



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Conway Public Library Receives \$500 Grant to Study Micro Plastic Pollution in the Saco River

Conway, NH – April 9th, 2020 – The Conway Public Library (CPL) has received a \$500 NH State Library Summer Learning Grant provided by the Saul O. Sidore Memorial Foundation in memory of Rebecca Lee Spitz. This grant funding will allow the library to develop and implement a citizen science experiment to learn about the effects of micro plastic pollution on plants, animals, and the Saco River. Participants will gain a better understanding of the impact plastic pollution has on our water systems and learn how to analyze and collect data to evaluate the effect their local community is having on the environment. This program is a part of CPL's 2021 Summer Reading Program, whose theme is "Tails and Tales."

The program will take place in three parts starting in June and ending in August with exact dates to be determined. The first part will be an orientation session where participants learn about erosion, pollution in our waterways, and the effect of micro plastic on plants and animals.

The second part of the program will be conducted independently by participants and their families. Two Sample Collection Kits will be available for check-out following the orientation sessions. Each kit will contain a plankton net, net stakes, and sample collection containers. Participants will stake the plankton net at a point of their choosing in the Saco River (or tributary) for 15 minute increments. During that 15 minutes, participants will record observational data in the Field Journal they were provided at their orientation session. Data recorded will include their location on the river, the date, time of day, current weather, how fast the river is flowing, and any other signs of litter or pollution they can see. Participants will return the sample they collected with the kit, but will keep their journal to continue collecting observational data throughout the summer.

The third part of this program will involve inspecting the collected samples for micro plastic pollution. Participants will sieve their samples through a series of increasingly fine mesh filters before examining under a microscope. The amount of micro plastic observed at 75 microns (the width of a human hair) and 25 microns (smaller than the human eye can see) will be recorded. Participants will then be asked to consider these microscopic observations, as well as the

macroscopic observations recorded in their Field Journals, to answer the geo-inquiry questions set out at the beginning of the summer.

By collecting data on plastics found in the waters of the Saco River, participants will get a snapshot of the effects their community is having on our local environment. Participants will be asked to make connections between what they observed and behaviors that exist in the local community. They will then expand upon what they have learned to think about how other natural features and life in the town might be affected by plastic pollution, taking a hard look at the way they, and their community, are using plastic products. The program will conclude with an evaluation of what practices Conway can adopt to become a cleaner and more waste responsible town.

Library Director David Smolen said, “we thank the State Library and the Sidore Foundation for their generous support of this innovative, informative, and fun program. This project is an excellent example of how the library is always looking to develop new educational experiences for our community.” For more information on this program, contact Assistant Director Jeff Beavers at 603-447-5552 or jbeavers@conwaypubliclibrary.org.

Founded in 1900, the mission of the Conway Public Library is to create an environment that promotes lifelong learning and community engagement. To meet that end the library collects and provides access to materials in print and digital form that meets the intellectual and cultural needs of the community. In addition to this, the library serves as a critical meeting space for programs where ideas are exchanged, and relationships are built.