The Greater Irvington Land Conservancy Foundation
Project to Create a Swamp Milkweed Meadow

Irvington Woods Park in Irvington, N.Y.

Report by The Greater Irvington Land Conservancy Foundation, Inc. on
Project to Create and Manage a Swamp Milkweed Meadow in
Irvington Woods Park in Irvington, N.Y.

Submitted to the New York Pollinator Conservation Fund and
The New York Community Trust

Dated: April 13, 2026

The Greater Irvington Land Conservancy Foundation, Inc. ("GILT")[1] submits to the New York Pollinator Conservation Fund and the New York Community Trust this Report on GILT's project to create a Swamp Milkweed Meadow in Irvington Woods Park in Irvington, New York (the "Wet Meadow Project"). As described below, the Wet Meadow Project has been and, hopefully, will continue to be a highly successful effort by GILT, the Irvington Woods Committee (the "IWC"), the Village of Irvington O'Hara Nature Center, and members of our community to create a unique habitat and outdoor laboratory in the Irvington Woods for pollinator-related research, programming opportunities, and public engagement.

Scope and Purpose of the Grant

As described in GILT's original Letter of Intent, dated November 12, 2024, the goal of the Wet Meadow Project was to restore an area in the Irvington Woods into a wet meadow supporting monarch butterfly habitat. GILT proposed that, during the first-year grant period, it would take the following steps:

- Increase sunlight to the area by removing the Norway Maples which surround the meadow.
- Clear the stilt grass and nettles from the area and use spading to remove any phragmites.
- Develop a design of the wet meadow, working with Strom Horticultural Services.
- Fence the area combined with slash walls to prevent browsing by deer.
- Order 100 X 50 plant trays of milkweed plugs from native plant nurseries.
- Plant a diverse range of native plants, trees and shrubs in the fall of 2025 and in the spring/early summer of 2026.

Future follow-up activities would include:

[1] GILT is a tax-exempt, New York not-for-profit corporation created to preserve and protect open space in the wider Rivertowns community and is overseen by a Board of Directors. GILT's current Board Members are Jan Blaire, Jon Elwyn, Neil Maher, Phil Whitney, Paula Veale, and Chet Kerr.

- Regular weeding of invasives in the wet meadow and maintenance of the fence to prevent deer browsing.
- Pollinator surveys particularly of monarch butterflies.
- Development of educational materials and public programming about the project and its impact on pollinators within the Irvington Woods.

GILT proposed that future maintenance of the wet meadow will be managed by GILT, the IWC, and public volunteers and that future pollinator and native plant surveys will be done under the guidance of the O'Hara Nature Center's Director and staff and led by the students in the Center's Changing Forest and Budding Naturalist after-school programs.

By Letter, dated April 15, 2025, the New York Community Trust confirmed that it had approved a one-year grant of $16,000 to GILT to create the 0.50-acre wet meadow and provide needed habitat for monarch butterflies (the "Grant"). The Grant required GILT to make its best efforts to complete the following activities over the coming year:

- Turn a 0.5-acre wet meadow into monarch butterfly habitat by planting swamp milkweed and other pollinator plants;
- Conduct pollinator surveys; and
- Develop educational materials and public programming.

On April 21, 2025, Chet Kerr, the Chair of GILT's Board of Directors, appeared before the Village of Irvington's Board of Trustees and announced that GILT had received this Grant. The Board of Trustees reaffirmed its support for the Wet Meadow Project and the opportunities it would provide for community education and outreach.

