Clean Water and Healthy Forests

As part of the Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative (UNCWI), the Eno River Association has received a $1.7 million grant from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities to initiate the Healthy Watersheds through Healthy Forests Project. UNCWI is a partnership effort to prioritize and protect those lands most critical for the long-term health of drinking water supplies in the Upper Neuse River Basin, of which the Eno River Basin is a part. Partners include six land trusts (including the Eno River Association), watershed associations, local government, landowners, utilities, state agencies, elected officials and more. Since its formation four years ago, UNCWI has protected over 4,400 acres of stream buffer. The Healthy Forests Project will complement UNCWI’s goal of protecting drinking water supplies by working with local landowners to maintain forested tracts as forest. Multiple scientific studies throughout the United States have shown that forest cover helps maintain water quality by absorbing and controlling stormwater, thereby reducing negative impacts on streams and waterways.

Managed conservation of forests also helps maintain a more resilient and functioning watershed, protecting not only water quality but biological diversity, wildlife habitat, natural heritage areas and parks. It also helps maintain productive working lands for local production of food and fiber, allowing a landowner to realize income while conserving the resource and maintaining jobs. In addition, forest conservation can reduce flood control costs, improve air quality, and play a vital role in the emerging global market to capture atmospheric carbon and sequester it as biomass.

Currently 60 percent of the Upper Neuse Basin is forested. However, the area is experiencing the most rapid population growth in the state, with a predicted increase of 90 percent across the six Basin counties (Durham, Orange, Wake, Person, Granville and Franklin) over the next 30 years.

As part of the Healthy Forests Project, the Eno River Association and its UNCWI partners will pursue outreach opportunities with forest landowners through a multi-step process to identify, contact, and work with interested non-industrial private forest landowners. The aim of the program is to foster sustainable
Another Milestone to Celebrate

On February 2 NCDOT officially announced the withdrawal of the Elizabeth Brady Road Extension project from the State’s Transportation Improvement Program. Although touted since the 1960s as the solution to traffic congestion in downtown Hillsborough, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released in November made it clear that actual traffic improvements would have been insignificant despite the project’s $30–$45 million price tag.

The cost to the river, the environment and the community would have been even more unacceptable. Had this four-lane, median divided road on its 100-foot right-of-way been built it would have taken out a number of homes and traversed steep bluffs rising as high as 140 feet above extensive wetlands and floodplains. The area, known as the Poplar Ridge Slopes and Bottom, has been designated as a Significant Natural Heritage Area by the NC Natural Heritage Program. It is home to regionally rare species such as Galax and the gray petaltail dragonfly, and there are at least 34 rare species listed by the NC Natural Heritage Program within two miles of the project area. In addition to the damage this sensitive ecosystem would have suffered during construction, the road would have been a perpetual source of toxic runoff dumping into this important ecological corridor just upstream of the Eno River State Park.

Encouraged by former Eno Board Member Bill Crowther, the Eno River Association worked for years to educate local and state government leaders, Hillsborough area residents, and DOT officials about the true costs of this road. Joining with residents of neighborhoods lying in the proposed path of the road, efforts intensified in anticipation of the release of the long-delayed Draft EIS. When the public hearing was held in December public comment overwhelmingly opposed the project, and both the Hillsborough Town Board and the Orange County Commissioners went on record in favor of the No-Build alternative. To its credit DOT listened and withdrew the project. The river is more secure, and as with the defeat in 2003 of Eno Drive in Durham and the original plans to dam the Eno near West Point we have seen once again how much can be accomplished by people who care.
We work hard to protect the beauty and precious resources of our river, but we don’t work alone. We’re bolstered by the many dedicated volunteers who give of their time, energy, sweat and intellect and we’d like to introduce you to just one of them today: Natalie Davis.

**Q & A WITH NATALIE:**

1. *When did you start volunteering with the ERA, and what sorts of things have you done during your time as a volunteer?*
   
   I began volunteering with the ERA in late May of 2009. It started out as a two-week internship for a school project, but then I stayed on for the rest of the summer as the Festival intern. I helped organize and oversee the Festival for the Eno. It involved a lot of mailings, sign painting, telephone calls, database referencing, scheduling, and site set-up. It was so much fun!

