Impact Project Report

Launching Sound Rivers Swim Guide Coverage for the Eno River

Issue

In Summer 2026, the Eno River Association - in partnership with Sound Rivers - launched a weekly water quality check at four popular recreation sites on the Eno River. By regularly monitoring water quality, the Eno River collected running data for ongoing monitoring, educated the public about water safety, and promoted stewardship of one of our region's treasured natural resources.

Project



Water quality can be affected by sediment from construction and development, agricultural and residential nutrient runoff, industrial and municipal waste, natural disasters, and more. After Tropical Storm Chantal caused major flooding of the Eno, extensive damage led to questions about the river's safety for recreation. Unfortunately, regular water quality data were not available to establish a baseline of expected water quality and - therefore - early alerts for future risks. NC DEQ data on Eno River water quality is available approximately every two years (last data published: 2022). Since a heavy rain can affect local water quality day-to-day, Sound Rivers helps resolve the data collection gap.

The Eno River Association is a longstanding organization with access to a supportive community volunteer network. By working with Sound Rivers, we organized teams of volunteers to support water collection at four popular recreation sites: Eno River Brewing, upstream of Sennet's Hole at West Point on the Eno, Fews Ford in Eno River State Park, and Penny's Bend. Teams coordinated weekly sample collection and delivery to Sound Rivers' lab in Raleigh within the critical time window to maintain water temperature needed for effective culturing, process the samples, and publish the results on Friday for the weekend.

Results

Summer 2026 was the first year weekly water quality data were available for Durham and other communities along the Eno.

We expected strong results. The Eno River's long sections of protected riverbank suggest a strong chance for a healthier ecosystem. By collecting weekly data from May - September, we found high "pass rates" at our four recreation sites. Rain events, pet waste, and agricultural runoff can still result in periodic failures. Some surprises - beyond the historic drought! - included several isolated July "failures" at Penny's Bend and an isolated upstream failure while sites downstream remained clear.

As a popular community resource, regular water quality monitoring and reporting is important to the communities who enjoy this natural resource. Next steps include further communicating the impacts of human activity, local development, and weather on week-to-week water quality swings.

Student

This project is the work of Alex Riehm

Highlight

Partner Organization

Eno River Assocation

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