Impact Project Report

Master Naturalist helps create a Forest Bathing trail with the Eno River Association

Issue

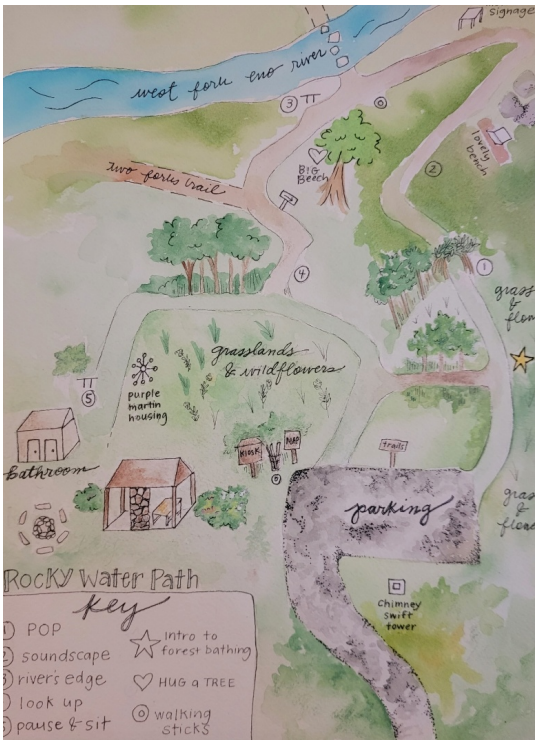
We live in a world that is increasingly disconnected from nature. Forest Therapy (also known as Forest Bathing or as the Japanese practice of *Shinrin Yoku*) is a way to explore nature. Decades of research have shown that it's good for our health —boosting the immune system, lowering blood pressure, and helping with depression.

Master Naturalist Aimee Vandemark worked with the Eno River Association (ERA) to create a forest bathing experience along the Rocky Water Path, in the Confluence Natural Area. It is a self-guided Certified Forest Therapy Trail (one of only three in the state), providing a dedicated space for visitors to connect with nature using all of their senses and experience the healing power of nature.

Project

As an Association of Nature & Forest Therapy (ANFT) Trail Consultant, Vandermark was able to complete the Certification Assessment (including assessments of safety, infrastructure, ease of access, trail design, ecosystem, and land management; mapping and a video walk).

She is developing an information sheet (laminated copies will be available at the start of the trail) providing an introduction to Forest Bathing and invitations to connect with nature along the trail. Once the ERA completes their ADA assessment and modifications to the trail, they will install permanent signage along the trail. The trail will soon be listed as a project in progress with ANFT (https://anft.earth/trails-overview). A “grand opening” of the trail is planned for SPRING 2026.



Vandemark’s hand-drawn map of the self-guided trail

Student

This project is the work of Aimee Vandemark

Impact Projects

Beyond classwork, a key feature of the Master Naturalist Volunteer program are the Impact Projects students develop. These projects integrate course concepts and benefit a Partner Organization.

Highlights

Partner Organization

Eno River Assocation

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