MEETING CANCELLED AS A RESULT OF TROPICAL STORM HELENE

Passive Recreation Lands Funding Recommendations

Presented by

Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee

October 1, 2024

Kevin Conrecode, Chair

Matthew Fusco, Vice Chair

Rachael Sawyer, Strategic Partnerships Director

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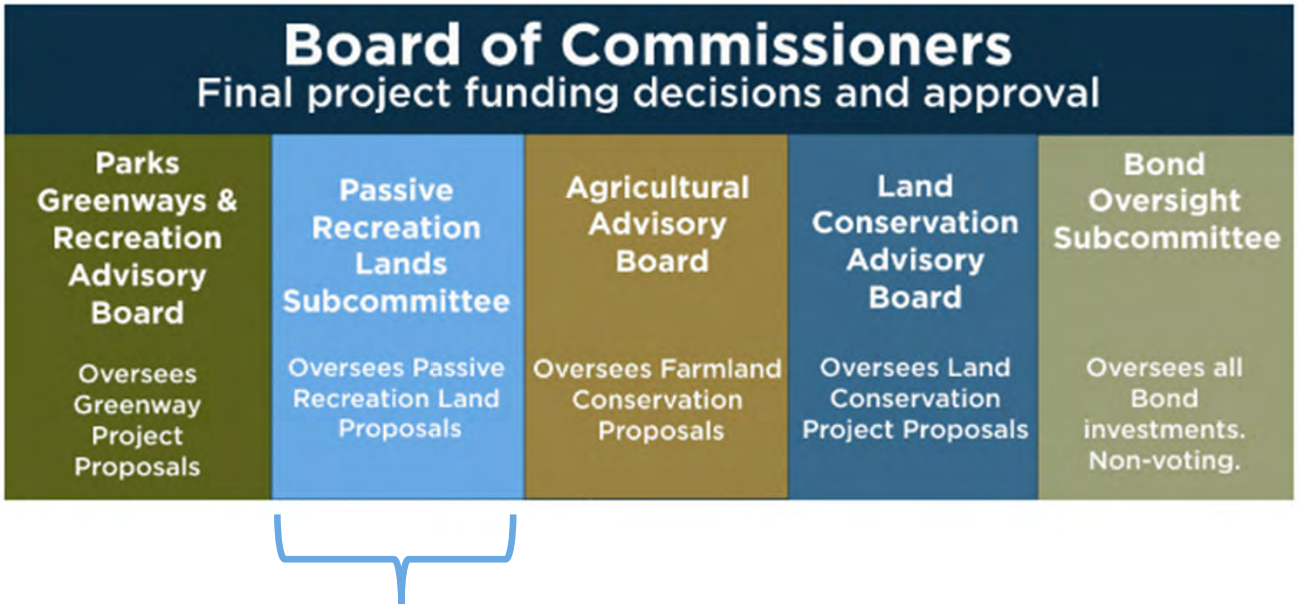
Open Space Bond

- In November 2022, Buncombe County voters approved a $30 million general obligation bond with the following goals:
  - Support greenway infrastructure
  - Protect farmland and natural resources while also contributing to the county's goal of conserving 20% of the County's land by 2030
  - Increase access to recreational activities and protect natural resources



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Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee



Comprised of 7 members appointed by the Parks Greenways & Recreation (PGR) Advisory Board and the Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB)

PGR:

- Ann Babcock
- David Burdette
- Kevin Conrecode
- Lena Richards

LCAB:

- Bob Gale
- Matt Fusco
- Bob Turner

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Passive Recreation Lands Funding

- Funding for publicly-accessible land, outdoor space, waterbodies, and corridors where passive recreational activities – such as hiking, birding, bicycling, and wildlife viewing – place minimal stress on a site's resources in a designated area
- These lands provide ecosystem services and are highly compatible with natural resource protection
- Funding is available for both acquisition and improvement projects for passive recreation
- Emphasis on projects that also deliver land conservation and/or greenway components

