



**SYLVESTER
MANOR**

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

Contact:

Cara Loriz, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm: 631.749.0626

Yvette DeBow-Salsedo, Peconic Land Trust: 631.283.3195

**Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and
the Peconic Land Trust announce the preservation
of an additional 57.1 acres on Shelter Island**

*The preservation, through the sale of development rights to Suffolk County and
the Town of Shelter Island, increases the number of acres conserved by
Sylvester Manor on Shelter Island to more than 105 acres.*

November 27, 2012. Shelter Island, NY. Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and the Peconic Land Trust announce the preservation of over 57 acres of agricultural land through a sale of development rights to Suffolk County and the Town of Shelter Island. This follows the August sale of development rights on 26 adjacent acres at Sylvester Manor, bringing the total of permanently protected farmland to more than 83 acres, and a total of 105 protected acres when combined with 22 acres of waterfront habitat and upland subject to a conservation easement donated by the owner, Eben Fiske Ostby, in 2009 to the Peconic Land Trust.

“Protecting a second parcel of the historic Sylvester Manor property is a remarkable achievement, both for the local and county governments and for the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. We now have a significant landholding preserved for future

generations, and with it a crucial foundation for the Educational Farm and its mission. So many people contributed to making this effort a success, and I am both indebted to them and proud of the community that supported it," said Eben Fiske Ostby, Sylvester Manor owner and 10th-generation proprietor.

"We are truly thankful for the generosity of Eben Ostby and the commitment of the Town and County in supporting a sustainable future for Sylvester Manor," said Executive Director Cara Loriz. "With the help of Peconic Land Trust and our many supporters, we can now celebrate the realization of our initial preservation goals for this remarkable property."

As with the August transaction, preceding the development rights purchase, Mr. Ostby donated the 57 acres to the non-profit organization, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, which will use the proceeds from the development rights sale to grow the Fund dedicated to sustaining the non-profit into the future.

Sylvester Manor Educational Farm now operates on the 243-acre property, working to cultivate, preserve and explore the Manor's lands, buildings and stories, inviting new thought about the history and culture of food, both on Shelter Island and across the country.

The newly designated preserved farmland extends south along Manhasset Road from the historic farm field along the northern boundary of Sylvester Manor that was preserved in August. The new acreage, gradually being cleared of succession old field vegetation, supported cover crop and livestock this past season. The Farm's plans for the protected acreage include expanding livestock and row crop production, establishing orchards and making acreage available to lease farmers and community gardeners.

"I'm so proud and excited for this preservation effort; it comes sooner than we thought, and it comes at a time when we've assembled a team that I completely trust to do the right thing for Sylvester Manor, its lands, stories and communities. I'm grateful for everyone who's put their shoulder behind this process and for everyone's patience as

we've put the puzzle pieces together. It's been an honor to play the role that I have. I look forward to helping this project grow and mature," said Bennett Konesni, nephew of Eben Fiske Ostby and founder of Sylvester Manor Educational Farm.

Shelter Island Supervisor Jim Dougherty stated, "On behalf of all Shelter Islanders, I want to thank our Suffolk County partners, the Sylvester Manor folks, the Peconic Land Trust and all players who made this possible."

"Eben and his nephew Bennett's vision for Sylvester Manor is extraordinary, a true gift to the Shelter Island community that benefits the entire East End. The conserved acreage will ensure that Shelter Island's agrarian history is protected and celebrated for generations to come," said John v.H. Halsey, President, Peconic Land Trust. "This is the third successful conservation transaction that we have helped the family complete. We look forward to continuing our working relationship with Eben, Bennett, and the entire team at Sylvester Manor Educational Farm."

Background on the transaction:

Suffolk County and the Town of Shelter Island purchased the development rights to the 57.1744-acre field, located along the eastern boundary of the 243-acre Sylvester Manor on Manhasset Road, for a total price of \$4,688,300.50 (\$82,000 per acre). The purchase was funded with dedicated land protection funds: 70 percent by the County from its ¼% Bonded Drinking Water Protection Farmland Preservation Program and 30% by the Town from its Community Preservation Fund, a 2% tax on real estate transactions.

