

PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release
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**PECONIC LAND TRUST ISSUES REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR THE RESALE OF 13.6 ACRES OF FARMLAND AND WOODLANDS
IN EASTPORT**

**PECONIC LAND TRUST AND TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON
PARTNERED TO PROTECT 9 ACRES OF FARMLAND FOR FOOD
FARMING AND 4.5 ACRES OF WOODLAND IN EASTPORT.**

*This is the first purchase of enhanced easement for food production
acquired by the Town west of the Shinnecock Canal.*

AUGUST 11, 2017. SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK. John v.H. Halsey, President of the Peconic Land Trust, is pleased to announce the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the resale of 13.6 acres of farmland and woodland in the Hamlet of Eastport, formerly owned by the Mary G. Raynor Dibble Irrevocable Trust. The Trust purchased the property in May 2017, in partnership with the Town of Southampton, which purchased the development rights on all 13.6 acres. The land includes 9.1 acres of farmland and 4.5 acres of

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woodland. The farmland includes the enhanced easement for food farming restrictions. The woodland, 4.5 acres, will be subject to traditional purchase of development rights restrictions.

This represents the first acquisition of the enhanced restrictions by the Town of Southampton on land west of the Shinnecock Canal. The Trust RFP for the resale of the land is subject to the requirement that the purchaser be a qualified farmer. Responses to the RFP are required to be submitted by Monday, September 18, 2017. The RFP can be found online: https://www.peconiclandtrust.org/prop_sale

In 2015, for the first time the Trust partnered with the Town in a farmland protection effort that included the enhanced easement restrictions for food. Since that conservation initiative, the Town of Southampton has applied these enhanced rights to over 200 acres of farmland – now from Eastport to Sagaponack.

Affirmative & Affordable Farming Covenants and Resale Restrictions

In recent years, sales of protected farmland on Long Island’s South Fork to non-farmers have been as high as \$380,000/acre, raising the average value of protected farmland to over \$185,000/acre—values well beyond the reach of the vast majority of farmers who grow food. However, through the use Affirmative & Affordable Farming Covenants and Resale Restrictions, the value of the protected farmland can be lowered to its “true agricultural value” for food

production. The former Raynor/Dibble property includes the following restrictions on the 9.1 acres of farmland:

- 80 percent of the farmland must be used for the production of food;
- equestrian use of the property is prohibited;
- vineyard use of the property is prohibited;
- horticultural products that result in the removal of soil from the property are prohibited;
- if the farmland is fallow for one year, it must be kept available for agricultural use and managed subject to a Natural Resource Conservation Plan;
- if the farmland is fallow for 2 years, the Trust has the right to lease it to another farmer to ensure that it remains in agricultural production.
- future sales of the additionally restricted farmland are limited to its value at the time the Affirmative & Affordable Farming Covenants were donated to the Trust (about \$25,000/acre) plus the value of any agricultural improvements added to the property by the farmer. The land's appreciation is limited to the lower of either the Area Median Income (AMI) or the Consumer Price Index (CPI) not to exceed 3.5% annually;
- the Trust reviews and approves all future sales to ensure that the restricted farmland is purchased by a qualified farmer;

- the Trust will be the purchaser of last resort if the owner is unable to find a farmer to purchase the restricted farmland in the future. When purchased under these circumstances, the protected farmland would be offered for sale to qualified farmers through a transparent selection process including a “request for proposals” and lottery, if necessary.

Why is this Important?

Landmark efforts to protect farms and farming in Suffolk County that began in the 1970s are unraveling. In total, about 20,000 of 39,000 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. This has led to the dramatic increase in the number of non-farmers purchasing protected farmland for lawns and other amenities to development as well as for equestrian purposes, especially on the South Fork. As a consequence, agriculture as we know it, including the production of local food, may very well disappear on Long Island, perhaps within a generation on the South Fork, unless aggressive actions are taken.

**Source: Suffolk County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan 2015*

Not only has this new trend driven up the value of protected farmland to over

\$100,000/acre on the South Fork, but also has additional consequences, including:

- a tremendous increase in federal and state inheritance tax liabilities for farmers, which will necessitate the sale of protected farmland at the highest possible price, primarily to non-farmers;
- an inability for most farmers who produce food to purchase protected farmland at \$100,000/acre or more (the maximum they can afford is \$20,000 - \$30,000/acre);
- without working farms that provide fresh, locally-produced food to residents and visitors alike, we will lose an extraordinary facet of our community character and an important component of our local economy.

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, 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 our 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:

- Keep conserved agricultural land actively farmed

- Create opportunities for farmers 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 Melanie Cirillo, Director of Conservation Planning, at 631.283.3195 or 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 approximately 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.

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