2. *What do you like to do when you’re not volunteering?*
   
   When I’m not at the ERA, I can generally be found at the barn with my horse Feather. I do dressage with her. I also volunteer at the North Carolina Therapeutic Riding Center in Mebane.

3. *Who has influenced you to make environmentalism a part of your life?* Although I have always been a very outdoorsy person, my sister was a big influence on me to be environmentally conscious from a young age. She participated in Envirothon, an environmental knowledge competition, as well as Stream Watch. We also just loved being in our wonderful backyard in the woods, especially the creek behind our house. Being constantly surrounded by nature and able to interact with it on a personal level makes you appreciate it all the more.

4. *What’s your favorite Eno River creature?* I have to pick a favorite? What? You people ask the hardest questions. I like bats a lot. Bats and opossums.

Thanks, Natalie!

As a member of the upcoming generation of activists, you inspire us all with your energy and potential.

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**Clean Water**, from page 1

Forest management to enhance water quality and protect forest health by assisting willing landowners to retire development rights on managed forested tracts and to plan and implement sound forest management practices. In addition to addressing the benefits of protecting these forests, the program will educate forestland owners about the revenue-generating/saving opportunities that may exist to support forestland management for the water-related ecosystem services it provides.

If you are interested in knowing more about the Healthy Watersheds through Healthy Forest project or know of potential outreach opportunities, please email kurt@enoriver.org.

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**Help Us Save Money & Resources**

SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!

This year we will be switching to email invitations for most of our Eno events. We will no longer be mailing postcards for the annual Spring Picnic, Annual Meeting and Calendar Celebration. If we have your email address you will receive an evite, special email and/or notice in our monthly enewsletter about these and many other Eno activities throughout the year. If you are not receiving monthly emails from us please send us your email address to association@enoriver.org. If you don’t use email regularly please give us a call at 919-620-9099 x205 and let us know. We’ll still get in touch with you with info throughout the year. We don’t want you to miss out on any Eno event!

* If you are an Earthlink customer, or you have junk mail filters running, you will need to add association@enoriver.org and evite.com to your accepted email list.

You can always visit www.enoriver.org or call 919-620-9099 for messages about event details and any last minute changes or cancellations.
Like everyone else, the Eno River Association has spent the last year and a half adjusting to the economic downturn. Changes at the state level have resulted in significant reductions in money available for land protection across the State of North Carolina. With the recent stresses on the economy, monies from the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and other funding sources have been dramatically diminished. This disruption in funding has created challenges for the way the Eno River Association does its critical work in the Eno River Basin.

Fortunately, our strong tradition as a grassroots organization enables us to keep on advancing the cause of the Eno! The Eno River Association has a number of strategies already underway to directly support our land conservation projects, our educational activities, and the professional staff that make these programs a reality.

In late spring of this year we will be undertaking an annual support campaign which will let people who love the Eno River to take a “hands-on” approach to helping the Eno River Association preserve the river. Volunteers will help us share the Eno River story and make a difference in safeguarding the Eno by participating in fundraising activities led by the Association. Also in 2010, we will be kicking off our “Eno River Legacy Society” which will promote planned giving and estate planning to include the Eno River Association.

As the Eno River Association celebrates nearly 45 years of making a difference in our community, it is appropriate that we continue to adapt; our increased self-sustainability is a necessary part of our evolution. What remains unchanged is our commitment to protect the Eno. With your help, we will make 2010 another great year!

If you or someone you know is willing to help the Eno River Association advance our fundraising efforts, please contact Robin Jacobs at (919) 620-9099 x202 or email her at robin@enoriver.org. Working together we will continue to protect and preserve this special river.

**Creek Week**
**March 20–27, 2010**

In 2009 the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association (ECWA) partnered with Durham Stormwater educator Laura Webb Smith on a pilot program called Creek Week. This year it has expanded to include the Eno River Association, Haw River Assembly, Northeast Creek, plus other community programs and groups including Durham Parks & Recreation, Frog Hollow Outdoors, Keep Durham Beautiful and Eno River State Park.

