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Elizabeth River Trail Foundation Announces Line Up of 2025 Programs

NORFOLK, Va. – The Elizabeth River Trail provides 10.5 miles of exploration, fun, and recreation with something for everyone. Each year, the Elizabeth River Trail hosts over 100 events that are free and open to the public including historical tours, botanical tours, Trail Beautification Days, group paddles, community events, and more. The Foundation is excited to announce the expansion of its Nature For All program which encompasses Trail Beautification Days and Botanical Tours.

The Nature for All program has been an ongoing partnership with the Norfolk Master Gardeners who lead the events and provide education and support for volunteers and participants. New this year, thanks to grant funding, the ERT is partnering with Eco Gardens 757 to offer volunteer training opportunities to the ERT Green Team as well as additional Trail Beautification Days where they will provide technical expertise on native plants and sustainable landscaping.

Meeting on the fourth Friday of each month, March through November, Norfolk Master Gardeners will lead Trail Beautification Days at rotating locations along the trail. This is in addition to the walking and biking Botanical Tours on the fourth Saturday of each month, April - October. The workdays will focus on removing invasive plants and non-native plants, as well as new plant installations. These workdays are open to anyone who wishes to support the trail through beautification. No experience is needed and is an opportunity to learn about native plants and plant care from local experts.

More Nature for All tours are being planned for late summer and early fall with new partnerships to be announced. These tours will expand program topics to include habitat, wildlife, carbon removal, and wetlands education.

“Enhancing the green spaces along the trail is not just about the environment. It’s about quality of life, the trail user experience, and creating inviting spaces that can be a sanctuary from our busy lives. As a small staff, volunteer support, with the help of partners and experts, provides much-needed support, connects people to the trail, and helps create a sense of ownership,”

said Morgan Willett, assistant director of the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation. “Botanical and historical tours are an opportunity to connect to where we live and develop a deeper appreciation for the world around us.”

Now in its fourth year, the African American History Tour continues to draw large crowds for this engaging and historical tour. Holding the tour in March and June, Norfolk Tour Company’s owner and Chief Tour Guide, Josh Weinstein, shares stories of the Elizabeth River as a means of self-emancipation. A version of the tour will be revisited in June in honor of Juneteenth. In addition to the two African American History tours, four more historical and educational tours are scheduled with Norfolk Tour Company.

The trail season will kick off with a free tour of Fort Norfolk. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to get inside access to this historic Fort on March 22 followed by the first Trail Beautification Day of 2025 on March 28 where a section of the Managed Meadow will be prepped for a revitalization project. April brings with it a variety of opportunities to get involved on the trail. The Second annual Don’t Struggle in Silence 5K is followed by the first Green Team Training of the year where new and interested volunteers can learn more about trail maintenance from Eco Gardens 757. The fourth Saturday in April is Celebrate Trails Day. This free community and day of service event will be hosted in Lambert’s Point and include activities, games, a litter clean up, tree planting with AKA Sorority, a mobile bookstore, and more. Group Paddles with Norfolk Kayak Rentals will continue this summer with dates to be announced soon.

“We are delighted to be able to grow our outreach, free programming, and partnerships as trail usage continues to grow,” said Kindra Greene, executive director of the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation. “Due in part to grant funding, but largely individual community member donations allow us to continue the programs that connect our communities with open access to the waterfront. We’re so grateful that our neighbors and trailside businesses see the value in that.”

Tours, events, community programs, and beautification days continue through the summer into the fall. Cooler days bring with them other popular trail programs such as the International Coastal Cleanup, Elizabeth River Run, Halloween Puppy Parade, and Glow Party all culminating with the festive Santa Bike Party in December.

ERT 2025 Tour Schedule

- ❖ March 1 African American History Tour led by Norfolk Tour Company
- ❖ March 2 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing
- ❖ March 22 Historic Fort Norfolk Tour led by Norfolk Tour Company
- ❖ April 6 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing

- ❖ April 26 Botanical Walking Tour of Lambert's Point led by the Norfolk Master Gardeners, followed by **Celebrate Trails Day**
- ❖ May 3 Spinclusion RideABILITY event at Harbor's Edge
- ❖ May 4 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing sponsored
- ❖ May 17 Larchmont and Edgewater Resilience Tour led by Norfolk Tour Company
- ❖ May 24 Botanical Bike Tour led by the Norfolk Master Gardeners
- ❖ June 1 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing
- ❖ June 21 African American History Tour led by Norfolk Tour Company
- ❖ June 28 Botanical Walking Tour of the Hague and Chrysler Museum led by the Norfolk Master Gardeners
- ❖ July 6 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing
- ❖ July 26 Botanical Bike Tour in Freemason led by the Norfolk Master Gardeners
- ❖ August 3 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing
- ❖ August 20 Chesterfield Heights Tour led by Norfolk Tour Company
- ❖ August 23 Botanical Walking Tour of Significant Trees at ODU led by ODU PhD. Candidate Devani Jolman
- ❖ September 7 Tour de ORF Group Bike Ride at Smartmouth Brewing
- ❖ September 21 Elizabeth River Run 10K and Kid's Mile
- ❖ September 27 Botanical Walking Tour of Chelsea and Managed Meadow led by the Norfolk Master Gardeners
- ❖ October 25 Botanical Walking Tour of Wetlands

If you would like to host an event on the trail, partner with the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation, or sponsor an ERT program, please email hello@elizabethrivertrail.org.

The Elizabeth River Trail Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides the planning, programming, and advocacy for the Elizabeth River Trail connecting Naval Station Norfolk to the Virginia Beach Trail. The Elizabeth River Trail runs 10.5 miles through businesses, and historic attractions and is within a 5-minute walk of 28 neighborhoods. The multi-use trail is designed for walking, running, and biking. It comprises 11 sections from Norfolk State University, through Downtown Norfolk and Old Dominion University to NIT Terminals along the Elizabeth River. The Foundation has completed multiple new unique and award-winning amenities, including kayak launches, play sculpture, and a double turbo challenge course in Plum Point Park, The Glowline, and most recently, the installation of the first ERT hydration station. Major sponsors include CHKD, Downtown Norfolk Council, PRA Group, and the City of Norfolk.

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