



July 29, 2020

Dear members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

We know you face an important decision regarding the future of playing fields at MVRHS. Island Grown Initiative (IGI) has not been directly engaged in these discussions, and defer to the experts on maintenance, costs, and the impact on sports play.

But for thirteen years, IGI has been fully committed and engaged in our local schools to help raise a new generation of islanders connected to the local food system and to the natural world, through school gardens, healthy food in school meals, farm field trips, and in-classroom learning. We believe strongly that regenerative land care practices, on our island farms, gardens, and fields are the best approach for environmental health, community wellness, and our children's future. We encourage you to consider a focus on regenerative land care as you make a decision about the future of the playing fields at MVRHS.

Regenerative land care practices include:

- Keeping the ground covered with a living carpet of plant life at all times;
- Minimizing tillage and soil disturbance; and
- Applying compost and other soil building materials to restore the plant/soil microbiome.

By implementing these practices, soil health increases, and along with its soil water holding capacity, making heavily used fields more resilient and better capable of withstanding the heavy rain events, droughts, heat waves, and cold snaps that are the reality of our changing climate.

Regenerative land care also sequesters carbon in the soil, a critical strategy for reversing climate change, perhaps the most significant threat to our children's future.

We have made a commitment to teaching regenerative practices to island children in our Island Grown Schools program, implementing these practices in our school gardens, and also on our own farm up the street from the high school.

As you weigh the best decision for the future of the school's fields and grounds, we encourage you to consider joining IGI in a commitment to regenerative land management. We are here to serve as a resource and support in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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