Background on Sylvester Manor Educational Farm

Mr. Ostby and his nephew, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm founder Bennett Konesni, have been working with the Peconic Land Trust since 2008 to plan and implement the conservation of the historic 243-acre Sylvester Manor property. Mr. Ostby donated a perpetual easement on 22 acres along Gardiners Creek to Peconic Land Trust in December 2009. This past August, Mr. Ostby donated 26 acres of farmland to the Educational Farm, allowing the nonprofit to sell the associated development rights to the County and Town, with additional funding from the federal Farm and Ranchlands

Protection Program. The development rights sale just completed brings the total of permanently protected land at the Manor to more than 105 acres.

Planning is underway to transfer the majority of the property from Mr. Ostby to Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, as the not-for-profit organization's capacity to care for this Shelter Island treasure grows.

The 57-plus acres are being brought back into productivity with extensive clearing and cover cropping. In 2012 these acres hosted a herd of heirloom pigs that traveled across Long Island Sound to a small butcher operation in Rhode Island, producing pork cuts for sale at the Sylvester Manor farm stand on Manwaring Road. Near the livestock area, invasive vines and deadwood were cleared — preparations for planting an orchard in a field currently hosting several honey bee hives.

During World War II, corn, cabbage and potatoes were grown on the land. With adjacent fields also cultivated, long-time Islanders say you could see clear to Coecles Harbor from the manor farmland. This historical farming area was served by an old community irrigation system; a relay station for this system can be found on the preserved land.

Sylvester Manor was established in 1652 on fertile land at the head of a protected harbor on Shelter Island, and it is one of the few places in America to have been in the hands of the same family since its colonial origins. Before that time, Native Americans of the Manhasset Tribe used the land for fishing, hunting and small-scale crop production. Sylvester Manor served as a residence for one of America's first food industrialists (and an inventor of baking powder), Eben Norton Horsford, as well as functioning as a farm for the past two centuries, serving regional markets.

Sylvester Manor's role as an East End history and education center is well founded. In addition to being a working farm, the property is an important early American archaeological site complemented by over 10,000 primary documents — family papers, books and letters now archived at New York University's Fales Library. The University

of Massachusetts in Boston has held an archaeological field school on the property for much of the last decade and continues to research the artifacts found. Next April, two books exploring the Manor's early history will be published, their launch to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of the manor records at NYU, entitled "Sylvester Manor: Food and Power on a Northern Plantation."

Sylvester Manor Educational Farm is working to re-establish agriculture on Shelter Island in a sustainable way. Long a part of the Island's heritage, active farming died out on Shelter Island in the 1980s, a demise attributed to residential development and an overpopulation of deer. The preservation of Manor land under the county's farmland program will guarantee that all activities on the preserved land are agricultural in nature.

Manor farm operations for the 2012 season include over 5 acres in pesticide-free vegetable and fruit production, winter greens operations in a new high tunnel greenhouse, a 50-hen egg production program, and pilot goat and pig programs. Thousands of area residents of all ages participated in arts and education programs at the Manor in 2012 — programs that ranged from Shakespeare in the Field to a gourd banjo-making workshop to the 4th annual Plant & Sing food and music festival over Columbus Day weekend. Registration will open soon for the 2013 Young Farmers outdoor education program, in which East End children grow and harvest their own food and learn about sustainable agriculture. For more information about Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, visit their website at <http://sylvestermanor.wordpress.com/> or call 631.749.0626

About Peconic Land Trust

The Peconic Land Trust was established in 1983 to conserve Long Island's working farms and natural lands. With the help of many, the nonprofit Trust has worked in concert with landowners, local government, partner organizations, and communities to conserve over 10,000 acres of land on Long Island.

On Shelter Island, the Peconic Land Trust has worked with the Town, County and local landowners on 28 projects, beginning with the donation of the Reel Point Preserve in 1995 by Herb and Marsha Stern – eight acres of uplands, wetlands and farmland. In addition to today's announcement, the Trust assisted the family on the sale of development rights to the Town and County on 26 acres of farmland in August of this year, and had received a gift of a conservation easement from Eben Fiske Ostby protecting 22 acres of waterfront and upland woods at Sylvester Manor in 2009.

The Trust has Stewardship Centers in Southold, Cutchogue, Bridgehampton and Amagansett and its Main Office is in Southampton. *A common misperception 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 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, the distribution of which is 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.