

PECONIC LAND TRUST



Comments from the Peconic Land Trust on the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act)

July 1, 2022

To the members of the Climate Action Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Scoping Plan. We also would like to take a moment to thank you for the efforts that went into developing the Draft Scoping Plan and its ambitious climate forward goals.

As a land conservation organization based on Long Island, we have seen firsthand the negative impacts of climate change on our shorelines, in our farm fields, and in our woodlands. The Scoping Plan contains many excellent proposed initiatives. We would like to briefly highlight some areas of consideration:

- Enable every town that wants a Community Preservation Fund to have one. Statewide enabling legislation, such as the Community Preservation Act, will improve the current town by town process. The five East End towns on Long Island have raised over \$1.8 Billion in revenue since 1999 and protected more than 10,000 acres of land. That means miles of hiking trails and shoreline, hundreds of acres of active, working farmland – all of which might have been developed or destroyed. Each town is different, the needs of their communities are unique. Not all will want to go this route. But all should have the opportunity.
- Incentivize land and sea farmers to make carbon emission and sequestration an integral part of farm practice. Farmers live on tight budgets. If we put forward recommendations for them to reduce emissions and nutrients, improve soil health, and sequester carbon, we must recognize they cannot fund these initiatives and still stay in business. There are a variety of mechanisms available: grants, cost-share programs, capital investments, etc. – to make adoption possible. Let's use them. The results will be healthy local food, a diversity of agricultural products, good jobs, and a continued contribution to the state's economy.
- Fix the State's Inheritance tax to favor conservation over development. Take a look at the New York State Inheritance tax, and the tax "cliff" that heirs of productive farmland and valuable open space face. The size of the tax and time by which it must be paid provides many heirs with no alternative but to sell - which means development. The state inheritance tax should be amended to enable landowners and their heirs to consider and implement public and private conservation options. A deferral of the inheritance tax on land of conservation value would be a great start. The specter of this tax forces land on the East End into development as much as the tax itself.

- Add into the document recognition and programs related to shellfish and kelp farming. Their benefit in reducing nitrogen and carbon, reducing methane production and building coastal resilience has been well outlined by our partner Karen Rivara of Aeros Cultured Oyster Co. (**see below). By not including this important part of our agricultural community we are missing an opportunity to meet these important climate mitigation goals.

Additionally, as a member of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), we would like to reiterate the organization's thank you to the Climate Action Council for "including the Conservation Partnership Program (CPP) and Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trust (FCELT) program in the Draft Scoping Plan. These program help develop locally led conservation projects that advance the state's goals, leverage private matching funds, generate economic benefits and can be expanded to meet the needs of the plan by increasing the Environmental Protection Fund, and if passed, with Bond Act funding. Increased funding for the successful CPP and FCLT grant programs will be critical if they are to have the capacity to meet the needs laid out in the plan."

We would also like to echo the request of the LTA to add land trust's to the text on page 276 in addition to State and municipal land acquisition as a partner in providing reliable long-term protection of forested areas from land conversion.

Partnership is a key to all. In New York we are fortunate to have a diverse group of organizations engage with and dedicated to protecting and conserving land and water, studying and improving agricultural practices, caring for and advancing the study of invasive pests and disease that are impacting our forests, and building resilience along our shorelines.

Working together to conserve and steward land is the key . . . for nearly 40 years we have worked in partnership with farmers, landowners, conversationists, scientists, communities, and public officials at all levels of government. We are here to help. We thank you for the opportunity to comment and look forward to working with you toward a brighter future for all New Yorkers.

Contact:

Yvette DeBow Salsedo

Vice President

Peconic Land Trust

ydebow@peconiclandtrust.org

631.283.3195 ext. 112

**** Karen Rivara of Aeros Cultured Oyster Co.*

"Farmed shellfish sequester carbon and nitrogen. This excess carbon and nitrogen is removed from the estuary when the shellfish are harvested. Farmed oysters were responsible for removing an estimated 558,000 pounds of nitrogen and 167,000 pounds of carbon as they filtered nearly a half billion gallons of

water in our bays in 2019. Our shellfish farmers are also interested in cultivating sugar kelp. An acre of kelp can sequester 20 times more carbon than an acre of forested land. ... A University of New Hampshire study found that feeding dairy cows seaweed reduced their methane production by up to 20%. Long Island can increase the amount of carbon sequestered in our bays by simply fostering shellfish and kelp farming. Siting these operations where they will have the most environmental benefit would be beneficial as we plan for the future.

The Shinnecock Tribe, several community groups and local research organizations are all actively participating in building coastal resilience through the establishment of oyster reefs. These groups are concentrating large amounts of shell with small oysters set on them in designated areas in our bays. These reefs will not only provide habitat and water filtration, but they will also provide structure that can mitigate wave action. These structures are especially effective when coupled with other mitigation measures like establishing seagrasses."