



Penn Program in  
Environmental Humanities



Penn  
Arts & Sciences

## PPEH Lab at WetLand Launches in the Schuylkill River in partnership with Bartram's Garden

Press Release for immediate distribution

WetLand is both a houseboat and an art project, and it has returned to Philly to answer our questions and ask us some new ones. From October 5th to November 7th, this lab for experimentation in sustainable living will float on the Schuylkill River, piloting cooperative projects between the University of Pennsylvania's Program in Environmental Humanities, Bartram's Garden, WetLand's creator, artist Mary Mattingly, and other community collaborators. WetLand is a floating studio, residence and open public space that resembles a partly-submerged house. It contains rainwater collection systems, solar energy, a beehive, and edible gardens around the perimeter.

On the Lower Schuylkill, amidst birdlife and oil refineries, between river paths and the Schuylkill Expressway, WetLand's voyages are meant to spark conversations about humans and nature, about art, architecture, and ecology, and about the larger question of how we generate knowledge to address the problems we face in an era of warmer temperatures and rising sea level. Humans are now the most significant natural force in this new era: the anthropocene. You are welcome aboard on our watery journey. Check social media for #WetLand and #welcomeaboard to visit the floating experiment and get involved.

A sculptor, Mattingly originally built this watery habitat with utopian leanings funded by the James L. Knight Foundation. During Fringe Festival 2014, WetLand was on the Delaware River, where it functioned as a public space and art residency for six weeks. Over 45,000 people visited. One year later, now on the Schuylkill, it provides a platform for hands-on workshops and experimental theatre, for scholars' symposia and artists' studios, for fine dining and students' attempts to live off the grid. A second phase of Schuylkill-based collaboration is in the planning for spring 2016.

Mary Mattingly's work focuses on themes of human and animal habitation, natural systems, environmental justice and distribution of natural resources. Beginning in childhood, Mattingly has honed an awareness of water pollution, water rights and access - from her hometown in Rockville, Connecticut, to privatization issues in Bolivia, to water access in her adopted city of New York.

Her work has earned her an array of prizes, media attention, and opportunities to present her messages around the globe.

Among WetLand's 45,000+ visitors last year was Bethany Wiggin, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and co-founder of Penn's Program for Environmental Humanities (PPEH). At Penn, Wiggin writes and teaches about utopian theory and practice, and she glimpsed in Mattingly and WetLand co-conspirators for experiments in sustainable living and learning. Exploring the boat with Penn students and colleagues, Wiggin saw how it used cutting-edge and ancient technology to make a cozy d-i-y home, and how visitors absorbed a new understanding of riverside ecology from its built-in introduction to wetland systems. Mattingly, Wiggin, Penn's Sustainability Director, Dan Garofalo, and Penn students soon decided to establish the PPEH Lab at WetLand, creating a floating platform to incubate projects about hope, mourning, ecology, art, health, and community on the Schuylkill. The Lab is now also in partnership with Bartram's Garden and more extensive programming is in the works. Mattingly is the Penn Program's first artist in residence. You are #welcomeaboard.

To learn more about the PPEH Lab at WetLand and about how to get involved, visit [ppehlab.org/wetland](http://ppehlab.org/wetland) and look for us on social media.