GILT's Work To Fulfill The Grant Requirements

A. GILT's Efforts To Secure Additional Funding For Project

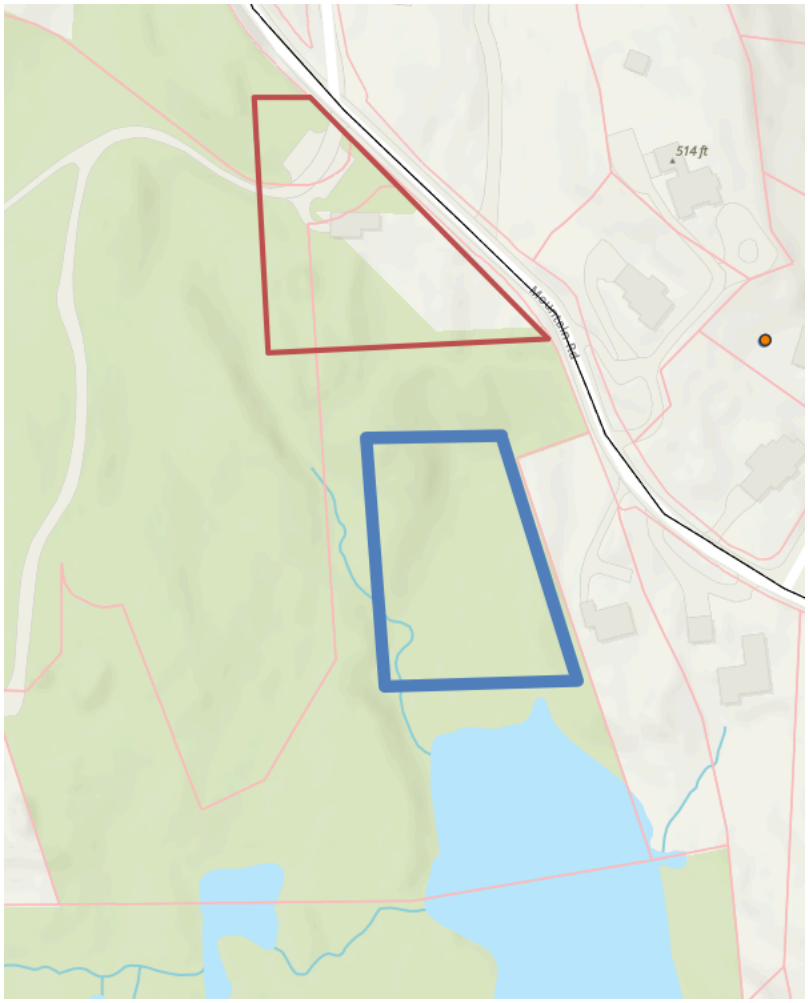
Immediately after receiving notification about the award of the $16,000 Grant, GILT sought to secure additional funding for its Wet Meadow Project. GILT confirmed it would provide $3,000 of its own funds toward this Project, and the Village of Irvington confirmed it would provide an additional $2,500. GILT also sought support from the Irvington community and obtained contributions of an additional $3,500 from community members. Thus, by mid-May GILT had secured a total of $9000 in additional funding, for a total $25,000 to be used on the Wet Meadow Project.[2]

B. Planning and Design Of The Proposed Wet Meadow

The proposed location for the wet meadow was an area just south of the grounds of the O'Hara Nature Center and just north of the Hermit's Wetland, a swamp-like area formed by the headwaters of Barney Brook. On the following map, the approximate area for the wet meadow

[2] This $25,000 raised by GILT exceeded its original proposed budget by $1,850.

is shown in blue, the grounds of the O'Hara Nature Center are shown in red, and Hermit's Wetland is shown just south of the proposed meadow.



The wet meadow is a relatively flat area surrounded by wooded, rocky slopes on the west, north and east.

CJ Reilly, the Director of the O'Hara Nature Center, has used a Strahler stream order and stream network analysis to document water flow through the wet meadow area. This stream network analysis shows that the meadow sits at a point where multiple smaller headwater flows come together. Even though the meadow is at a slightly higher elevation, it is a local collection point for water, which causes moisture to persist in the soil longer than in surrounding upland forest. This higher-order stream channel feeds the wet meadow during rain events and seasonal wet periods, slowing water down and allowing it to spread out rather than rush downhill. That process creates the saturated conditions needed for a wet meadow to form and persist.

During May and June members of the GILT Board met with CJ Reilly, Peter Strom of Strom Horticultural and members of the IWC to develop a schedule and strategy for creating the wet meadow. This included mapping out the meadow's proposed boundaries, cataloguing and

geotagging the existing trees in and surrounding the meadow, and developing a strategy for managing fallen trees and shrubs, removing invasive plants (stinging nettle, smartweed, Japanese stilt grass and phragmites), and taking down and removing invasive trees (Norway Maples) surrounding the wet meadow. In addition, students in the O'Hara Nature Center's Changing Forest program conducted an existing species survey of the plants and grasses within the wet meadow area. As of that time, the proposed wet meadow area contained a large number of fallen logs and fallen branches, and any native grasses and plants were largely overrun by invasive plants and weeds.

