



# PECONIC LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

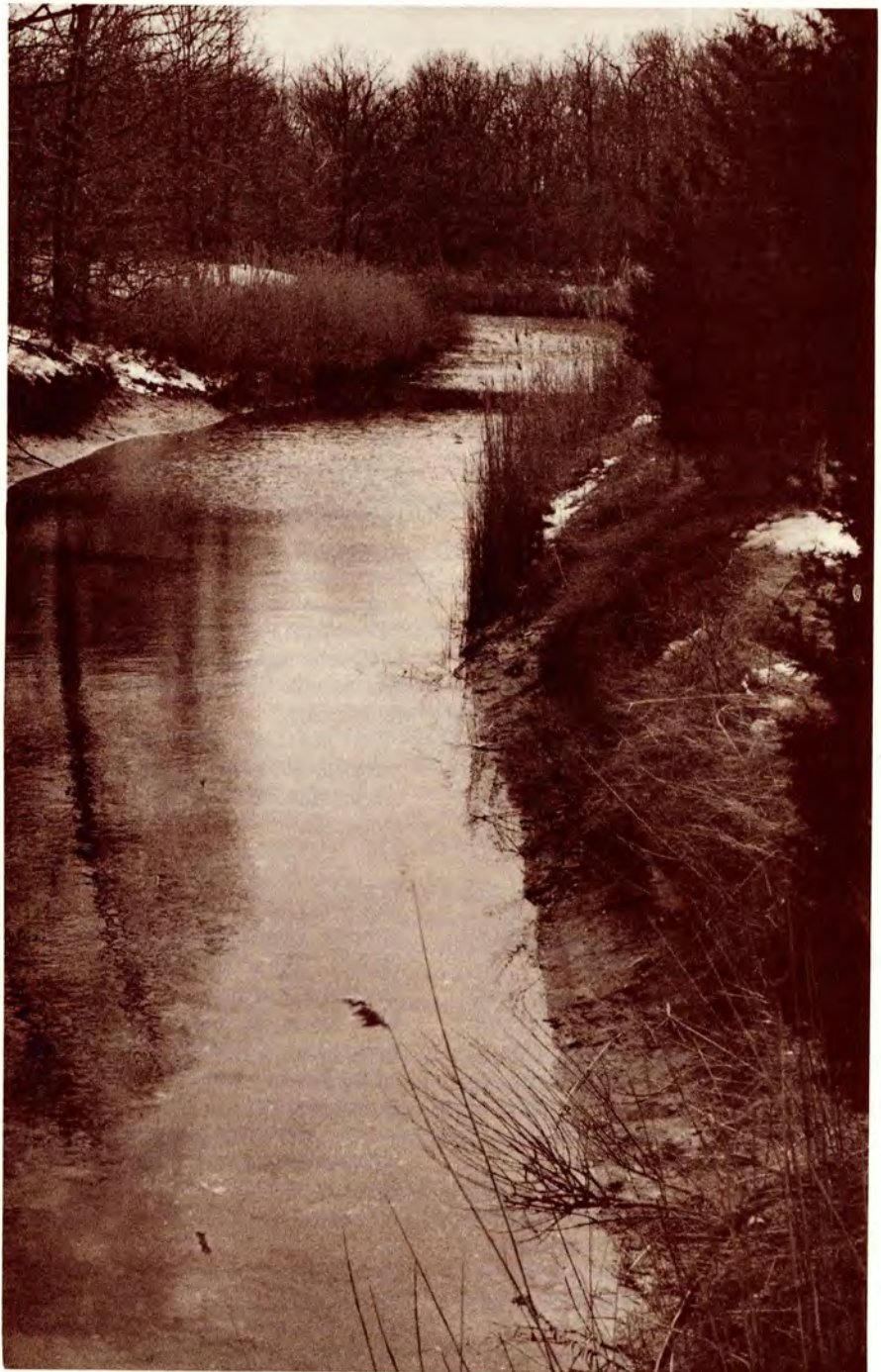
VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

APRIL/MAY 1992

## Land Trust Helps Protect Sea Farm

The Peconic Land Trust is always looking for unique conservation opportunities. So it should come as no surprise to learn that the Trust recently expanded its farmland preservation efforts to include, of all things, a "sea farm." The sea farm is actually a mariculture facility located on a 22-acre waterfront site on Great Hog Neck in the Town of Southold. The property, owned by the Plock family, includes wetlands and woodlands that should be preserved as open space. Equally important, the site includes a shellfish seed grow-out facility that was operated by the Plock family from the 1940's through the 1970's. As a result of successful Trust negotiations, the Plock family has agreed to underwrite the renovation of the sea farm facility so that it may be used in the future for limited research, educational and other appropriate shellfish dependent uses.

