

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROTECTS 114 ACRES OF ENDANGERED SPECIES HABITAT AND ENO RIVER FRONTAGE IN DURHAM COUNTY

A partnership of the Eno River Association, NC Plant Conservation Program and NC Botanical Garden secured purchase of a 114-acre property (click for location map) from Jack and Sybil Penny on August 31, 2006. The property will support efforts to save endangered plant species, protect river frontage along the Eno River, restore parts of the rare Piedmont Prairie ecosystem, and preserve water quality and wildlife habitat.

This purchase is part of an ongoing partnership that has successfully protected numerous other properties in the area near Penny's Bend Nature Preserve. The Plant Conservation Program identifies priority tracts and secures funding, Eno River Association contacts and negotiates purchases with landowners, and the NC Botanical Garden provides management expertise once the tracts are acquired.

Funding for the acquisition, the partnership's largest to date, came from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund (NHTF) and the Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP). NHTF works through the State's land conservation trust system to protect sites with significant ecological significance. EEP was formed from an agreement between the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the NC Department of Transportation and the Army Corps of Engineers. It provides grants to protect and restore wetlands and streams to offset damage to these resources caused by highway construction projects.

All of the partnership's land acquisition has taken place within a "Diabase Sill Project Area" that has been identified as nationally significant by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Soils and parent rock materials help create conditions for a number of rare plant species. Populations of Smooth Coneflower (*Echinacea laevigata*), Blue Wild Indigo (*Baptista minor* var. *aberrans*) and Prairie Dock (*Silphium terebinthinaceum*) occur on the Penny tract, and efforts to restore their populations and habitat has already been initiated by the Plant Conservation Program.

"We are thrilled that we were able to help protect this extremely valuable tract," said Klugh Jordan, Land Protection Specialist for the Eno River Association. "The permanent protection of this property will protect sensitive endangered species habitat, wetland habitat, and over 6,200 feet of frontage along the Eno River and its tributaries, and bring us one step closer to protecting a continuous stretch of habitat along the Eno River between Penny's Bend Nature Preserve and West Point on the Eno Park."

The Plant Conservation Program will manage the tract with support from the Botanical Garden to protect and restore populations of the rare plants and their natural habitats, while protecting the water resources associated with the Eno River. "We greatly appreciate ERA's willingness to help the NC Plant Conservation Program, Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and EEP permanently protect this tract. The property will make an excellent addition to the Eno Diabase Sill Preserve. Without the willingness of the Penny family this key acquisition could not have occurred. Thankfully, they appreciated the natural environment their property provides and recognized the importance of having their property protected for future generations," said Rob Evans of the Plant Conservation Program.

For more information about the Eno River Association's conservation

activities call the Association office at (919) 620-9099.

For More Information Contact:

Klugh Jordan, ERA Land Protection Specialist: (919) 620-9099

Rob Evans, Plant Conservation Program Plant Ecologist: (919) 733-3610 x249

Johnny Randall, NC Botanical Garden Assistant Director: (919) 962-0522