Over the course of July, August and September, community members put in over 90 volunteer hours moving fallen logs and brush and removing invasives plants across the floor of the meadow. A substantial amount of fallen branches was moved to adjacent hillsides to clear the meadow floor and create nesting and habitat for birds and small animals. Fallen logs were cut and either moved to areas outside of the wet meadow and/or were placed into piles that would remain on the meadow floor as habitat for lizards, snakes and small animals.

Community volunteers also worked to remove by hand large areas of smartweed (*Persicaria longiseta*), non-native stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) that covered much of the meadow floor. Invasive plants pulled from the ground were collected and moved to other areas of the Irvington Woods to decompose naturally. As they worked, volunteers would identify native plants and grasses and leave those plants *in situ*.

Trained members of the IWC also identified and removed several invasive Norway Maple trees growing in the meadow area and/or that were on adjacent slopes and blocking sunlight from reaching the meadow floor.

C. Fall Planting in The Wet Meadow

As a result of this work done over a five-month period, by October much of the wet meadow had been cleared and was ready for an initial round of planting. On October 19, 2025, GILT held a public event at the O'Hara Nature Center and led a guided tour of the wet meadow site to explain the hydrology of the area and what habitat it would provide for pollinators, birds and other animals. In the photograph below, Warwick Norton, the Chair of the IWC and the Irvington Tree Commission, explains the soil and clay structure on the meadow floor and how that impacts water flow and plant life.

Working with Peter Strom of Strom Horticultural, GILT purchased a diverse range of plants, ferns, sedges and grasses for Community Planting days held on October 25, 2025, and on December 6, 2025. This list included numerous flats of milkweed plugs (*Asclepias incarnata*), which are essential for monarch butterfly habitat. A large number of community volunteers planted over 900 native plants, plugs and shrubs in the newly cleared wet meadow. (A complete listing of these native plants is attached as Exhibit A.)

D. Construction of the Deer Enclosure Surrounding the Wet Meadow

Because of the pressure from deer browsing across the Irvington Woods, GILT had identified the need for a deer exclosure to protect the plant life within the wet meadow. After working with local landscapers to research the proper size and design for fencing, GILT purchased a deer fencing system from Critterfence, a nationally recognized leader in deer fencing systems. The fencing system is seven and a half feet high and is constructed using metal posts and corner posts, heavy grade poly fence mesh and a wire tension system to anchor and secure the fencing. The enclosed, protected area is accessed through a gate constructed as part of the fencing system.

Over the course of November and December, GILT and IWC volunteers constructed this fencing system over most, but not all the 0.5-acre wet meadow.

GILT intentionally left a small portion of the wet meadow outside of the deer exclosure to allow for future study of what ferns, shrubs and grasses thrive both within the enclosure area and outside of the enclosure area and how that potentially impacts the pollinator population. Within the area outside of the deer exclosure, volunteers also used fallen branches to create slash walls around trees and shrubs that could be vulnerable to deer browsing.

E. Spring Planting in the Wet Meadow

In early March, GILT applied for and received from Pollinator Pathway, Inc., a $500 donation of native seeds for planting in the wet meadow. Peter Strom of Strom Horticultural worked with the Northeast Seed Collective at The Hickories in Ridgefield, Connecticut, to develop a seed mix that would support the goal of creating pollinator habitat in the wet meadow. On March 13th, community volunteers hand-sowed these seeds across the wet meadow area.

Again, working with Peter Strom, GILT has purchased and is planning to plant a wide range of additional native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees in the wet meadow over April and May of 2026. On April 3, 2026, GILT received a shipment of 36 native shrubs and trees for the wet meadow. A number of these have already been planted by volunteers and the remaining

trees and shrubs will be planted over the next several weeks. On April 13, 2026, GILT received a shipment of almost 200 native grasses and ferns, which will be planted both within the enclosure and along the outside of the enclosure. Finally, on April 21, 2026, GILT will receive over 50 native plants (including additional milkweed) from The Native Plant Center at SUNY Westchester Community Collage to be planted within the protected wet meadow. (A listing of these native plants, shrubs, and trees planned for planting in the Spring is attached as Exhibit B.)

