

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

Contact: Yvette DeBow-Salsedo

631.283.3195; 646.284.8028 (cell)

ydebow@peconiclandtrust.org

PECONIC LAND TRUST RECEIVES \$400,000 GRANT FROM NEW YORK STATE FOR HISTORIC SHIPS HOLE FARM IN SMITHTOWN

The grant, announced on December 8, 2011, will assist the Trust in acquiring the historic 23-acre farmstead in Smithtown for use as an agricultural and educational resource in Western Suffolk.

DECEMBER 15, 2011. SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK. John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust, is pleased to announce that the Trust has been awarded a \$400,000 grant from New York State for the acquisition of Ships Hole Farm, a 23-acre historic farmstead located in Smithtown along the Nissequogue River. The grant, part of the State's Strategic Plan and Regional Project Awards, designed to stimulate job growth across the state, was one of 66 awards on Long Island, totaling more than \$101 million.

Dating back to 1820, Ships Hole Farm is one of the last surviving, active farm properties in Western Suffolk County. Owned by the Nicodemus family since 1927, the family has maintained the property as an active farm, even as farming operations in Western Suffolk have diminished over time. In 1986, Richard Nicodemus initiated the farm's preservation by selling the development rights on the land to Suffolk County, with the assistance of the Trust. Today, the heirs of Richard Nicodemus are working with the

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Trust to secure the farm's future and see their family's legacy and conservation ethic carried out for generations to come.

In the short term, the Trust envisions putting the farm back into sustainable agricultural production, coordinating farmer training and education, restoring the property's historic structures, developing hands-on educational programming that focus on the property's unique ecology as well as its working landscape, and developing an interpretative nature trail. To do this, the Trust is working to raise \$1.6 million to acquire the property from the family and to cover the initial costs to establish the working farm. The \$400,000 grant from the State will be applied to that fundraising effort.

"This project is a great example of how the Trust can work with families and the community to protect important assets that represent our agricultural heritage and provide an opportunity for future generations to experience it first hand," said Trust President Halsey.

About the Property

Ships Hole Farm, located along the Nissequogue River in Smithtown, is a 23-acre farmstead dating back to 1820. Begun as a modest family farm, with an original barn and 2-story farmhouse, in the late 19th century the property was expanded with substantial barn additions, the installation of a well and cistern, and other infrastructure improvements. Purchased by Frank Nicodemus in 1927, the farm has been in the Nicodemus family ever since. The house was renovated to its current footprint in 1928. The property was abundant in fruit, vegetables, a draft horse, a riding horse, cows for dairy and calves for beef, sheep, ducks and chickens. The scale of farm activity has

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declined over recent decades, though a portion of the farm is currently leased to a farmer who is raising chickens, sheep and vegetables.

In 1986, Richard Nicodemus sold developments rights on 20 acres of Ships Hole Farm to Suffolk County, retaining the right to create 3 residential lots on Landing Meadow Road. In 1999, those lots were subdivided and sold resulting in the existing configuration of the 23-acre property (20 acres of preserved farmland and 1 three-acre development area with a historic farmhouse).

Immediately adjacent to the Ships Hole Farm to the north along the Nissequogue is a woodland parcel of 16 acres that was purchased by Richard Nicodemus' friend and business associate William Crocker in 1962 from the Nicodemus family. Mr. Crocker subsequently donated a conservation easement on most of the woodland, including frontage on the Nissequogue River to the Peconic Land Trust in 1986; fee title to the easement-protected woodland was donated to the Trust in 1999.

The project to acquire and manage the Ships Hole Farm is part of the Trust's larger Farms for the Future Initiative.

Farms for the Future Initiative

The issue of access to affordable farmland by both established and start-up farmers has become of particular concern within the past decade as the value of farmland – even protected farmland – has climbed beyond that which is affordable to most farmers, whether new or established.

With the support of its donors, the Trust has begun to identify ways to help new farm

operations get off the ground and established growers to expand their businesses with an eye toward their long-term economic health and viability. This initiative includes farmland leases, incubator programs, and sales of land with overlay easements that further limit non-agricultural activities and real estate values.

“Through our Farms for the Future initiative, we hope to ensure that farmland, once conserved, remains in production and available to farmers. If our communities are going to have viable, productive farms, we must take steps that go beyond farmland protection. We must assure that both farmers and the business of farming can continue,” explained Trust President Halsey.

Objectives of the Farms for the Future Initiative:

- Keep conserved agricultural land actively farmed
- Create opportunities for farms to start-up and/or expand their commercial agricultural operations
- Promote the diversity of farming and farmers on Long Island
- Encourage food production farming
- Ensure that farmland is available and affordable for farmers

About the Peconic Land Trust

The Peconic Land Trust was established in 1983 to conserve Long Island's working farms and natural lands. Since its inception, the nonprofit Trust has worked conscientiously with landowners, communities, municipalities, partner organizations, and donors to conserve over 10,000 acres of land on Long Island. The Trust's professional staff carries out the necessary research and planning to identify and implement alternatives to outright development. While working to conserve the

productive farms, watersheds, woodlands, and beachfront of Long Island, the Trust is also protecting the unique rural heritage and natural resources of the region. The Trust has Stewardship Centers in Cutchogue, Bridgehampton (Bridge Gardens), Southold (Agricultural Center at Charnews Farm and Shellfisher Preserve) and Amagansett (Quail Hill Farm) and its Main Office is in Southampton. *A common misperception, however, is that the Peconic Land Trust is the recipient of the monies raised through the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund (also referred to as the CPF, 2% land transfer tax, or the Peconic Land Tax). This is NOT the case. The CPF tax is collected by Suffolk County and then redistributed to the five East End towns based on the location of the property from which the tax is acquired.* For more information about the Peconic Land Trust visit www.peconiclandtrust.org or call 631.283.3195.

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