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**Nonprofit Collects Nearly 6 Tons of Trash in 2022-Receives 6K Grant from Duke Energy Foundation!**

WILMINGTON, NC-December 26, 2022-Wilmington-based nonprofit, Plastic Ocean Project (POP)was awarded a $6,000 grant from the Duke Energy Foundation in late December. The grant program addresses community efforts in a six state area and seeks to, “…power the vitality of our communities through philanthropy focused on vibrant economies; climate resiliency; and justice, equity and inclusion.”

As an environmental nonprofit, many facets of POP’s work address climate resiliency and match the grant guidelines, specifically:

 “Environmental resiliency projects that prepare communities for and mitigate against the effects of climate change”

In 2022, through the Trees4Trash program, POP volunteers collected a grand total of 11,780 pounds of trash and planted 471 trees. The initiative earns one tree for every 25 pounds of trash collected. This effort began in 2019 in an effort to mitigate the damage caused by Hurricane Florence. Due to an uptick in these “super storms,” area residents have faced an increased threat of flooding due to severe tree loss. Trees combat the flow of storm water by helping absorb it and also protect homes by serving as a windbreak. Floods cause manmade debris to clog storm drains, which leads to the pollution of the ocean, area creeks, rivers and waterways.

On Tuesday, December 20th, Pam Hardy, Duke Energy’s District Manager for Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender and Sampson counties, presented the check to POP’s director, Bonnie Monteleone, Board member Keith Calder and staff member, Lisa Andree. These funds will enable the Trees4Trash effort to expand to Brunswick and Pender counties where rural residents have expressed concerns about litter and its impact on roadways, livestock, waterways and wildlife.

For more information on this nonprofit or to sign up for future cleanups please visit plasticoceanproject.org.

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