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Call for Proposals



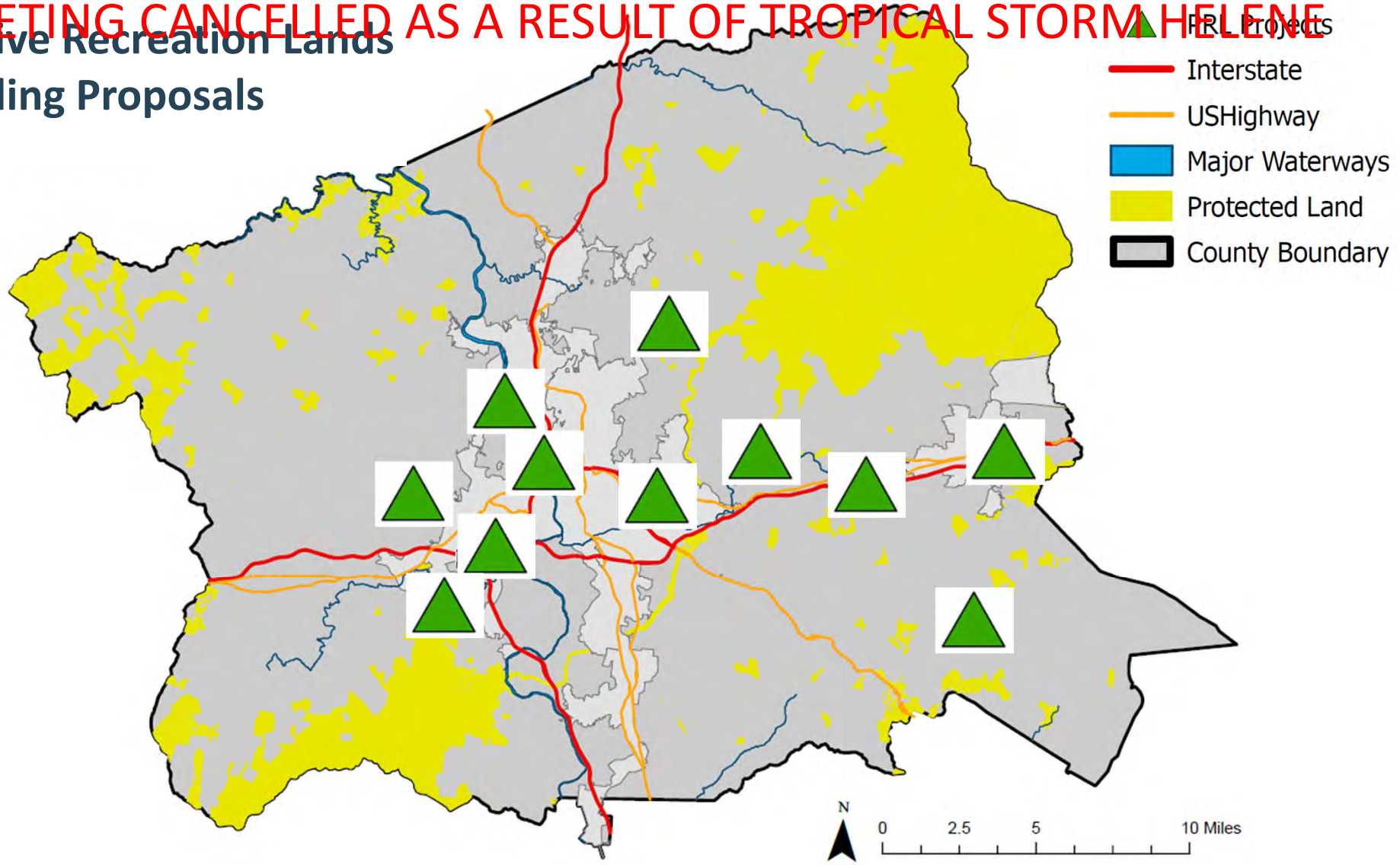
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Proposals Received

- **11** projects
- **3** requests from local government partners + **8** from private entities
- Total request: **$10,931,182**
- Smallest request: **$102,182**
- Largest request: **$3,368,660**
- Median request: **$756,800**

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Passive Recreation Lands Funding Proposals



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The Project Review Process

Staff Review

Vets eligibility, reviews legal authority, and assigns scores using standardized, points-based evaluation criteria

Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee

Digs deeper into scored projects, hears presentations, attends site visits, reviews information, makes recommendations

Board of Commissioners

Makes final decision regarding project funding

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Evaluation Criteria

Qualifying Criteria

Answered as a Yes/No Question

- Project Scheduling/Timeline
- Geographic Location
- Long-Term Management & Maintenance Plan

