



USFWS Native American Liaison D.J. Monette hands over keys to Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council.  
Credit: MWT

## **Boat Donation Will Bring Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Members Back to Nature** **By Maddie List**

In July 2010, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe of Cape Cod received a boat from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) that will be used to help bring its members closer to nature and back to their roots.

The Tribe's Natural Resources Department will begin a new program that will focus on getting Tribal members away from their computers and out into the natural world. The program will resemble the USFWS's national Connecting People with Nature program that promotes positive relationships with nature through outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, fishing and hunting.

Traditionally, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe was dependent on the natural world and survived mainly by fishing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new advances in technology have begun to pull members of the Tribe away from the outdoors and keep them from enjoying nature. The Tribal Council felt that a boat would not only help reconnect its members with nature, but to their history as well.

USFWS Native American Liaison D.J. Monette located a boat at the New England field office that was no longer needed there. The BIA had an existing contract with the Wampanoag's Natural Resource Department that would allow the boat to be donated. The USFWS and the BIA collaborated their efforts to deliver the boat to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe.

Monette met with Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell, Tribal Vice Chairman Aaron Tobey, Natural Resources Department Director Quan Tobey, and Natural Resources Department Assistant Director Chuckie Green to officially hand over the keys to the boat. Also present was Norman Dias, Tribal elder and member of the Fish, Wildlife and Natural Resources Commission and his grandson; a hopeful participant in the Tribe's new program. The Tribe was extremely grateful for the donation and excited to start getting its members back into nature. The boat will be used for various aspects of the program including fishing, and performing environmental services such as conducting water quality tests.

Monette believes that the boat will have a positive impact on the Tribe and its relationship with nature. "This boat will help the Tribe out in terms of initiating its own Connecting People with Nature program as well as benefiting the Natural Resources Department and its efforts to preserve the environment," he said.