

# PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

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## PECONIC LAND TRUST RECEIVES GRANT FROM NYS DEC AND LAND TRUST ALLIANCE TO ASSIST RIVERHEAD TOWN WITH THE REVITALIZATION OF ITS FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAMS

**APRIL 29, 2016. SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK.** John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust, is pleased to announce that the Trust has been awarded a grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance, through the Conservation Partnership Program (CPP) of the Environmental Protection Fund, in support of a collaboration project with the Town of Riverhead on preservation and protection strategies for open space and farmland.

The conservation catalyst grant awarded to the Trust is in the amount of \$30,000. It will underwrite the Trust's work with the Town including a review of the Town's Community Preservation Project Plan and its Transfer of Development Rights Program. There are hundreds of acres of unprotected working farmland in Riverhead, as well as natural habitat including woodland and wetlands. Riverhead is also a regional hub for retail development and is strategically positioning itself for significant development of commercial and industrial complexes. The research initiative will be in coordination

with the Town's Farmland Preservation Committee and Agricultural Advisory Committee, and will seek to develop strategies that will leverage private funds to jump start the Town's preservation efforts.

"The Peconic Land Trust has worked with the Town of Riverhead on farmland protection for many years and is proud to have played a part in conserving many hundreds of acres in the Town. But we all know that there is much more to be done. We look forward to working with Supervisor Walter, Councilman Wooten and the entire Town Board as well as members of the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Advisory Committees to come up with effective strategies to protect more of the Town's productive farms now," said John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust.

"There is still much work to be done in the Town to preserve the important farm and natural lands that support our economy in so many ways, including jobs and tourism. We need to be creative and forward-thinking in our approach to protecting our farmland and open spaces, especially as funding through the Community Preservation Fund is limited in our town. We look forward to working with the staff at the Peconic Land Trust to develop new strategies that can leverage private funding and to revitalize our transfer of development rights program for the long-term benefit of our residents," said Riverhead Town Supervisor Sean Walter.

"Our rich farmland and incredible natural lands are resources we need to protect, and now is the time. I'm looking forward to working with the Trust and the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Advisory Committees to find new solutions that will enable the town to keep agriculture strong in Riverhead," said Riverhead Town

Councilman James Wooten – board liaison to the Town’s Agricultural Advisory, Open Space and Farmland committees.

“As a resident of Riverhead, I’m excited to be working in my hometown to help protect the farmland that surrounds me and my family. Driving alongside the open farm fields is one of the things I treasure most about the East End, and I look forward to working with the Town and our local farming community to preserve the land for future generations,” said Jessie Marcus, Peconic Land Trust’s Project Assistant.

The awards were announced on Tuesday, April 19, 2016, at a press conference in Skaneateles, in the Finger Lakes Region.

In a press release issued at the time of the press conference, Assemblyman Steven Englebright of Setauket, Long Island and Chair of the Assembly’s Environmental Conservation Committee said: “Land Trusts are indispensable partners in our efforts to preserve our State’s natural heritage land, working landscapes, urban green spaces, wildlife habitats, recreational spaces and lands that provide priceless ecological services to our state. Our state’s land trusts also have their fingers on the pulse of regional priorities and are stewards to many of our valuable conservation investments. The announcement of these land trust grants is a great way to both celebrate Earth Week and to state on a new round of preservation in our state!”

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos said, “Land Trusts continue to make a difference in local communities, maximizing public and private dollars to protect and preserve our state’s natural resources for generations

to come. Through partnerships like these, the Environmental Protection Fund provides critical support for many environmental and open space programs, generating revenue, creating jobs, and ensuring a cleaner and healthier New York.”

Andrew Bowman, President of the Land Trust Alliance said, “This pioneering initiative enables land trusts, local communities and private landowners to better protect New York’s most important water resources, farmland, wildlife habitat and urban green space such as community gardens. We also applaud New York’s tremendous progress in strengthening the Environmental Protection Fund in this year’s state budget. Individually and together, these are smart investments promoting healthy communities, strategy land conservation and environmental stewardship. On behalf of the Land Trust Alliance and its supporters, I thank Governor Cuomo, Acting Commissioner Seggos and the New York State Legislature.”

In addition, the Peconic Land Trust would like to thank our local legislators, including Assemblyman Englebright, Senators Ken LaValle and John Flanagan, and Assemblymen Fred Thiele, Jr., and Anthony Palumbo for their support of the EPF and the CPP programs.

As a result of the grants announced today, organizations throughout New York State, including the Peconic Land Trust, will leverage an additional \$2.25 million in matching funds from community and private sources.

### **About the Conservation Partnership Program**

The Conservation Partnership Program is a public-private initiative funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in

coordination with Department of Environmental Conservation. Since 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded over 700 grants totaling \$13.1 million in EPF funds to 86 different land trusts across the state, from Long Island to Buffalo. To date, the state's investment has leveraged over \$15 million in additional funding from local communities and private donors

A total of \$1.8 million in grants will be awarded through the 2016 Conservation Partnership Program to help local not-for-profits sustain critical programs: help local land trusts sustain and expand community and landowner outreach initiatives and develop an array of land conservation, stewardship and education programs. The grants will further regional economic development goals by strengthening partnerships with local and state governments and advancing locally supported efforts to protect working farms, enhance public access and recreation opportunities, and conserve private lands prioritized in New York State's Open Space Conservation Plan and state wildlife action plan.

Fifty-five organizations across New York will receive funds, including the Peconic Land Trust, North Shore Land Alliance, Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust, Green Guerillas, Open Space Institute, Westchester Land Trust, Teatown Lake Reservation, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Mohonk Preserve, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Scenic Hudson, Orange County Land Trust, Mohawk Preserve, Agricultural Stewardship Association, American Farmland Trust, Thousand Islands Land Trust. The full list of grant recipients can be found at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/48901.html>

The Conservation Partnership Program, like other EPF programs, creates a powerful economic stimulus that spurs green community investments in every county in the state.

In a report released in 2015, the Trust for Public Land says that it is widely understood that investments in conservation boost property values, support businesses, save energy and tax payer money, and safeguard natural ecosystems on which economic wellbeing depends. With the grant awards announced today, land trusts will advance significant projects at a critical time for communities and businesses across the state.

**Conservation Catalyst Grants** provide critical funding for partnerships and community initiatives that connect people to nature, increase public involvement in community conservation, and help save special places prioritized in the New York State Open Space Plan. Land trust partnerships funded by the Conservation Partnership Program will involve local, state and federal agency partners, private landowners, municipalities, and other community service organizations. Land trust partnerships are a proven and highly cost-effective way for New York State to strengthen and build public support for its conservation programs.

#### **About The Peconic Land Trust's 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 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, 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 the Agricultural Center at Charnews Farm in Southold or at the Deborah Light Preserve in Amagansett, home of the Trust's Quail Hill Farm.

Objectives of the Farms for the Future Initiative:

- Explore and refine a new set of conservation tools and techniques that address the issues of farmland accessibility, affordability, and sustainability (including [Overlay Easements with Affordable and/or Affirmative Farming Covenants](#))
- Buy, protect, rebuild and resell farms to farmers
- Develop and expand our Farmland Leasing Program

To learn more about this program, please contact Melanie Cirillo, Director of Conservation Programs, at 631.283.3195 or [MCirillo@PeconicLandTrust.org](mailto:MCirillo@PeconicLandTrust.org).

### **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](http://www.peconiclandtrust.org) or call 631.283.3195.*

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