Making an Impact

A Green Light for the New Hope Creek Restoration Projects

Thanks to a combination of private and public support, the New Hope Creek Restoration Projects have received sufficient funding to enter final planning and design, and ultimately construction. New Hope Creek, a vital waterway that flows through the Duke Forest, is a crucial habitat corridor for numerous species and connects ecosystems across the region.

For decades, the Concrete Bridge and partially breached Billy Erwin Dam have degraded this creek, which is a primary tributary to Jordan Lake. To restore it, the planned projects will tackle three primary goals: (1) remove the Concrete Bridge; (2) construct a new, clear-span bridge to replace it; and (3) remove the defunct Billy Erwin Dam. By eliminating these obstacles, the creek will flow freely once again, improving water and habitat quality and restoring connectivity for native species like the federally threatened Atlantic Pigtoe mussel (*Fusconaia masoni*) and its host fish, the Creek Chub (*Semotilus atromaculatus*).

Funding for the projects was secured through partnerships and generous private donations. Working with our friends at Triangle Land Conservancy, we secured a grant from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund. A leadership level gift from **Brad and Shelli Stanback**, along with significant donations from **John Alston Gardner** and **Adam and Rosalind Abram** helped us reach the threshold necessary to begin the projects.

"Having walked its trails since I was five years old, connecting with nature has always been central to my relationship with the Duke Forest," Gardner says. "By supporting this effort to restore vital habitats, I hope to help the Forest continue to thrive as a healthy environment for both wildlife and visitors like me."

As the projects progress, the Duke Forest team is excited about the opportunities they will bring for research, teaching, and community engagement. A recent mussel survey and subsequent reintroduction completed with expertise and capacity provided by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission is just one example of how the projects can engage students, researchers, and recreational visitors in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences.

Design for the new, clear-span bridge is nearly complete, with construction beginning next year. Our team is deeply grateful for the support that has set these projects into motion. We are eager to begin the work of restoring New Hope Creek, creating a healthier, more resilient ecosystem for all.

These restoration projects embody Duke University's commitment to research, education, and environmental stewardship and importantly, what we can achieve through partnership. Whether it's a small project or a multi-year initiative like this one, there are always opportunities to get involved with the work to steward this land base. If you are interested in partnering with us to support these efforts, please reach out at **dukeforest@duke.edu**.

Duke graduate students from the Nicholas School of the Environment examining Notched Rainbow Mussels (Villosa constricta) being reintroduced into New Hope Creek in preparation for the restoration projects.

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The ***Friends of the Duke Forest*** are our foundation of support. When you become a Friend of the Duke Forest, you are part of the network of neighbors, community members, and Duke faculty, staff, and students that make our work possible. Show your dedication and appreciation for this irreplaceable resource by ***donating $50 or more per year***. You will receive a Friends of the Duke Forest car decal!

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