April 22, 2015

For Immediate Release
Contact: Tom Gabriel, Development Director
914-234-6992 ext 18
tom@westchesterlandtrust.org

Westchester Land Trust Receives $32,750 Grant from Jerome Levy Foundation for Habitat Restoration Project at Leon Levy Preserve in Lewisboro

The Westchester Land Trust (WLT) has received a $32,750 grant from the Jerome Levy Foundation in support of an Invasive Plant Removal & Native Plant Restoration Project on the 370-acre Leon Levy Preserve located on Routes 35 at 123 in South Salem. The Town of Lewisboro owns the Preserve while WLT holds the conservation easement which ensures its permanent preservation.

The goal of this multi-phase project, which begins this week, is to restore the native flora by removing invasive plant species that have taken a foothold. Native ecosystems provide better air purification, water retention, erosion control, and climate regulation than ecosystems where invasive species have taken over. Additionally, local wildlife is better adapted to and thrive off of native plant species. “Invasives are a plague on our preserves making it ever harder for true native plants to flourish or even survive. Lewisboro is hugely grateful to the Jerome Levy Foundation for funding this work,” said Town of Lewisboro Supervisor, Peter Parsons. During this first phase of the project, invasive plants will be removed from a 4-acre area around the main entrance, White Trail and Black Mansion area, allowing enough native seedlings and seed beds to naturally regenerate.

“Shelby White and the Jerome Levy Foundation have been stalwart supporters of the Westchester Land Trust’s efforts in regards to the Leon Levy Preserve, and we are deeply honored that they have chosen to support our project to improve the habitat at the Preserve,” said Lori J. Ensinger, WLT’s President.

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Jim Nordgren Land Trust Services will be the naturalist supervising the project, while WLT’s Stewardship team will provide general oversight and administration. “This project will encourage biodiversity through the regeneration of native plant species, which in turn will welcome more butterflies, flowers and birds to the habitat, creating a more enjoyable experience for visitors to the Preserve,” said Jim Nordgren.

Some of the work scheduled to begin this week includes the removal of invasive species such as Japanese Barberry, Burning Bush, Tree of Heaven, and Norway Maples which are shading indigenous tree saplings and smaller shrubs preventing them from growing, as well as the restoration of a Hemlock grove. During future phases of this project, native species will be reintroduced and young seedlings and saplings will be protected from deer browse by netting, tubing and wire caging, ensuring that nature encourages the right native plants to grow in just the right areas.

This is not the only Enhancement Project WLT is working on in Lewisboro this year. At the 112-acre Frederick P. Rose Preserve on Rt. 121 in Lewisboro, WLT’s Stewardship team is working to restore a unique blueberry orchard, increase the size of the meadow help its plants and animals thrive, as well as reclaim the Brady Farm Trail by removing 200’ of encroaching invasive shrubs.

Based in Bedford Hills, NY, WLT is one of the leading conservation organizations working to protect and enhance the natural resources in Westchester and eastern Putnam counties. WLT’s conservation efforts impact the long term health of these communities as well as those neighboring them through the protection of air and water quality, food supply and critical habitats for the more than 9.5 million residents in the surrounding areas. Its efforts also ensure the preservation of scenic viewsheds and the creation of passive recreation opportunities. WLT works together with public and private partners to preserve land in perpetuity through the donation of property, fee acquisition, or use of legal instruments called conservation easements. As a result of WLT’s conservation efforts since its founding in 1988, the organization has protected approximately 7,500 acres including more than 700 acres on 29 preserves. To learn more, visit westchesterlandtrust.org.