The Trust is employing the conservation tool of "limited development" as a means to preserve the facility as well as the contiguous open space and wetlands. The limited development approach enables the landowner to both realize the equity in the land and to benefit from the donation of significant open space. In this instance, the property has an estimated yield of 14 units under zoning. The Plock family will retain 7 acres for a 4-lot subdivision while the remaining 15 acres will be conveyed to the Trust as the Plock Shellfisher Preserve. Given the substantial reduction in density, the 4-lot plan should be approved more quickly with less improvement costs than a full-yield plan of 14 lots. In addition, the 4 lots will benefit from the privacy and exclusivity provided by the adjacent preserve.



*Photograph by Roger Smith*

*continued next page*



Photograph by Roger Smith

## Land Trust Helps Protect Sea Farm *continued from cover*

John Halsey, President of the Trust, believes that the limited development tool is ideal in this situation. "There are simply no public or private funds available to acquire and restore this property in its entirety. The limited development can provide a significant public benefit through the revitalization of the mariculture facility and adjacent open space."

According to Timothy Caufield, the Trust's Assistant Director, the facility was used in the past for a variety of mariculture activities and played a significant role in Southold Town's shellfish industry. "This is an important site. We view it not only as an open space project but also as a part of the continued effort to preserve and enhance an important town industry."

Marine science experts from the Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program agree. According to Gregg Rivara of the Marine program, the revived facility can serve a number of purposes. "The bay has been plagued by increased shellfish growing area closures, and the waters of this facility can be used to cleanse affected shellfish that would otherwise be unmarketable," he says. "Another use of the facility is for public and/or private shellfish nursery culture."

In addition, the facility can be

used for educational and scientific purposes. Rivara says that, through the Suffolk County Marine Environmental Learning Center, research can be conducted and visitors can be brought in to learn how mariculture works. "This is an irreplaceable facility," Rivara stated. "There's no way to build that site today. It's really one of a kind, and it's great that it will once again be alive and functioning."

John L. Plock Sr., who originally developed the site for research and mariculture, died in January of 1987 after more than 50 years in the shellfish business. His wife, Anna K. Plock along with members of her family, is pleased that a part of the family tradition will continue through revitalization of the sea farm facility. "We are delighted that the Trust has agreed to manage the property," says Mrs. Plock. "It is our hope that it can be used as a research facility for the education and benefit of many future generations."

"It's very gratifying to find one solution that resolves several issues," Halsey concludes. "In this case, thanks to the generosity and far-sightedness of the Plock family and their advisors, we have laid the groundwork for the family and the community-at-large to benefit from a unique facility and its adjacent open space at no public cost."

## County Affirms Trust Partnership

In a resolution passed in March of this year, the Suffolk County Legislature designated the Peconic Land Trust to negotiate on the County's behalf for a number of parcels it hopes to acquire. These parcels involve land that the county would like to preserve as open space and that contain sources of fresh drinking water.

This is the first time the Trust has been so designated, although it has received approval in the past to negotiate for specific parcels. The resolution authorizes the Trust to target 16 acquisitions in five East End areas: 7 in the Laurel Lake area in Southold, 2 in Tuckahoe Woods of Southampton, 1 adjacent to the East Hampton Airport, 5 at Chatfield's Hole in East Hampton, and 1 in Stony Hill Woods in Amagansett.

The Laurel Lake area is of particular interest to the County and Southold Town officials. The County Legislators are hopeful that the Trust can use all of its tools to stretch the limited public dollars available for acquisition.

"This is the best source of potable water on the North Fork," says Legislator Michael Caracciolo, who represents the North Fork in the County Legislature. "We are utilizing the Trust's expertise with conservation techniques to meet landowners' needs while significantly reducing the cost to the County." If the Trust is successful in negotiating these acquisitions, it will be the first time that funds from the County's Drinking Water Protection Program will have been spent in Southold Town. The Laurel Lake area is considered the deepest water recharge area in Southold Town. Negotiations have just begun and could take a year or more to complete.

