FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Why Is a Local Nonprofit Planting Trees at the NHC Landfill? Or/**

**Volunteers Needed to Plant 80 Trees this Saturday!**

WILMINGTON, NC-December 13, 2023-Since 2019, the local environmental nonprofit, Plastic Ocean Project or “POP,” has planted over 1500 trees at the county landfill. POP initiated its Trees4Trash program in response to the devastation caused when Hurricane Florence swept through the area in the fall of 2018. The NC Forest Service noted, “Although a category one storm, Florence caused more than $70 million in damage to an estimated 1,251,312 acres of forested land.”

POP has made taking away what doesn’t belong and replacing it with what does, part of its mission. Along with being an eyesore, trash clogs storm drains, and pollutes area creeks, ponds, rivers, waterways and the ocean. Trees provide shade, oxygen, a habitat for wildlife plus buffer high winds and absorb excess water through their roots.

For every 25 pounds of trash collected at POP cleanups, one tree is planted. So far, the trash total for 2023 is 13,876.56 pounds or nearly 7 tons of trash. Over 900 volunteers have participated in POP cleanups this year and thanks to their efforts, 555 trees will be planted in 2024. Duke Energy was the chief sponsor for the 2023 Trees4Trash program and helped it expand to Brunswick & Pender counties.

Volunteers are needed this Saturday from 9am to noon to help plant 80 trees at the NHC Landfill in an area known as “Fran’s Forest.” The site covers about two acres and contains inert debris such as lumber and roofing materials left over from the 1996 storm, Hurricane Fran.

When asked about Trees4Trash and Fran’s Forest, Joe Suleyman, New Hanover County’s Recycling and Solid Waste Director expalined: “Twelve years ago, our department made a commitment to establish habitat restoration areas on unused property at the landfill.  With POP’s amazing team of volunteers, we’ve very close to realizing that vision two decades ahead of schedule.  It’s truly amazing seeing the transformation of those areas over the past few years.  Now it hosts deer, racoon, fox, squirrels, wild turkeys, and more!  It’s a must-see stop on the many tours we conduct, and folks are amazed at the hard work and dedication put into creating such a natural, peaceful space that can be enjoyed for many years to come.”

Please join POP this Saturday morning along with volunteers from Cape Fear Alliance for Trees, the Sierra Club and the National Charity League. Details here: <https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MjAwMTc0>

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