The goal of Creek Week is to provide opportunities for Durham residents to discover and explore local streams and lakes through educational programs and recreational activities and to do their part to protect waterways through volunteer projects. Check out all of the activities at www.keepdurhambeautiful.org, Upcoming Events link and be sure to join in on one of the many opportunities during Creek Week 2010.

**Donation Wish List**

Tools – Wheelbarrow, Shovels, Hand tools

10’ x 10’ eZ-Up Canopies

Macintosh Computer (G4 or better)

**We Love Serendipity!**

When the Museum of Life and Science began renovations they invited us to come over and rummage their surplus equipment. What fun it was! We look forward to using all of the “new to us” equipment in our education programs.

We’d been putting off buying new reflective vests and gloves for our workdays when Julie Reynolds, a member of our education committee, said that she had some items to donate to our programs. You guessed it—reflective vests and work gloves!
Staff from the Eno River Association, Triangle Land Conservancy, Durham County Open Space Program, and the Orange County Lands Legacy Program, have recently partnered to create the Durham and Orange Land Stewardship Network. The goal of the Network is to promote collaboration between the partnering organizations by sharing stewardship resources and knowledge to more effectively manage important natural areas in Durham and Orange counties.

As part of this partnership, the Network will be holding quarterly volunteer stewardship workday events. The idea behind these workdays is simple: we want to provide opportunities for our fellow naturalists and conservationists to visit other natural properties within the Triangle area, experience a variety of land management projects, and meet other fellow nature lovers. These workdays will also allow the partnering organizations to recruit from a larger volunteer base to assist with a variety of land management projects, including activities such as trail construction, invasive species mapping and removal, native vegetation plantings, or property clean-up.

Below is the Network’s workday schedule for the rest of the year:

- **May 22, 2010** – See Eno listings, left
- **September 2010** – Trail building
- **Durham County Open Space Program**
  - **New Hope Creek Preserve**
  - **Hollow Rock Access**
- **December 2010**
  - **Triangle Land Conservancy**
  - **Irvin Farm or Johnston Mill**

If you are interested in hearing about these future workdays, notify Kurt Schlimme at kurt@enoriver.org to have your name added to the Network’s volunteer list.

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**Traveling Ts**

Our Director of Stewardship Kurt Schlimme traveled to the John Muir Wilderness south of Yosemite in 2008 to do some backpacking with friends. This photo was taken in the Bear Lakes Basin with the Seven Gables ridge behind. If you’re ever out that way, Kurt says that it was the best campsite ever!

Has your favorite Eno Tee been anywhere lately? Email your Traveling Tee images to kathy@enoriver.org.
Standing by the river – Canada geese float gently on the current and a kingfisher calls on the wing; the sky is blue and there are deer tracks in the snow… and a herd of bison grazing nearby! It was on a recent trip to Yellowstone National Park, while watching bison and other wildlife along the Lamar River, that I came to understand in a clearer way that protected places and wilderness mean to me.

It was my first visit to Yellowstone and it was spectacular. I felt like I was experiencing a time-traveling moment, back to the primeval. I am grateful that in 1872 there were forward-thinking, daring individuals who proposed that Yellowstone should be protected “For the benefit and enjoyment of the people” as the Roosevelt Arch reminds us at the north entrance to the park. Perhaps I take it for granted that the obviously awe-inspiring places such as Yellowstone will be protected. But what about the less dramatic places, like the Eno? Why protect them?

The Eno River valley did have a dramatic past long, long ago, when volcanoes were active and dinosaurs roamed, but that’s not why it’s important to me today. I believe that the places close to home with their gentle wildness are as important to our understanding of nature, and of ourselves, as the awe-inspiring places like Yellowstone. It was no less forward thinking when in 1972 the Association for the Preservation of the Eno River Valley convinced local and state authorities that establishing the Eno River State Park would benefit the people of North Carolina. I am grateful to these forward thinking individuals who fought to protect the awe-inspiring places, and to those who protect the meek and the mild places too.

Reflections from the River
Kathy Lee, Director of Education

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Eno River Currents is online!

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☐ Please inform me of volunteer opportunities with the Eno River Association. (Please provide an email address if you have one.)

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