According to Randall Parsons, a Trust consultant, the Legislature's resolution has implications that go beyond Laurel Lake and the other parcels named in the resolution. "The resolution gives administrative authority to the County Attorney and the Director of the County Real Estate Division to authorize the Trust to begin negotiations on any approved parcel," Parsons says. "This can speed up the process of land acquisition where important parcels are threatened with development."

## President's Column: Reassessment

The current controversy over reassessment in Southampton Town is extremely important to all communities of Eastern Long Island. If it can happen in Southampton, it may very well occur in Southold, East Hampton, and elsewhere in the future. The reassessment process began in Southampton as the result of a court decision that forced the discontinuation of the Town's longstanding practice of reassessing improved property at the time it was sold. With the tremendous appreciation in property values that took place during the 1970's and 1980's, a wide disparity resulted between assessments of recently purchased property and that which had been in the same ownership for many years. In order to rectify these apparent inequities, Southampton Town embarked upon a process to reassess all property at its full fair market value.

The issue of how we tax vacant land, whether wetlands, farmland, or woodland, is central to our commitment to preserve the rural character of our communities. After all, Eastern Long Island's tourist economy has flourished as a consequence of the open space, wetlands, and farming that has graced our landscape for centuries. Unfortunately, Southampton Town's reassessment may very well undermine its own underpinnings. In an effort to provide a more equitable assessment for its property owners, the Town has jeopardized the future of its wetlands, farmland, or woodland by dramatically increasing the tax liability on vacant land. This approach is fundamentally flawed and must be corrected for the following reasons:

1. Wetlands, farmland, or woodland require far less government and other public services than improved property. Thus, the conversion of vacant land to other uses costs the taxpayer far more in the long run. The Town gains tax revenues on vacant land and loses it on improved property.

2. By drastically increasing the property tax burden on wetlands, farmland, and woodland, the Town is promoting the conversion of such land to residential and/or commercial uses. The Town should reward owners for keeping their land vacant rather than penalize them.

There are a number of tools that Southampton Town and its residents have at their disposal to reduce the tax burden

on wetlands, farmland, and woodland. Certainly, the donation of perpetual conservation easements to the Town or qualified conservation organizations such as the Peconic Land Trust can be of great benefit. Conservation easements are very flexible tools that can be applied to all or part of one's property. The use of the land subject to such easements is limited from future development in perpetuity. Therefore, the value of the land is significantly reduced for property tax purposes. Such easements may also have significant benefits for income tax and estate tax purposes.

Many landowners, however, may not be in a position to give up a significant portion of the equity that resides in their land. For these landowners, the Town's term easement program may well be the answer. Through this program, landowners that commit to preserving their land for 5 years or more are entitled to a reduction in their property taxes. The longer the commitment in time, the greater the tax reduction. This program can be very effective provided that the penalties for future conversion are minimal. The Town is presently

exploring an additional program specifically for farmland. In this instance, farmland that has been in production the previous two years could be eligible for a reduced assessment on an annual basis. This new program has the potential to be of great significance to the farm community if the property tax on such land is low enough for agriculture to be financially viable.

All of the tools described herein have the potential to help many land-owners facing reassessment. It is imperative, however, for Southampton Town to do whatever it takes to assure that the owners of wetlands, farmland, and woodland are not forced to sell such land to pay their property taxes. Open space is a prudent investment and perhaps one of the best methods of controlling the costs of government and other public services. In short, rather than promoting the loss of our open space and farmland through reassessment, Southampton Town should set an example by recognizing its significance and taxing it accordingly. The future of our rural character throughout Eastern Long Island is at stake.

### Have You Ever Been A Farmer?

(The following is a statement that was made at a Southampton Town public meeting by Richard G. Hendrickson, a local farmer, in response to the new tax reassessment.)

There have been taxes for 1993, on marginal productive farm land that we own, raised one thousand per cent. The home farm more than doubled. Just let me say this - that rate is impossible to meet. No one can raise any legal crop on Long Island's rich sandy loam soil and meet expenses, let alone show a profit.

The soil is what it is all about and the only thing that is worth anything. The land. This rich Bridgehampton sandy loam soil has made a living for all of us since 1640. But it can - no more - with your new assessment. For years now the town and county have cried for open space. Tax all productive farmland at a reasonable figure and we will give you open space. If we in the future want or have to sell, then and only then, the higher rates should be paid.

Our town is in debt, our county is in debt, our state is in debt, and our country is in debt; but we the small individual, in debt or not, have to pay our taxes each year.

