



February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear Friends & Supporters,

I want to thank you for your past and present support and to share some updates about a transition within our organization and our status. As your incoming board chair, I am incredibly grateful and excited for this new chapter. **I love our Conservancy, and I am hopeful for our future.**

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy protects the Indian River, interconnected lakes, forests, and wetlands, ensuring clean water, thriving wildlife, and outdoor recreation for generations to come. As a vital part of the Adirondack to Algonquin (A2A) corridor, our lands support an extraordinary level of biodiversity, from rare orchids to migratory songbirds.

IRLC is a leader in community-driven water quality advocacy, bringing people together to protect shorelines and reduce pollution—a forward-thinking approach recognized by the Land Trust Alliance. Through unique educational programs like the Elizabeth May Duvall Nature Grows Kids Camp and Project WHIRL, we inspire the next generation of environmental stewards while preserving the land and water that make this region special. Last year, we established trails on our new preserves, the Red Lake and Ferrone Woods Preserve, and we will continue to expand and build new trails **that make a difference in so many people's lives.**



**We need your help.** Your continued support and engagement will allow us to continue hosting your favorite annual events, such as Celebration of Lakes and the Elizabeth May Duvall Nature Grows Kids Camp, while introducing new activities such as our monthly Fire and Wine Chats. Our future is bright, but we need your support to get ahead, thrive, and grow.

Despite the years of generous commitment from all our donors and supporters, this year we are facing a challenge of being able to sustain our Conservancy. The board, along with the executive director, has been working to create a sustainable business plan to move forward, ensuring we are able to sustain our mission, to thrive, grow, and to address future conservation challenges in the Indian River Lakes Region.

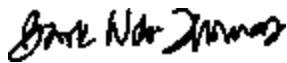
We've been successful for more than 26 years, however, in 2024, we suffered a revenue loss due to unforeseen changes in the environmental carbon credits markets. In efforts to reduce our expenses the board reduced the 2025 budget, resulting in reduction of printed newsletters and mailings and reducing our staff by half from 3.5 to 1.5 employees. We are focused on increasing revenue across all areas of our organization, including memberships, business sponsorships, monthly giving, and grant funding.

At the same time, we remain committed to supporting stewardship, land acquisition, updating trail maps and other strategic communications, water quality summits, environmental educational programs for all ages, as well as planning and implementing conservation-focused community enrichment activities. With fewer staff, our executive director is now more reliant than ever on leveraging the help of our incredible volunteers. Our volunteers have always been central to IRLC's success and, today, they are even more critical to the longevity of the IRLC. There are many ways to get involved! Consider joining one of our committees (stewardship, land acquisition, development, finance, and education), volunteering at events, or even joining our board.

Keep an eye out for our spring newsletter, which will highlight this summer's programs and activities—some of which will showcase the new Red Lake Preserve—and our upcoming spring 2025 campaign **"Let's Get Ahead!"** This campaign is crucial to maintain the sustainability of our nonprofit. Our goal is not only to secure our position in 2025, but to position IRLC's programming and staffing for success in 2026. Because of your continued support, the IRLC continues to not only transform landscapes for the benefit of our wildlife and environment, but we're changing the lives of all who enjoy the Indian River Lakes Watershed. To donate, please visit: [indianriverlakes.org/donate/](https://indianriverlakes.org/donate/) or mail to P.O. Box 27, Redwood, NY 13679.

**Thank you for your continued support as we look ahead!**

Sincerely,



**Brooke Wills-Thomas**  
Board Chair



**Heidi Sourwine**  
Executive Director



**Stephen Swallow**  
Board Member/Immediate Past Chair