

# PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

Contact: Yvette DeBow-Salsedo  
631.283.3195; 646.284.8028 (cell)  
ydebow@peconiclandtrust.org

**IN ORDER TO SUPPORT LONG ISLAND'S FARMING COMMUNITY,  
PECONIC LAND TRUST WILL DISTRIBUTE \$1 MILLION FROM THE  
LI REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
TO FUND THE "FARMERS FOR THE FUTURE" AGRICULTURE CAPITAL  
EQUIPMENT PROGRAM**

*A COST-SHARING PROGRAM INTENDED TO HELP BEGINNING AND  
ESTABLISHED FARMERS ACCESS CAPITAL TO SUPPORT INVESTMENTS IN  
FARM EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE.*

**MAY 29, 2015. SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK.** John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust, is pleased to announce that the Trust will issue Request for Proposals for the Farmers for the Future: Long Island Agricultural Capital Equipment Grant Program, funded by a \$1 million grant from the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council (LIREDC), through the Empire State Development (ESD). The Trust will request and review applications as per the LIREDC criteria and award the funds to both beginning and established farmers for capital improvements, including agricultural equipment and infrastructure.

The new program will create a financial pool of resources that will assist Nassau and Suffolk County farmers in making capital investments in their farming operations. The

--next--

program is expected to assist 50 to 100 beginning and established farmers over three years to acquire the farm equipment needed to grow or diversify their business and meet the regulatory demands for improved food quality and safety standards.

“We are excited by the opportunity to provide working farms with access to capital to support their businesses. Thank you to Governor Andrew Cuomo and the members of the LI Regional Economic Development Council for this important grant, and we look forward to working productively with our partners -- Suffolk County including the Suffolk County Planning Commission, the Long Island Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, Cornell University’s Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center, Farm Credit East, Long Island Wine Council and Edible East End – to put these funds into the hands of our local farmers,” said John Halsey, President, Peconic Land Trust.

“Agriculture is vitally important to Long Island’s heritage, and it is crucial we do all we can to help our farmers continue to succeed,” said Cara Longworth, ESD’s Director for the Long Island Region and Executive Director of the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council. “With this \$1 million of funding, Long Island’s farmers will have access to resources that will help them buy new equipment and upgrade their facilities, to expand their operations.”

“I would like to thank Governor Andrew Cuomo, Empire State Development, and the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council for recognizing the importance of agriculture to the Suffolk County economy,” said County Executive Steve Bellone. “This award will help provide the economic stimulus needed to attract and retain the next

generation of Suffolk County farmers. We will work diligently with our partners at the Peconic Land Trust, the Long Island Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm Credit East, and the Suffolk County Planning Commission to ensure that farmers have a permanent place here on Long Island.”

“Long Island Farm Bureau is pleased that Empire State Development and the State of New York recognize the importance of a healthy agricultural industry on Long Island. With this assistance, new and existing farmers can continue to grow the food and fiber our residents have come to enjoy. Our farmers are proud of the fact that Suffolk County is the third largest agricultural county in the State of New York in terms of gross sales. We hope to keep this tradition alive for many years to come,” said Karen Rivara, President, Long Island Farm Bureau.

“This funding is extremely valuable for new and established farmers to assist them with adopting new technology in order for them to become or remain competitive,” said Dale Moyer, Associate Executive Director/Agriculture Program Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

“Last spring, the Suffolk County Planning Commission in conjunction with East Hampton Town Supervisor Larry Cantwell and U.S. Congressman Tim Bishop, convened a meeting of young East End farmers to discuss the obstacles preventing more new farmers from getting into the industry. One of the primary initial issues that was identified is the significant capital costs needed to start-up a farm operation. As a result of that meeting, the County Planning Commission was pleased to initiate this agricultural capital equipment grant program in conjunction with the County Executive’s office and our agriculture partners. Particular kudos go to John Halsey and

the Peconic Land Trust for leading the effort to see this program through to fruition. Thank you also to the LI Regional Economic Development Council, in particular Co-chairs Kevin Law and Stu Rabinowitz, for recognizing the importance of this initiative and providing crucial support from the early stages," said David L. Calone, Chairman, Suffolk County Planning Commission.