Weighted Criteria

Scored on a scale

- Conservation and Environmental Impact – 20%
- Feasibility – 20%
- Accessibility – 15%
- Equity – 15%
- Long-Term Management and Maintenance – 10%
- Costs and Leveraged Funding – 10%
- Alignment with County Plans/Needs/Other Priorities – 5%
- Safety – 5%

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Funding Recommendations

Project	Type	Initial Funding Request	Recommended Funding	Applicant
33+/- Acres on Sandhill Road	Acquisition	$1,633,400	$1,090,000	Balsam Gardens
Deaverview Mountain	Acquisition	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Gateway Park	Improvements	$200,000	$200,000	Riverlink
Haw Creek Park Greenway	Improvements	$102,182	$102,182	Haw Creek Community Association
Hominy Creek Greenway Trail Improvements	Improvements	$312,834	$312,834	Asheville Greenworks
Improving Public Access & Use of Lands	Improvements	$141,580	$141,580	Warren Wilson College
Ridgecrest Connector	Improvements	$705,000	$575,000	Town of Black Mountain
Riverside Park	Improvements	$3,368,660	$2,195,231	Town of Woodfin
Worx Community Forest Trail Development	Improvements	$756,800	$675,000	Camp Grier
Weaverville Watershed Trails and Wildlife Preserve	Improvements	$1,072,030	$0	Town of Weaverville
Woodmen Trailhead and Educational Park	Acquisition & Improvements	$1,638,950	$0	Friends and Neighbors of Swannanoa (FANS)

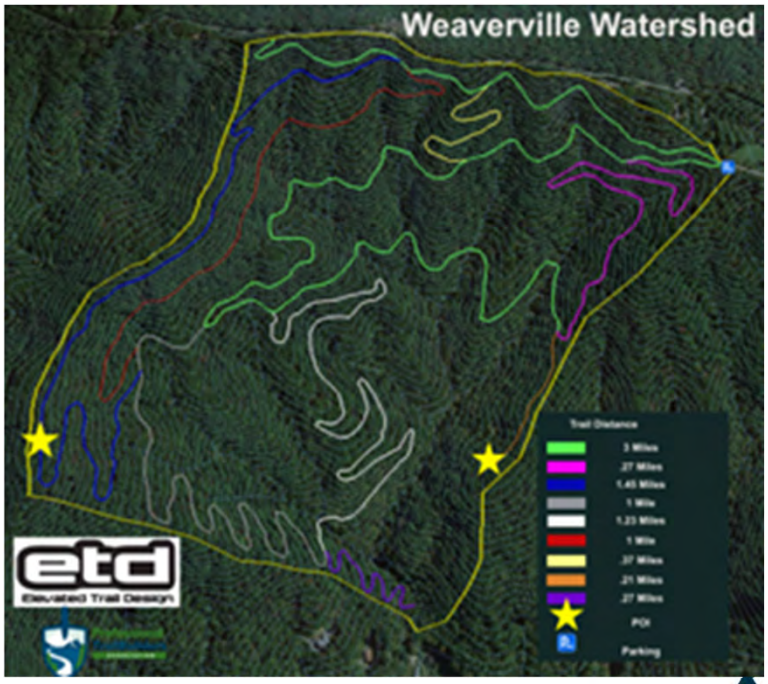
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Weaverville Watershed Trails & Wildlife Preserve

Town of Weaverville

Recommended Funding: $0 at this time

The Town of Weaverville owns a 309 acre watershed along Elk Mountain Scenic Highway that is protected under a conservation easement with the NC Land and Water Fund. This funding would be used to pay for the construction of over 9 miles of trails, parking area creation, and installation of reservoir fencing.



