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Seneca Park Zoo Society to plant mega-garden at The Nature Conservancy's Thousand Acre Swamp

1,000-square-foot garden will be one of the largest in the program's history

Rochester, N.Y. – July 24, 2015 — The Seneca Park Zoo Society's Butterfly Beltway Program will plant nearly 1,000 plants at The Nature Conservancy's Thousand Acre Swamp beginning at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, July 27. Creating a massive, and impressive, mega-garden at this regional nature preserve, the 1,000-square-foot garden will be filled with milkweed and other butterfly-friendly plants by a team of staff and volunteers from both organizations.

This ambitious undertaking will be accomplished in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Nature Conservancy protected Thousand Acre Swamp in 1971 and continues to steward this uniquely biodiverse habitat in Penfield.

"The population of migratory monarch butterflies has decreased by an estimated 90% in the past 20 years, making projects and partnerships like this critically important," said Pamela Reed Sanchez, Executive Director of the Seneca Park Zoo Society. "By working to rebuild the habitats for the migratory monarch population, we hope to ensure that future generations will be able to experience the beauty of the monarch phenomena."

New York State is currently dealing with an invasive plant called swallow-wort. This plant crowds out native plants beneficial to butterflies, and is toxic to monarch caterpillars that feed off of it. Swallow-wort has been found at Thousand Acre Swamp, and The Nature Conservancy has been working to remove as much of it as possible to restore habitat for native plants and animals.

"Thousand Acre Swamp is The Nature Conservancy's most frequently visited preserve and one of Monroe County's largest wetland systems," said Jim Howe, The Nature Conservancy's Director in Central & Western New York. "We're thrilled to be working with the Zoo on a project that will help butterfly populations, educate the public on butterflies, and encourage people to create their own butterfly habitats."

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Since the Zoo's Butterfly Beltway Program began in 2002, nearly 20,000-square-feet — represented by almost 150 gardens — of land has been converted into butterfly habitat. Rebuilding lost and shrinking habitats for migrating monarch butterflies is the mission of the Seneca Park Zoo Society's Butterfly Beltway Program. The support of the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation makes these efforts possible.

Of note: Pamela Reed Sanchez, Executive Director of the Seneca Park Zoo Society, and Jim Howe, The Nature Conservancy's Director in Central & Western New York, will be at Thousand Acre Swamp from 10 to 11 a.m. Monday, July 27. They are available for interviews during that time.

Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.