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NEW OBSERVATION PLATFORM DEDICATED AT RIVERBEND PARK

NEWTON, NC – A dedication ceremony was held at Riverbend Park November 9 to commemorate the official opening of a new observation platform, which was constructed with the help of a \$100,000 grant from Duke Energy’s Water Resources Fund.

The ceremony featured remarks from Catawba County Commissioner Barbara Beatty, Duke Energy Community Relations Manager Robin Nicholson, Duke Energy Director of Public Safety and Recreation Strategy Services John Crutchfield, Catawba County Parks Advisory Committee Chair Paul Beatty, Jr., and Catawba County Planning and Parks Director Jacky Eubanks.

The new, ADA-accessible platform extends out over Lookout Shoals Lake and provides views of the Catawba River and the Oxford Hydro Dam. Its concrete construction was designed to help stabilize the shoreline and withstand flood conditions unique to the Oxford Hydro Dam. The platform replaces Riverbend’s previous wooden observation deck, which was lost during the June 6, 2013 flood.

Due to its proximity to the Oxford Hydro Dam, the platform features educational kiosks with historical, statistical, and environmental facts about the dam, hydroelectric energy, and the dam’s role in both flood and drought control in Catawba County.

“This new platform greatly enhances the Riverbend Park experience for park visitors,” said Commissioner Beatty. “We are grateful to Duke Energy Water Resources Fund and the many partners who contributed to making this new platform and educational space possible.”

“Catawba County’s waterways are a regional treasure that power the vibrancy of the surrounding communities,” said Robin Nicholson, Duke Energy’s community relations manager. “Thanks to Catawba County’s efforts, our community members can better enjoy and appreciate the waterways, which is an essential ingredient to ensuring their preservation for generations to come.”

In addition to the Duke Energy Water Resources Fund, project partners included the Catawba County Parks Advisory Committee, the Historical Association of Catawba County, Lenoir-Rhyne University School of Natural Sciences, the Catawba Valley Community College Department of Science, and the companies involved in designing and constructing the platform and printing the sign faces: TGS Engineers, R.E. Burns & Sons, and A Signco.

Located at 6700 Hwy. 16 N. in Conover, Riverbend Park is the largest public passive recreation facility in the Catawba County area with 689 total acres and 5,200 feet of shoreline. Riverbend Park is known for trails that can accommodate hikers and mountain bikers, a two-acre fenced dog park, kayak and canoe access to the Catawba River, a three-quarter-acre pond for fishing, a 1,000-square foot meeting facility, exceptional bird watching, and a diverse natural habitat. On average, Riverbend Park serves more than 94,000 patrons a year and provides the only public access to upper Lookout Shoals Lake. For more information, visit

<http://www.catawbacountync.gov/Parks/Riverbend.asp>.

The Water Resources Fund is a \$10 million multiyear commitment from Duke Energy to help local organizations continue to protect and improve the environment, including waterways used year-round across the Carolinas and neighboring states.

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Photo Cutline: The dedication of the new observation platform at Riverbend Park was celebrated by Catawba County Commissioners, Duke Energy officials, Catawba County Parks Advisory Committee members, and Catawba County staff November 9.

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