

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DURHAM RESIDENTS TO VOTE FOR MORE ENO RIVER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS

Expansion of Eno River Association's environmental education programs featured in Durham Participatory Budgeting Cycle #2

Out of more than 60 applicants, the Eno River Association's hands-on, feet-wet environmental education programming was selected to be a part of the Durham Participatory Budgeting Cycle 2 (PB Durham). The Association is looking to expand upon its successful summer programming with new initiatives to engage Durham students throughout the school year. The Durham-based non-profit land trust is eligible to receive up to \$50,000 of grant funding to help with this initiative, as determined by the votes of City Residents.

The Association's plan includes partnering directly with Durham Public Schools to offer field trips to parks along the Eno River, education programs provided within the school when a field trip is not a viable option, and virtual learning opportunities. These programs will consist of curated activities in alignment with NC Standard Course of Study curriculum and will target 4th, 5th, and 8th grade classes. These programs will be provided at no cost to the schools, and transportation may be available to serve all schools, especially the Title One Public elementary and middle schools in the Eno River watershed.

Durham City Council approved \$1 million for PB Durham to support Durham-connected nonprofit and community organizations who are directly serving those residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing issues contributing to racial, economic, and social injustices. City of Durham residents and students 13 years and older will have the opportunity to vote on the 31 project proposal finalists between May 5 and June 6. Last cycle, over 10,000 Durham residents participated in PB Durham by submitting ideas, serving as budget delegates, and voting on the community projects.

"Our youth have suffered tremendously from the ongoing pandemic, especially those from under-resourced communities. Experiential learning opportunities especially suffered." says Hillary Harrison, Director of Education & Outreach for the Association. "Study after study proves that spending time in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing, especially for youth. Having access to safe, outdoor activities has never been more essential to the health of our community, and by partnering with schools to offer quality, hands-on inquiry-based environmental education programs to students, we are responding simultaneously to the learning loss and wellness impacts of the pandemic."

The Eno River Association is a local leader in offering summer programming with a focus on reaching underrepresented and marginalized communities within the Eno River watershed area; 30-50% of summer camp participants self-identify from minority populations, with the majority of those coming from ESL (English as a second language) families. The Eno River flows through Durham County which has populations of 57% racial and ethnic minority and 16.4% below the poverty line – statistics both higher than national averages. The watershed is home to 13 Durham Public Schools, eight of which are identified as Title One

Schools. A school-wide Title I school must have 40% or more of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch. DPS currently has 31 schools that have school-wide Title I programs.

“We have a grand vision of providing every DPS student with a personally meaningful experience with this important waterway during their time in the school system.” shares Jessica Sheffield, Eno River Association Executive Director. “The Eno River flows through all of our lives, provides drinking water, recreation and respite, and important wildlife corridors to our communities. It’s imperative that our youth – especially those simultaneous most impacted by poor environmental practices and least represented in environmental and natural resource conservation – are given the chance to engage with it and learn from it.”

“We’re inspiring students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and creating future conservationists who will protect the Eno and the larger environment for generations to come,” adds Harrison.

Durham City residents can visit pbdurham.org to see a complete list of projects and to cast their vote by June 6. The Eno River Association is listed under the Children, Youth, and Families category.

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About the Eno River Association:

The Eno River Association is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization founded in 1966 with a mission to protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Eno River basin in northern Durham and Orange counties. The Association has protected 7,500 acres of natural and working lands and has helped create five local, state, and regional nature parks, including Eno River State Park, Oconeechee Mountain State Natural Area, West Point on the Eno City Park, Penny’s Bend Nature Preserve, and Little River Regional Park. The Association continues to acquire land and secure easements, as well as provide stewardship, education programs, and events like the annual Festival for the Eno to inspire others to prioritize our local, natural resources. More information is available at www.enoriver.org