All these native plants, grasses, ferns, trees and shrubs will be planted by volunteers in the wet meadow over the next six weeks.

F. Creating Study Tools for Pollinators, Birds and Other Wildlife

An essential element of GILT's Wet Meadow Project is to provide both the tools and the opportunity to study the pollinators, birds and other wild life drawn to this new meadow. The wet meadow is immediately adjacent to Irvington's O'Hara Nature Center and, therefore, can serve as a hands-on laboratory of learning for adults and students alike. This is especially true for the Changing Forest students (grades 8 through 12), the Junior Naturalist students (grades 4 through 6) and the Budding Naturalist students (grades 1 through 3) who are part of the Center's after-school programs for young citizen scientists. These programs are designed to create hands-on, science-based study about the old-growth forest in the Irvington Woods and the pollinators, birds, lizards and small animals that live in that diverse habitat. GILT is working closely with CJ Reilly, the O'Hara Nature Center's Director, to design and plan for these future pollinator research programs based in the wet meadow.

After speaking to peer organizations and thinking about how to create these types of programming opportunities, it became clear that getting students and adults into and around the wet meadow to observe, survey, document and report on plants, pollinators, birds and other wildlife was key. To support this educational programming, GILT is using portions of its funds to purchase magnifying glasses and binoculars that students and others at the O'Hara Nature Center will use to observe, track and record pollinators, invertebrates, birds, and other wildlife. GILT has also purchased a Haikubox Birdsong Identifier and a BirdWeather PUC that record and track the wide diversity of birds drawn to this new meadow, especially as it supports a wider number of pollinators and insects. (In less than three weeks, the Haikubox identified over ninety different species of birds in or near the meadow.) Finally, because of the importance of understanding and connecting temperature, wind, and cloud conditions to the presence of pollinators and plant bloom times, GILT has purchased an Ambient Weather WS-2000 weather station that will be installed on the O'Hara Nature Center's grounds near the wet meadow and monitored by members of the IWC.

A challenge of promoting this type of field work, however, is that the wet meadow is, in fact, very wet and muddy much of the time. Therefore, GILT is also using its funding to purchase waders that both adults and students can use to work in the wet meadow while doing observational field work. All this equipment will be housed at the O'Hara Nature Center and be available to student groups and adults who investigate the wet meadow and its plant and animal life.

GILT Has Met If Not Exceeded
Its Hoped-For Results Of The Wet Meadow Project

As described above, over the last twelve months GILT has successfully created a 0.5-acre wet meadow and built it into a pollinator and wildlife habitat. While it is still early spring and the milkweed and other native plants that are already in the ground or that will be planted over the coming weeks have yet to fully bloom, GILT has worked hard to create the right conditions for a successful monarch butterfly habitat.

Moreover, working with CJ Reilly and members of the IWC, GILT has planned for and set the stage for future pollinator surveys, observational study and educational programming about the diverse habitat within the wet meadow. It has provided the tools – magnifying glasses, binoculars, and waders – that will allow both students and adults to study first-hand the pollinators, birds and other animal life within and surrounding the wet meadow. GILT is also working with the O'Hara Nature Center staff to schedule future volunteer days for invasive removal within the wet meadow over the coming months. This will offer the opportunity for community members to observe first-hand what pollinators are drawn to the wet meadow and how they interact and thrive on the diverse range of native plants protected within the deer exclosure.

This observational study of the wet meadow habitat is part of the larger ecological studies being run through the O'Hara Nature Center involving Hermit's Wetland and the overall Irvington Woods. These efforts dovetail well with a 10-year DEC grant the Village has received to study and rehabilitate both the canopy and the understory of the Irvington Woods.