The Trust will administer the capital equipment and infrastructure cost-share program with assistance from our partners including local lending institutions, such as Farm Credit East, and government agencies, such as the Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning, among others. The program will reimburse farmers up to 20% of the purchase cost of new and used capital equipment and infrastructure – the funding of which will be drawn from the \$1 million grant. Eligible parties are new and emerging farmers, including second-career farmers, farmers upgrading equipment to come into compliance with new food safety regulations including the federal Food Safety Modernization Act, and farmers transitioning to a new commodity, method of production, or a new business plan. Both the farmer and the capital equipment and infrastructure purchases will be closely verified and vetted for cost share eligibility and suitability by the Trust and its partners.

### **Why is this Important?**

Landmark efforts to protect farms and farming in Suffolk County that began in the 1970s are unraveling. In total, about 12,000 of 34,000 acres of farmland in Suffolk County have been protected from residential or commercial development through development

restrictions held by Suffolk County, Towns, and the Peconic Land Trust. For the most part, these restrictions protect the resource but do not assure that protected farmland will be farmed.

While agriculture can be an attractive industry for social, cultural, and lifestyle reasons, the bottom line is that it must be profitable in order to survive. The public can be of great help by purchasing Long Island Grown products. Nonetheless, there are economic barriers to entry that can inhibit new and emerging farmers as well as regulatory challenges that threaten even established farmers and the industry's future profitability. Established and beginning farmers alike cite equipment and technological costs as prohibitively expensive. Though the Trust is doing everything it can to alleviate the cost of farmland in Suffolk County (even protected land in farmland preservation programs can run well over \$20-25K/acre, and well over \$100,000/acre on the South Fork), we can also help reduce other costs associated with a farm operation. Namely, we can create capital equipment and infrastructure financing structures that are targeted and tailored for Long Island's agricultural community. We can keep farmers on Long Island, and even grow new farmers, if we give them the financial capacity to buy new tractors, build greenhouses, adapt renewable energy technologies, invest in environmentally sustainable equipment, and come into compliance with food safety and water quality regulations. These investments will not only ensure the economic viability of the industry, but will give Long Island a marketing and environmental "leg-up" on our out-of-state and out-of-country competitors. We will have the financial resources to differentiate our product by our methods of production and technological adaptation. A cost-share program targeted in this manner will increase farmer liquidity, equity, and business opportunities, and improve overall financial flexibility in a political and social

environment characterized by environmental uncertainty and changing regulations. This new program will be incorporated into the Trust's Farms for the Future Initiative.

### **About Farms for the Future Initiative**

The Peconic Land Trust's Farms for the Future Initiative includes farmland leases, incubator programs, and sales of protected farmland, some with additional restrictions that limit non-agricultural activities or support food production farming, designed to assure access and affordability for farmers in the future. The majority of the lessees operate on protected farmland owned by the Trust either at its Agricultural Center at Charnews Farm in Southold or at Quail Hill Farm/Deborah Light Preserve in Amagansett.

Although the Farms for the Future Initiative is constantly evolving, the Trust started with three primary objectives:

- 1) Explore and refine a new set of conservation tools and techniques that address the issues of farmland accessibility, affordability, and sustainability
- 2) Buy, protect, rebuild and resell farms to farmers
- 3) Develop and expand our Farmland Leasing Program

To learn more about the Trust's Farms for the Future Initiative, please contact Luke McKay, Project Manager, at 631.283.3195 or [LMcKay@PeconicLandTrust.org](mailto:LMcKay@PeconicLandTrust.org).

### **About the Peconic Land Trust**

Established in 1983 to conserve Long Island's working farms, natural lands, and heritage, the Peconic Land Trust, a nonprofit, tax-exempt conservation organization, has

worked conscientiously with landowners, communities, municipalities, partner organizations, and donors, to conserve over 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, shorelines, and historic resources 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. *The Trust depends primarily upon private donations to support its conservation work. A common misperception, however, is that the Peconic Land Trust collects and distributes the monies raised through the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund (the CPF is also referred to as the 2% land transfer tax or the Peconic Land Tax). This is NOT the case. The CPF is a public program managed by each of the five East End Towns for the protection of farmland, open space, and community character.* For more information about the Peconic Land Trust visit [www.peconiclandtrust.org](http://www.peconiclandtrust.org) or call 631.283.3195.

#####