We the small farmers and businessmen are what has made America, and don't forget that. Only in recent years has it been the large corporations which hire the thousands through speculation, with inflation, go through bankruptcy - then put those workers on the relief rolls.

If we are forced to sell, and prices are much lower now, the large speculators will move in, get all kinds of variances, and exploit the East End.

I would hate to think that, in the future, every quart of strawberries or ear of sweetcorn I eat had to be raised in Pennsylvania or further west, and you know as well as I, it will taste like wet cardboard.

You give us a fair and reasonable tax and we will give you open space, strawberries, sweetcorn, melons, waving fields of grain, beautiful flowers, and those beautiful lush green fields of cover crops that are so pretty during the dull days of winter, not to forget the ducks and geese who beautify our landscape.

I borrowed the \$10,000 to pay taxes and make ends meet this past year. I cannot do it again. We are depending on you. Don't make Eastern Long Island the asphalt, steel and cement jungle like the west end.

## North Fork Planning Conference

Last summer the US/UK Countryside Stewardship Exchange sponsored a team of eight planning consultants, four from the United Kingdom and four from the United States, to conduct a study of the North Fork of Long Island. At the invitation of the North Fork Planning Conference, the team looked closely at the Town of Southold's past and present land use patterns and prepared a report with recommendations about the future stewardship of the town. The team's work provided an opportunity for an objective view of the comprehensive planning that, if implemented, can strengthen the local economy while also preserving the integrity and special character of our natural landscapes.

"When you look at the areas to our west, you get the impression there never was a clear will to do anything about what was happening to the land," says Tom Wickham, a Southold farmer and Town Board member. "In most communities there was support for growth but not much concern about open spaces; I guess they got what they wanted. Here on the North Fork, we want to maintain a growing local economy while also retaining the rural qualities that make the area so special."

Among the report's conclusions is this statement: "The North Fork area is one of scenic beauty and rich resources, both natural and human, with a deep and meaningful history, truly one of America's great places. Yet the North Fork is under threat of drastic change spreading east from the New York metropolitan area. Unfortunately local controls are inadequate to cope with these changes. New directions and programs are needed to change this situation for the benefit of the entire community."

The report makes eleven specific recommendations (included here) on how Southold Town can preserve its special character and traditions. These recommendations focus on six basic areas: farmland protection, concentrating development



*Photograph by Paul Stoutenburgh*

within villages and hamlets, provision of affordable housing, preservation of the community's historic and rural character, economic development based on the existing resources of the area, and maintenance and improvement of the area's environmental quality.

According to Michael Zweig, Chairmen of the North Fork Planning Conference, the real work is just beginning. "I'm glad the report was done. Now the tough part begins, which is trying to put the recommendations into practice." Mr. Zweig is optimistic about the future of the North Fork and the recommendations of the Stewardship Exchange. He maintains that land

preservation is essential to the economic health of the area. "The recommendations are not just about aesthetics, they provide a good starting point for a balanced policy of economic development which can help maintain and strengthen the entire community."

North Fork residents can obtain a copy of the full 35-page Stewardship Exchange report by contacting the North Fork Planning Conference at 765-1604 or Southold Town Hall at 765-1800. Copies of the report, as well as a video presentation of the Stewardship Exchange's formal report to the town in July of last year are also available at local North Fork libraries.



# REPRINT OF US/UK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Report by the 1991 US/UK Countryside Stewardship Exchange Team to the People of the Town of Southold, North Fork, Long Island

## - Executive Summary -

**Introduction**—From July 14 - 18 a professional team of eight consultants, four from the United Kingdom and four from the United States, conducted a study of the North Fork area of Long Island. The Team members were participants in the 1991 US/UK Countryside Stewardship Exchange, a program which provides pro bono consultant services to selected case study sites to address the issues of sustainable economic development and countryside stewardship. The North Fork was one of seven case study sites participating in the 1991 Exchange.

At the invitation of the North Fork Planning Conference, the US/UK Team was asked to address four issues important to the future of the area:

1. Farmland Retention
2. Water Quality
3. Tourism Development
4. Affordable Housing

After an intense four days of discovery and discussion the Team presented its conclusions and recommendations to a public meeting at the Southold Town Hall. The following summarizes these findings.

