

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

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PECONIC LAND TRUST: MAJOR CONSERVATION LEGISLATION CONGRESS PASSED WILL HAVE LOCAL BENEFITS

SOUTHAMPTON, NY (December 31, 2015) – Peconic Land Trust, a land conservation organization working to protect Long Island’s working farms, natural lands and heritage, praises a bipartisan congressional vote that makes permanent a federal tax incentive supporting land conservation.

Farmers, ranchers and the public will directly benefit from the incentive that encourages landowners to place a conservation easement on their land to protect important natural, scenic and historic resources. Peconic Land Trust was among the 1,100 land trusts to support the incentive through a collaborative, multi-year campaign.

“This is a great step forward for conservation efforts across the country,” said John v.H. Halsey, President, Peconic Land Trust. “Here on Long Island, the conservation easement tax incentive is particularly beneficial to our working farm families – providing them with the opportunity to consider bargain sales as part of a farmland conservation strategy. By making the incentive permanent, our ability to work with the farming community on conservation has been strengthened.”

Peconic Land Trust is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, the national land conservation organization that led the campaign for permanence.

“The importance of this vote – and this incentive – cannot be overstated,” said Rand Wentworth, the Alliance’s president. “This is the single greatest legislative action in decades to support land conservation. It states, unequivocally, that we as a nation treasure our lands and must conserve their many benefits for all future generations.”

In a strong bipartisan action, the House voted 318-109 and the Senate voted 65-33 to pass the bills that included the tax incentive. The President signed the bill into law on Friday, December 18, 2015.

Peconic Land Trust thanks United States Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Representatives Lee Zeldin, Peter King and Kathleen Rice for their support of the bill.

First enacted as a temporary provision in 2006, the incentive is directly responsible for conserving more than 2 million acres of America’s natural outdoor heritage. The incentive grants certain tax benefits to landowners who sign a conservation easement. Such private, voluntary agreements with local land trusts permanently limit uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Lands placed into conservation easements can continue to be farmed, hunted or used for other specified purposes. The lands also remain on county tax rolls, strengthening local economies.

The incentive will be applied retroactively to Jan. 1, 2015. An earlier version of the incentive expired Dec. 31, 2014.

The incentive advanced through Congress as part of the America Gives More Act, a package of tax incentives to encourage charitable giving. It passed the House earlier this year, 279-137. A

standalone version of the incentive, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, earned 52 Senate sponsors this year, including 26 Democrats, 24 Republicans and 2 Independents. The agreement announced this week additionally encourages donations to food banks and facilitates charitable deductions from IRAs.

About the Peconic Land Trust

Founded in 1983, Peconic Land Trust conserves Long Island's working farms, natural lands, and heritage. Since its inception, the nonprofit Trust has worked conscientiously with landowners, communities, municipalities, partner organizations, and donors, to conserve nearly 12,000 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. *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 or call 631.283.3195.

About the Land Trust Alliance

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national land conservation organization that works to save the places people love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance represents more than 1,100 member land trusts supported by more than 100,000 volunteers and 5 million members nationwide. The Alliance is based in Washington, D.C. and operates several regional offices. More information about the Alliance is available at www.landtrustalliance.org.

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