



July 2025

Durham County Natural Areas Inventory Update

Durham County's Open Space Program has been awarded \$20,000 from The Burt's Bees Foundation to document, map, and update State-designated natural areas in east and north Durham County. Durham County has long been recognized as a special place for its biological and ecological diversity and was one of the first counties in the State to have State-led biological inventories. This original inventory has not been comprehensively updated since 1999. This work will include landowner outreach, fieldwork, data compilation, and reporting - all of which will be completed by [North Carolina Natural Heritage Program](#) (NC NHP), a program of the Division of Land and Water Stewardship within the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Natural Areas. NC's Natural Heritage Program has identified natural areas in Durham County that are important for biodiversity. Many are in east and north Durham where there have been significant recent land use changes. Natural areas are sites recommended for conservation due to the presence of rare species, unique natural communities, important animal groups, or other ecological features of special significance for



Prairie Dock – photo by Bruce Sorrie

biodiversity. This project will document, map, and update State-designated natural areas in east and north Durham to support conservation planning and land stewardship. With Durham's current UDO update and the upcoming County-wide open space plan, these biological surveys will provide meaningful environmental data for conservation of wildlife habitats. With this funding and in partnership with the State's Natural Heritage Program we will gather much needed current ecological and environmental data for conservation planning, management, and community education. Fieldwork for this project will be conducted through July 2026, to provide observations during two growing seasons. The final report is expected in October 2026.

The Importance of Biological Inventories. There is an acknowledged global *biodiversity crisis*: species are threatened with extinction as land use and environmental change drive significant habitat decline and loss. The better we understand what we have, the better we can protect, manage, and restore the remaining important natural areas.

*This updated inventory of Natural Areas will: **guide conservation priorities, support site specific management efforts, contribute to conservation planning, and provide educational materials for the community.***

Thank you to our partners!



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