**Conclusions**—The North Fork area is one of scenic beauty and rich resources, both natural and human, with a deep and meaningful history, truly one of America's great places. Yet the North Fork is under threat of drastic change spreading east from the New York metropolitan area. Unfortunately, local controls are inadequate to cope with these changes. New directions and programs are needed now to change this situation for the benefit of the entire community.

The most important conclusion of the Team in this regard is that the people of Southold share a vision in some detail of what they would like the future of their community to be, but they currently lack the programs to get there. This overall conclusion led the Team to make the following recommendations:



1 - In order to be clearer and more efficient in dealing with land use and development issues the Southold Town Board should streamline governmental organization and establish a new planning process based on consensus around the Town's shared vision.

2 - Community-oriented non-profit organizations in the Town of Southold and the North Fork area should form an Action Coalition to promote their shared vision and to develop interrelated projects to achieve that vision. The Coalition would take a positive, non-confrontational approach to community issues and needs, working cooperatively with each other and with government.

3 - The Town of Southold should work in cooperation with the Action Coalition to restate in clear, specific terms Southold Town's shared vision, concentrating on six basic areas: farmland protection; concentrating development within villages and hamlets; provision of quality affordable housing; preservation of the community's historic and rural character; economic development based on the existing resources of the area; and maintenance and improvement of the area's environmental quality. The concept of Community Stewardship which integrates these concerns should be emphasized.

4 - The Town of Southold together with the Action Coalition and others, should create a visual map—a blueprint—of the Town based on the six basic areas of its shared vision.

5 - The Town of Southold in cooperation with the Action Coalition should institute creative, practical steps to implement the blueprint of its shared vision.

6 - The Town of Southold should consider a combined Purchase of Development Rights and a Transfer of Development Rights Program.

7 - The Town of Southold should

consider expanding the current tax abatement program for farmland into a working farm tax abatement program which would eliminate property taxes on farmland and farm buildings in return for a right of first purchase on the land if it is ever to go out of farming use.

8 - The Town of Southold should develop a capital improvement program for water and sewers limited to those areas designated for growth in and around villages and hamlets and to protect surface and ground water quality. Priority should be given to eliminating pollution in creeks and bays, identifying and eliminating non-point sources of pollution and solving the "brown tide" problem in Peconic Bay.

9 - The Town of Southold should create an economic plan which promotes sustainable development, using existing agricultural, water-related recreational, fishing, historical and cultural assets, and the area's unique sense of place as its theme. Tourism would play a central part in this plan.

10 - The Town of Southold should develop an affordable housing plan which would encourage a diversity of quality housing, including rental units, equity-sharing concepts and ownership, designed to be in keeping with the historic character of the area and mostly located within existing villages and hamlets. This plan should be developed in partnership with the Action Coalition and with the neighborhoods in which housing would be located.

11 - In order to implement these recommendations, leadership must be provided. In some areas town government will have to take action, in others private resources can be more effective. Southold Town government in cooperation with the Action Coalition should develop a mutually agreed upon strategic action plan for implementation of specific tasks, assigning responsibility for leadership in fulfilling them to the appropriate agency or organization.



Photograph by Paul Stoutenburgh

## Historic Lore: Southold Shellfishing Tradition

It is not surprising that the early settlers of the Town of Southold looked to the waters for sustenance and, eventually, an industry. Town waters cover a very large area, from "Up Bay" (as old-timers refer to the Great Peconic Bay around Jamesport) to the waters of the Long Island Sound which surround Fishers Island.

The Indians of the North Fork fished these waters for centuries before the arrival of the English settlers. Mounds of oyster and clam shells have been found near the remnants of Indian villages, such as the one found near "Pete's Neck," which is along Narrow River Road in Orient off Hallock's Bay. Town records indicate that shellfishing techniques were taught to the settlers by the Indians, and

early on shellfishing became a regular occupation.

Shellfishing complemented the other forms of fishing that comprised the town's mariculture industry. The term, "bunkers," otherwise known as menhaden, is mentioned as far back as 1790 when seine nets were dragged from the beach and the fish were allowed to rot in the fields to become fertilizer. Later, fish factories were established in the town, usually in isolated locations due to their "cooking aroma." Bunker boats would stay out in the water for a week or more, then return fully loaded. One of the last boats was a steamer, Ocean View, which often put in to Greenport. It sank in the fury of the Hurricane of 1938, when Captain Roy Griffing of Shelter Island

and his crew perished.