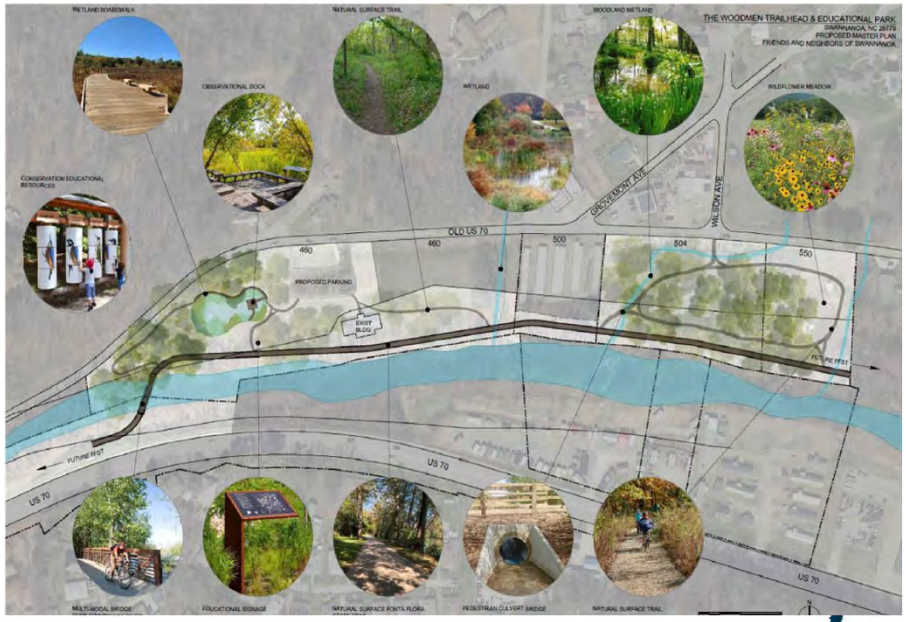
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Woodmen Trailhead & Educational Park

Friends and Neighbors of Swannanoa

Recommended Funding: $0 at this time

This funding would be used to for the County to purchase land and/or easements along the proposed future route of the Fonta Flora State Trail (FFST). The project would build a riverside park for the residents of Swannanoa and users of the FFST. The park would be in close proximity to Grovemont Park and the newly announced Beacon Village project.



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33 +/- acres on Sandhill Road

Balsam Gardens, LLC

Recommended Funding: $1,090,000

This project proposes the County acquire 33 acres of riparian land consisting of approx. a mile of creek frontage along Hominy Creek. The acquisition would preserve the land as open space, protect sensitive watershed, and provide safe and easy access to nature. The property could be used for an extension of the Enka Heritage Trail.



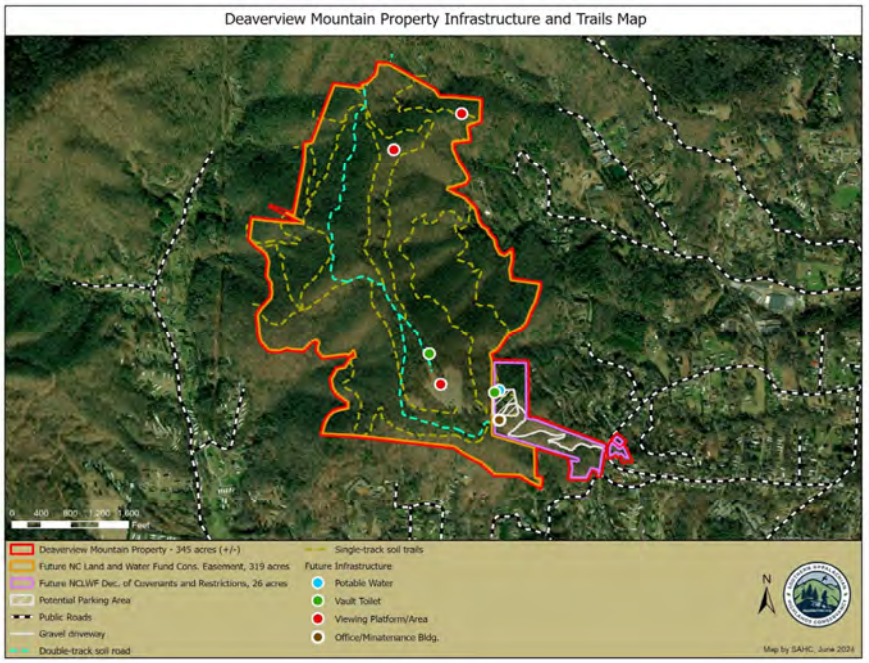
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Deaverview Mountain

Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

Recommended Funding: $1,000,000

This funding enables SAHC to purchase the 345 acre Deaverview Mountain property. SAHC will transfer the property to Buncombe County for ownership, development and management of a new public park. The park will provide passive outdoor recreation opportunities (hiking, nature viewing, and gathering).