More broadly, creating this wet meadow has offered lessons to both GILT and the IWC that can be applied to future projects in the Irvington Woods. First, this project has provided first-hand experience in how to build deer exclosures by community volunteers that can be applied to other projects across the Woods. Second, the Irvington Woods has been heavily deer browsed and has almost no understory. The Village has recently instituted a deer management program, and this wet meadow project, which includes the restoration of understory forbs and shrubs, will provide a useful study about the effectiveness of these new measures. Third, previous invasive plant control in the Irvington Woods has focused on barberry and phragmites. This project is the first to work on sustained management of Japanese stiltgrass and stinging nettles and should offer lessons learned for other areas in the Irvington Woods.

The success of this Wet Meadow Project to date has been due to the committed efforts of Irvington Village staff and the network of community volunteers and activists within the Irvington community who are focused on environmental sustainability. These efforts at building environmental awareness across our community are also being supported by Irvington's Pollinator Pathway program (which was started by GILT in 2019), the Irvington Green Policy Task Force, the Irvington Girl Scouts and a committed group of students and parents who are focused on ensuring that the Irvington Woods remain a healthy and diverse ecological habitat for plants and animals alike.

GILT Has Managed This Project Consistent With Its Planned Budget

GILT has successfully worked to meet the expected results of the Grant and to manage the Wet Meadow Project within the constraints of the project's budget, subject to a few adjustments as described below. To date, GILT has expended funds in the amount of $23,184.90 on the Wet Meadow Project, all of which are detailed in the Irvington Woods Wet Meadow Project Spending Worksheet, attached as Exhibit C.

Based on our work with Peter Strom and after evaluating the conditions within the wet meadow area after it was cleared of invasives and fallen brush, GILT adjusted the mix of native plants, shrubs and trees it has purchased for planting in the wet meadow. This range of native plants still fully supports a monarch butterfly habitat but will also provide habitat for a wider range of pollinators and birds drawn to the wet meadow and the adjacent Hermit's Wetland. In addition, instead of only purchasing trays of plant plugs, GILT has also included certain shrubs, trees and potted plants within the wet meadow habitat. As a result of this and notwithstanding that GILT purchased a wider diversity and an increased number of plants than originally planned for this project, the overall cost of plants, trees and shrubs was slightly less than anticipated.

The total cost of the deer fencing system used in the wet meadow was higher than originally budgeted for, costing a total of $4,600 rather than the budgeted amount of $3,100. This was due, in part, because of GILT's decision to strengthen the fenced enclosure by installing a wiring and tensioning system running across the top and bottom of the fencing. Based on the conditions in the Irvington Woods and after examining other deer exclosure fencing installed in the Irvington Woods and the surrounding communities, GILT determined that the benefits of installing this equipment and hardware was worth the added cost.

GILT expended slightly more than it had budgeted to support the potential educational programming and field work planned for the wet meadow. These expenditures have included equipment that will be kept at the O'Hara Nature Center and made available to students and adults alike who will participate in the Center's educational and after-school programming and who will do field work within the wet meadow and surrounding area. GILT has also used funds to acquire a Haikubox Birdsong Identifier and a small weather station, which will add to the hands-on field research on both pollinators and other wildlife that is planned within the wet meadow over the next several years.

Finally, GILT and members of the IWC have committed to spending additional volunteer hours doing invasive removal and monitoring developments in the wet meadow. These volunteer efforts are intended to ensure that the plant life supporting pollinator habitat will continue to thrive once the Grant expires.

Exhibit A

Plant Species Planted In The Wet Meadow On October 25, 2025, and on December 6, 2025

Sedges:
Carex grayi (Plug)
Carex vulpinoidea (Plug)

Forbs:
Asclepias incarnata (Plug, Container and Seed)
Chelone glabra (Plug)
Coloclinum coelestinum (Plug)
Doellingeria umbellate (Container)
Eupatorium perfoliatum (Container)
Euthamium graminifolia (Plug)
Eutrochium fistulosum (Seed)
Filipendula rubra (Container)
Helenium autumnale (Plug)
Lobelia cardinalis (Plug)
Lobelia syphilitica (Plug)
Ludwigia alternifolia (Seed)
Mimulus ringens (Plug)
Verbena hastata (Container)
Zizia aurea (Plug)

Ferns:
Onoclea sensibilis (Container)
Osmunda cinnamomea (Container)
Dennstaedtia punctilobula

Shrubs:
Clethra alnifolia (Container)
Lindera benzoin (7)
Aronia arbutifolia 'Brilliantissima' (5)
Aronia melanocarpa 'Autumn Magic' (5)
Viburnum dentatum 'Blue Muffin' (5)

Exhibit B

Plant Species to be Planted During Spring of 2026

Grasses:
Schizachyrium scoparium (48 1 gal.)
Andropogon gerardii (24 1 gal.)
Deschampsia cespitosa (24 1gal.)