In addition to offshore fishing, the creeks of Southold Town have been bountiful sources of crabbing, scalloping, and eeling. But it's the oyster industry that provided employment for generations, and not just for local residents. During the Depression, workers came to Greenport from all over New England and as far away as Virginia for employment, fortunately at a time when there were an abundance of oysters. Trains would leave the Long Island Railroad yards in Greenport towing refrigerated cars filled with oysters bound for destinations across the country. By truck, the Reich Brothers Trucking Company sent barrels of oysters in the shell daily to New York City. And the Ellsworth Oyster Company was popular at holiday time as it sent thousands of small tin containers of oysters.



Photograph by Paul Stoutenburgh

Fleets of scallop boats out of Greenport, South Jamesport, and New Suffolk daily brought in catches to be opened by both adults and their children at the many scallop shops that lined the shore. Each boat brought in as much or more than 25 bushels, and on a good day there could be 100 boats out on the bay. An example of one of these boats remains: called the Modesty, it is on exhibit at the Suffolk Marine Museum in West Sayville.

Like its southern counterpart, the North Fork has a rich shellfishing tradition. Unfortunately, like the South Fork, the waters of Southold Town have suffered due to the brown tide, which first appeared in 1985. Nevertheless, the men and women who work our bays have persevered, and continue to maintain a tradition of the past which will surely be a guide to the future shellfishing industry.

(Special thanks to the Southold Town Historian, Antonia Booth, for providing information.)



Photograph by Paul Stoutenburgh



### Pe • c ó • ni • nic, *n.*

1. a picnic,
2. a friendly gathering in celebration of land preservation,
3. an acknowledgement of Peconic Land Trust Supporters.

Please set aside Sunday, June 14th on your calendar because that's when the Peconic Land Trust's annual "Peconinic" will take place on the Wickham family farm in Cutchogue, Town of Southold. The annual Peconinic is the Trust's way of saying thank you to the many people who have supported the Trust's conservation efforts throughout the years. There is no charge, just bring yourselves, your loved ones and your favorite dishes. Beverages, dessert, tables and chairs, and music will be provided by the Trust.

According to Tom Wickham, this historic farm contains bay frontage, creek frontage, wetlands, farm fields and orchards — many of the important natural features that Trust supporters do their best to preserve. This is the first time the Peconinic will be held on the North Fork, and Tom expects that "people will see it's a little different from the South Fork."

The Wickham family is ready to play the role of host. "We'll be happy to have the Trust's supporters over for a visit," Tom says. "This is a working, operating farm that's been in the family for many generations. I'd like people to tour the farm fields and greenhouses to see the wide variety of fruits and vegetable the farm produces. An event like this can help reinforce why people support the Trust's conservation efforts."

If you want more information about the Peconinic, want to make sure your invitation will be in the mail, or if want to become a Trust supporter in time to participate in this most enjoyable event, call the Peconic Land Trust at (516) 283-3195.

## Potential Sale Of Refuges

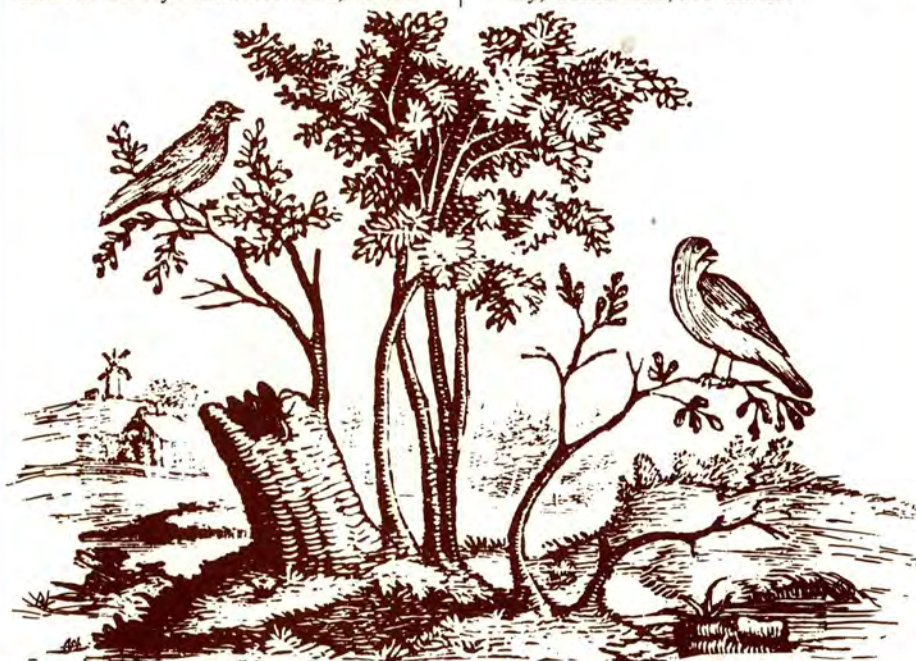
In spite of assurances to the contrary, it appears that efforts by the U.S. Department of the Interior to sell wildlife refuges on Long Island may still be alive. The refuges targeted for elimination include the Atlantic Double Dunes in Amagansett, Conscience Point in North Sea, Morton Wildlife Refuge in Noyac, Seatuck in Islip, and Target Rock in Huntington. An audit by the Interior Department claimed these refuges were underutilized and might be better off sold to private interests.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced March 12 that the Long Island refuges are too valuable to sell and should remain in the Federal system. According to the Service, Long Island's wildlife refuge system consists of 7,000 acres of woodlands, beaches, and marshlands that last year attracted 356,000 hik-