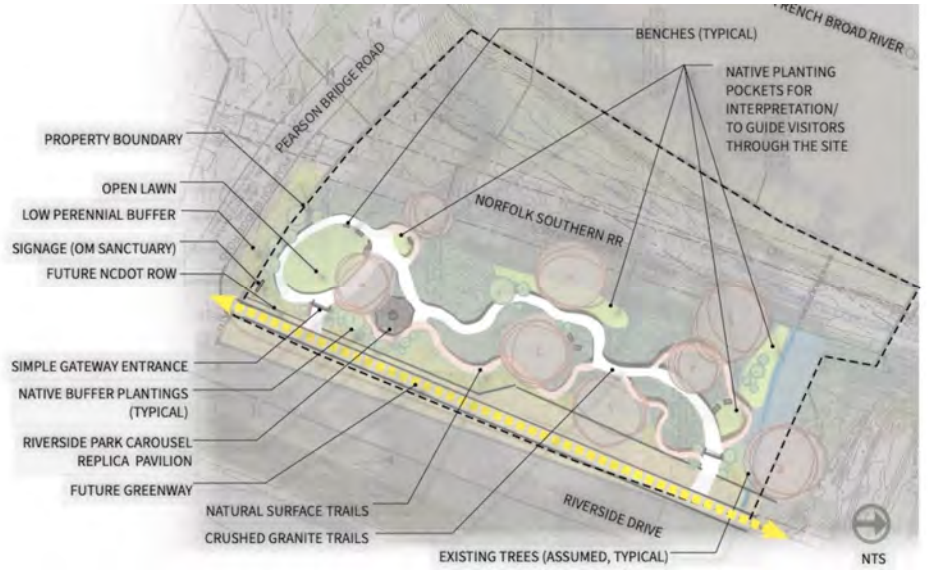
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Gateway Park

RiverLink

Recommended Funding: $200,000

This funding will support the creation of partially wooded park in the French Broad River corridor. The park will provide public greenspace along the 2.5 mi. corridor between the River Arts District and Silver-Line Park, prioritizing natural resource protection, habitat preservation, and ecosystem services.



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Haw Creek Park Greenway

Haw Creek Community Association

Recommended Funding: $102,182

This funding will support the development of a 585-ft nature path in the Haw Creek valley. The path will link the East Asheville Public Library, Haw Creek Park, and the local commercial area with neighborhoods and schools. A private landowner is donating a conservation easement for the extension of the path.



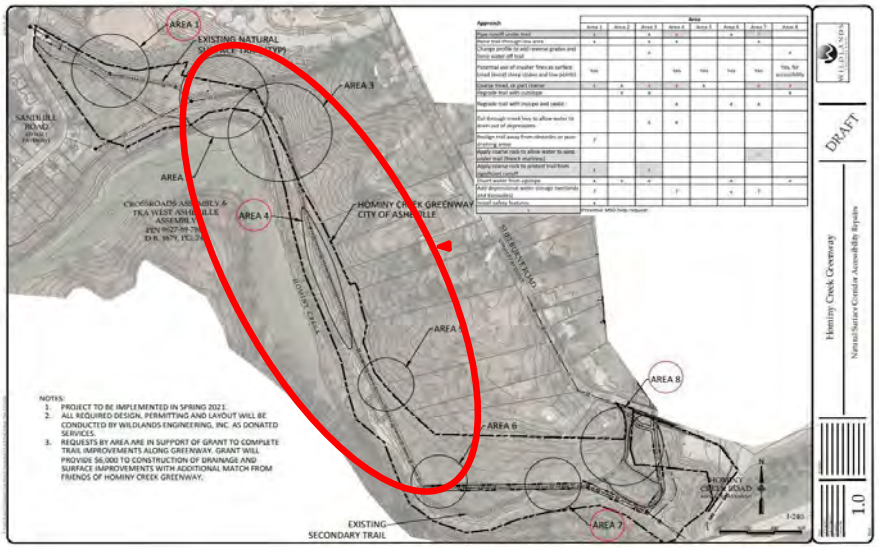
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Hominy Creek Greenway

Asheville Greenworks/Friends of Hominy Creek

Recommended Funding: $312,834

This funding will support the restoration of .4 miles of a sustainable natural surface trail and the ongoing ecological restoration and maintenance of the 12-acre green space known as the Hominy Creek Greenway, a City of Asheville park. The project will link two recently completed trail projects, expanding access to residents.



