



**SYLVESTER
MANOR**

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

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**Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and
the Peconic Land Trust announce the preservation
of 26 acres of farmland 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 nearly 50 acres.

August 8, 2012. Shelter Island, NY. Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and the Peconic Land Trust announce the preservation of over 26 acres of farmland through a sale of development rights to Suffolk County and the Town of Shelter Island, an agricultural protection effort long in the making. A federal grant through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program was also used by the County to fund the purchase.

"I am thrilled that we were able to partner with all levels of government to protect this historic farmland," commented Eben Fiske Ostby, Sylvester Manor owner and 10th-generation proprietor. "This is truly an enormous step in the preservation of Sylvester Manor and a major part of Shelter Island, and I thank everyone who worked to make it happen."

“This is a landmark day in Sylvester Manor’s new era as a non-profit educational farm,” said Executive Director Cara Loriz. “We are truly grateful to Suffolk County and Shelter Island Town for protecting this unique and historic farmland and to our friends at the Peconic Land Trust for all their assistance.”

“This preservation effort has garnered an extraordinary amount of support, including from the offices of our Congressional representatives Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer and Representative Tim Bishop; their assistance with facilitating the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program grant to the County from the USDA for Sylvester Manor was very helpful,” said Ms. Loriz.

Preceding the development rights purchase, Mr. Ostby donated the 26 acres to the non-profit organization, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, which will use the proceeds from the development rights sale to begin an endowment fund.

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 is an historic farm field along the northern boundary of Sylvester Manor and Manhasset Road, currently cultivated in rye grass cover crop.

"This is a great day," said Bennett Konesni, nephew of Eben Fiske Ostby and founder of Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. "The field will be really beautiful in November, as the rye comes in before the first frost."

“A wonderful day for Shelter Island,” said Shelter Island Town Supervisor Jim Dougherty. “All hands were yeomen, but I want to particularly thank our friends at

Suffolk County who are not only paying 70 percent of the purchase price, but are generously sharing their Federal grant proceeds with Shelter Island, resulting in our share in preserving 26.2 acres being only \$457,000 in 2-percent monies. Well done all!”

“We’ve been very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Eben and his nephew Bennett on the conservation plan for this extraordinary property – not only an important piece of Shelter Island history, but of our nation as well,” said John v.H. Halsey, President, Peconic Land Trust. “We look forward to our ongoing work with the family and the board and staff of the new non-profit, as well as educational and recreational programs that re-introduce the community to its historic roots.”

Background on the transaction:

Suffolk County and the Town of Shelter Island purchased the development rights to the 26.2554-acre field, located on the northern boundary of the 243-acre Sylvester Manor on Manhasset Road, for a total price of \$2,389,241.40 (\$91,000 per acre). A federal grant through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program provided \$866,428.20 of the funding; the remaining purchase price was paid with dedicated land protection funds: 70 percent by the County from its ¼% Bonded Drinking Water Protection Farmland Preservation Program and 30 percent by the Town from its Community Preservation Fund, a 2-percent 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. The development rights sale just completed brings the total of permanently protected land at the Manor to nearly 50 acres; a second sale of development rights on an additional 57 acres is expected later this year.

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 26-plus acres, called "the big field" by locals, was likely part of the land that original proprietor Nathaniel Sylvester mentioned in his 1680 will as the "the planting field behinde the Orchard Containeing about fourtie akers." It is believed that the field was cultivated by the native Manhasset people prior to European settlement. In the last century, this land and adjacent fields were irrigated for crop production — an enormous pump from this period is visible in the bushes on a nearby parcel of town land. Today, with its windswept rye and bluebird boxes, the big field is both an agricultural and natural asset protecting Shelter Island's sole source aquifer and preserving its rural character.

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 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.

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 next year Farrar, Straus & Giroux is publishing a book exploring the Manor's early history.

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 100-hen egg production program, and pilot goat and pig programs. Hundreds of area residents of all ages participated in arts and education programs at the Manor in 2011 – 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 is underway for the 2012 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 has received a gift of a conservation easement from Eben Fiske Ostby protecting 22 acres of waterfront and upland woods at Sylvester Manor."

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.