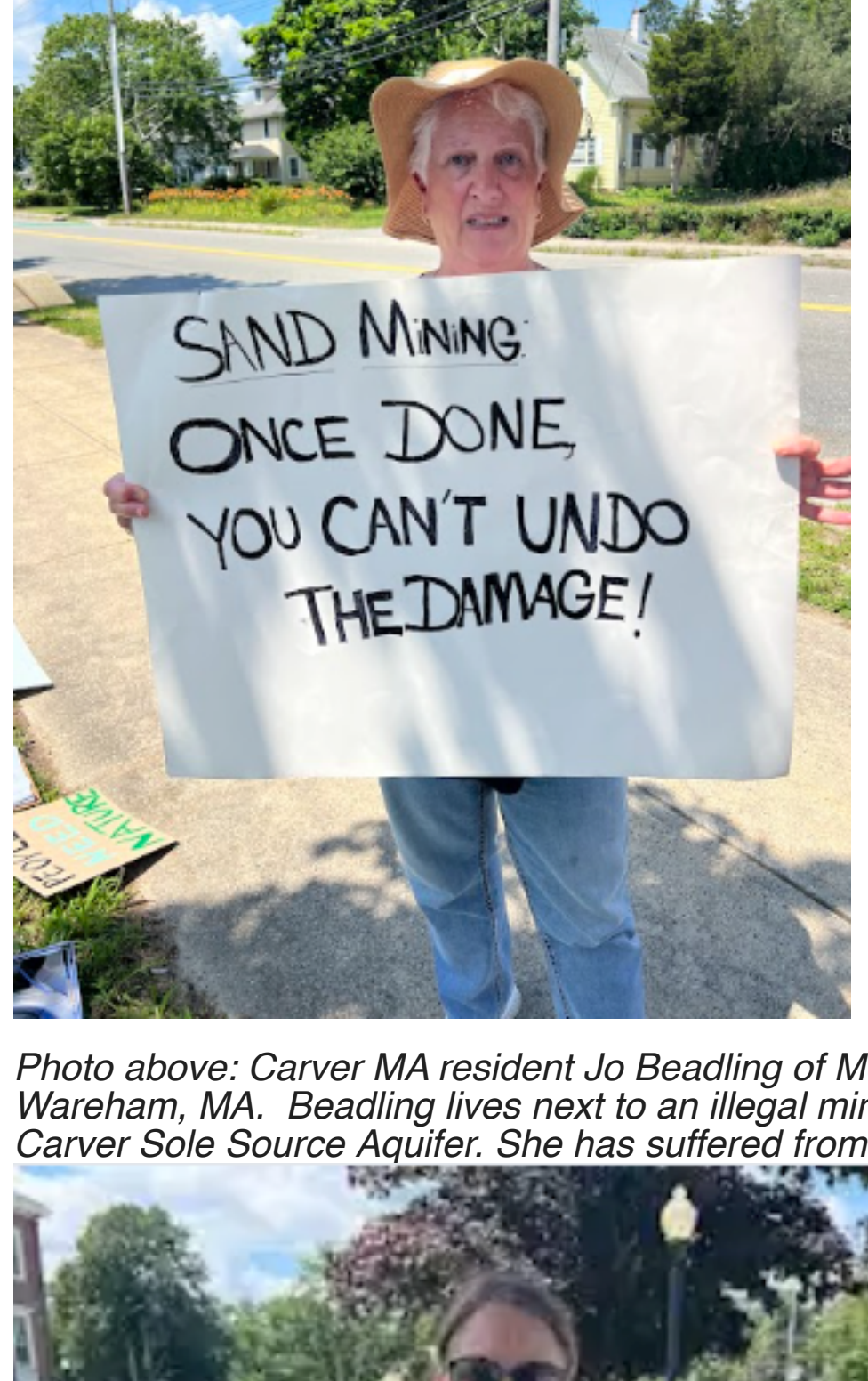


Photo above: Carver MA resident Jo Beadling of Meadow Street holds a sign at the July 22, 2023 rally in Wareham, MA. Beadling lives next to an illegal mining operation excavating sand and gravel in the Plymouth Carver Sole Source Aquifer. She has suffered from emissions of sand on her property for over a decade.



Photo above: A Wareham resident living along the route used by Read Custom Soils LLC to export sand and gravel to interstate highways from mining pits along Federal and Tihonet Roads in Carver and Wareham holds a sign at the rally on July 22, 2023.