ers, anglers, and birdwatchers. This was an increase of 4,000 visitors over 1990.

The audit prepared by the Interior Department did not take into account what would happen to the wildlife and marine life contained in the refuges. Neither did it consider how the thousands of annual visitors would feel upon the closure of these sites. Indeed, the sale of these refuges would be a blow to the credibility of future conservation efforts by the federal government. With such open space on Long Island truly finite and irreplaceable, it is astonishing to think that the federal government would consider the sale of these sites.

You can express your opinion on the future of the Long Island refuges by writing to Congressman George Hochbrueckner at 3771 Nesconset Highway, Centereach, NY 11720.



### SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE PECONIC LAND TRUST!!

The Trust provides farmers and other landowners with unique alternatives to development. Our gifts to you of farmland and open space are dependent upon your gifts to us. Please make a contribution today. Thank you very much!!

\$5000 \_\_\_ \$2500 \_\_\_ \$1000 \_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of the last financial report filed with the Department of State may be obtained by writing to: 1) New York State, Department of State, Office of Charities Registration, Albany, N.Y. 12231, or 2) Peconic Land Trust, P.O. Box 2088, Southampton, N.Y. 11968.



**PECONIC LAND TRUST**

**P.O. Box 2088**

**Southampton, N.Y. 11968**



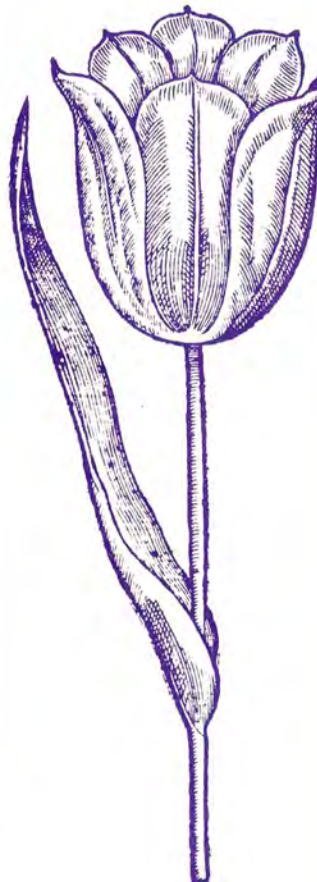
## POSTAL PATRON

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### *Spring Dance*

On the first of the beginning month  
of the pungent season, restless in change,  
the cusp where the snow is an island  
in the melt,  
our frozen boarders retreat inward  
from the wind-sheered  
liquid mirror  
as it reflects the bodies of the trees  
moving as we move  
tall in our spines.  
Now, the water shadows  
open our wintering buds-  
the inner habitat  
of woman's wisdom  
in flux-  
"Let's play!" our limbs say.  
"Let's dance!" say our feet  
moving free of the sun-bright  
snow.

Megan Boyd



### *Mission Statement*

The Peconic Land Trust is a non-profit, tax-exempt conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of farmland and open space on Long Island. To this end, the Trust acquires and manages land as well as easements for conservation purposes. In addition, the Trust assists farmers and other landowners in the identification and implementation of alternatives to outright development.

### **Peconic Land Trust, Inc.**

30 Jagger Lane, P. O. Box 2088  
Southampton, New York 11968  
(516) 283-3195

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