

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release
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PECONIC LAND TRUST ANNOUNCES THE ACQUISITION OF 20 ACRES OF FARMLAND IN BRIDGEHAMPTON FROM HAYGROUND FARMS INC.

The farmland, located on Route 27 at the gateway to the hamlet has been in the same family since the 1600s. The land will be retained by the Trust and incorporated into its Farms for the Future Initiative.

July 15th, 2013. Southampton, New York. John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust, announced the acquisition of 20 acres of productive agricultural land in Bridgehampton on Route 27. The property could not have been purchased without the assistance of the South Fork Land Foundation and one of the Trust's supporters who wishes to remain anonymous. The land, acquired by William Haines as a consequence of the Little South Division of 1682, was purchased from 9th generation descendants of Mr. Haines.

"We are pleased that our land went to an organization that will treasure it and preserve it for agriculture. The Trust's dedication and passion for preserving the East End is very obvious. There are many, I am sure, who appreciate all that you do. My family is one of them," said Darrah Yates soon after the closing on June 17th.

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Ninety percent of the property consists of the best agricultural soils on Long Island (Bridgehampton Silt Loam), and perhaps the world. Over the 9 generations that the family has owned the property, it has been in food production, first supporting the early generations of settlers, and later in production agriculture, producing potatoes, corn, and other vegetables. But the land may well have been in production by Native Americans for centuries prior to English settlement. According to David Martine, Director of the Shinnecock Nation Cultural Center and Museum, "Native Americans often raised crops, including the Three Sisters (corn, squash, and beans), near their settlements. This property contains very fertile soils close to a documented Native American settlement in Mecox and is adjacent to Kellis Pond, a source of fresh water, so the likelihood is quite high that it was producing food long before Europeans arrived."

"It's all about these incredible soils," said Lee Foster, SFLF's Treasurer. "Once protected, we have a responsibility to care, nurture, and use these soils for their best purpose. It is our goal to make the land available to farmers who grow food and to respect the legacy that the soil represents as well as its special capacity to produce crops of benefit to all."

In 2002, the Trust assisted the former owners with the sale of development rights to Southampton Town for \$50,000/acre – the protected farmland that they retained was probably worth \$10,000 - \$15,000/acre at the time. The Trust's

purchase of the protected farmland at \$125,000/acre just 11 years later is indicative of the growing problem of access to affordable farmland that food producers increasingly face.

“It has gotten to the point that we literally must purchase protected farmland in order to keep working farms here on the South Fork. Most farmers cannot afford protected farmland at prices in excess of \$100,000, nor are they able to lease it. Nearly 40 years ago, when purchase of development rights (PDR) programs began on Long Island, no one anticipated that non-farmers would want to buy this land at exorbitant prices and then take it out of production,” said John v.H. Halsey, President of the Trust.

The Trust will retain ownership of the property for the foreseeable future and incorporate it into its Farms for the Future Initiative. With the help of grants from a number of funders several years ago, the Trust began to implement ways to help new farm operations get off the ground and established growers to retain farmland central to the business of farming with an eye toward their long-term economic health and viability. The documentary entitled “*Growing Farmers*,” 2012 winner of the Hamptons Film Festival’s Audience Award for Short Documentaries, captures this work and can be seen this Friday, July 19th at 6 PM at the Parrish Art Museum followed by a panel discussion.

The Farms for the Future Initiative includes farmland leases, incubator programs, and sales of protected farmland, some with additional restrictions that limit

non-agricultural activities and assure its affordability to farmers in the future. In 2011, Jim & Jennifer Pike purchased protected farmland from the Trust in Sagaponack and in late 2012 Chris & Holly Browder of Browder's Birds purchased protected farmland in Southold. The majority of the lessees operate on protected farmland owned by the Trust either at the Agricultural Center at Charnews Farm in Southold or at Quail Hill Farm/Deborah Light Preserve in Amagansett. The property just purchased by the Trust in Bridgehampton from Hayground Farms Inc. will be added to this inventory.

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 agricultural operations
- Promote the diversity of farming and farmers on Long Island
- Encourage food production farming
- Ensure that farmland is available and affordable to farmers

To learn more about this program, please contact Pam Greene, Vice President of Stewardship, at 631.283.3195 or PGreene@PeconicLandTrust.org.

About the Peconic Land Trust

2013 is the 30th Anniversary of the Peconic Land Trust, which was established in 1983 to conserve Long Island's working farms, natural lands, and heritage. Since its inception, the nonprofit Trust has worked conscientiously with landowners,

donors, local government, partner organizations, and communities to conserve nearly 11,000 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, Southold, Bridgehampton and Amagansett 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 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.

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