Sedges:
Carex pensylvanica (12 1 gal.)
Carex appalachica (12 1 gal.)

Ferns:
Dennstaedtia punctilobula (24 1 gal.)
Osmunda regalis (24 1 gal.)
Polystichum acrostichoides (12 1 gal.)
Dryopteris marginalis (18 1 gal.)

Trees:
Acer pensylvanicum (5 1")
Aesculus Glabra (1 11/2")
Carpinus Caroliniana (3 11/2")
Chionanthus virginicus (1 4')
Halesia Carolina (3 11/4")

Shrubs:
Alnus Serrulata (3 5 gal.)
Cornus alternifolia (3 4')
Cornus Sericea (3 5')
Hamamelis virginiana (9 4')
Magnolia virginiana (5 5 gal.)
Viburnum dentatum (3 7 gal.)
Viburnum lentago (3 8')
Aronia melanocarpa (4)
Ilex verticillata (4)

Forbs:
Mertensia virginica (6)
Packera aurea (3)
Pycnanthemum tenuifolium (6)
Asclepias incarnata (6)
Geranium maculatum (6)
Anemone canadensis (6)

Exhibit C				
Irvington Woods Wet Meadow Project Spending Worksheet				
Date	Vendor	Invoice #	Amount	Balance of Funds
06/01/25	**Total Funding Available**			$25,000.00
06/30/25	Invasive Plant Control Sheeting		$551.36	$24,448.64
10/17/25	Lowe's - Square Wood Stakes		$8.67	$24,439.97
10/30/25	Strom Horticulture LLC	25 WM 01	$3,821.97	$20,618.00
11/07/25	Critterfence -- Deer Fencing	Order #208427	$4,299.31	$16,318.69
11/18/25	Critterfence -- Anvil Order	Order # 208692	$59.56	$16,259.13
11/21/25	Loew's - Additional Hardware for fence		$35.69	$16,223.44
12/06/25	Critterfence -- Deer Fencing parts	Order # 209045	$37.85	$16,185.59
12/07/25	Critterfence -- Deer Fencing parts	Order # 209051	$33.51	$16,152.08
12/15/25	Strom Horticulture	25 WM 02	$1,260.84	$14,891.24
01/28/26	Native Plant Center	Order # 26013	$933.85	$13,957.39
02/12/26	Schichtel's Nursery, Inc.	Order # 0030344	$4,755.00	$9,202.39
03/03/26	Haikubox Birdsong Identifier	Order # 114-3204866-1946660	$291.53	$8,910.86
03/03/26	Birdweather PUC	Order #11784	$309.00	$8,601.86
3/11/26	Critterfence -- fencing parts	Order #210919	$56.92	$8,544.94
3/11/26	Ambient Weather Station WS-2000	Order # 8000279603	$368.45	$8,176.49
3/15/26	4 Athlon Optics 8X42 Midas Binoculars Chest Waders for Kids - 4 Size 12/13, 2 Size 10/11, and 2 Size 8/9 Bootfoot Chest Wader for Adults - 2 Size 6, 4 Size 8, and 2 Size 11	Order # 111-3610966-1032247	$1,960.90	$6,215.59
3/15/26	4 Vortex Optics Triumph 10X42 Binoculars	Order # 111-0739955-7667411	$429.16	$5,786.43
3/18/26	Raybee Clothes Rack	Order # 111-3522791-0826600	$97.50	$5,688.93
3/21/26	Critterfence -- Deer Fencing Parts	Order # 211438	$53.22	$5,635.71
4/1/26	Strom Horticulture	26 WM 01	$3,744.80	$1,890.91
4/7/26	Critterfence -- Deer Fencing Parts	Order # 212543	$75.81	$1,815.10