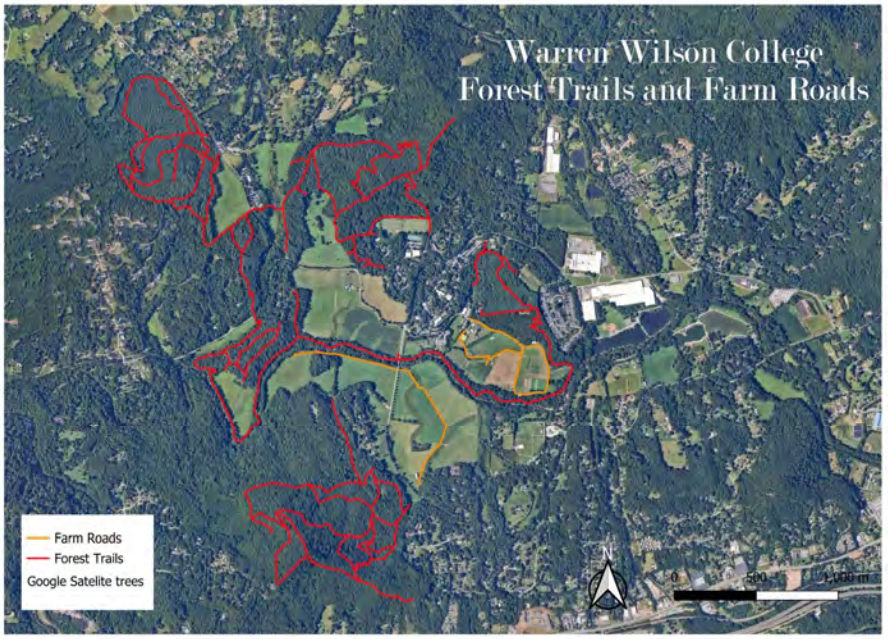
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Improving Public Access & Use of Lands

Warren Wilson College

Recommended Funding: $141,580

This funding will be used to upgrade and improve 17 miles of the College's road and trail system used extensively by the public for passive recreation. This work will improve user safety, access and quality of experience for County residents using College lands for passive recreation activities and allow the College to continue providing these opportunities.



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Ridgecrest Connector

Town of Black Mountain

Recommended Funding: $575,000

The Ridgecrest Connector is a multi-use path that will serve as a critical connection for the Fonta Flora State Trail. The project is available to the public at all times. The requested bond funding will pay for ¾ mile of path construction, which will provide passive recreation opportunities and support the Town's economic development.



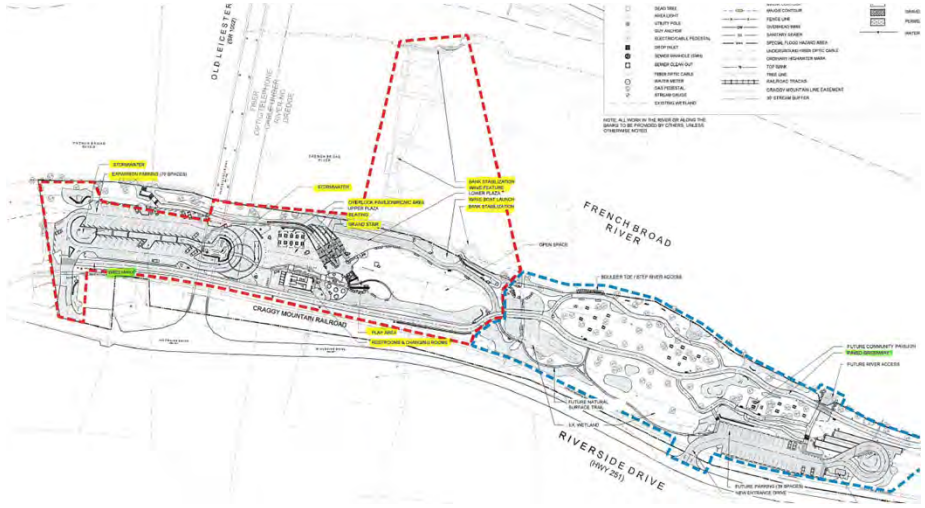
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Riverside Park

Town of Woodfin

Recommended Funding: $2,195,231

Riverside Park is the centerpiece of the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway, which will establish a regional outdoor recreation destination. This funding would support the improvement of passive recreation infrastructure through the existing park as well as measures to control flooding, preserve water quality and restore native flora.



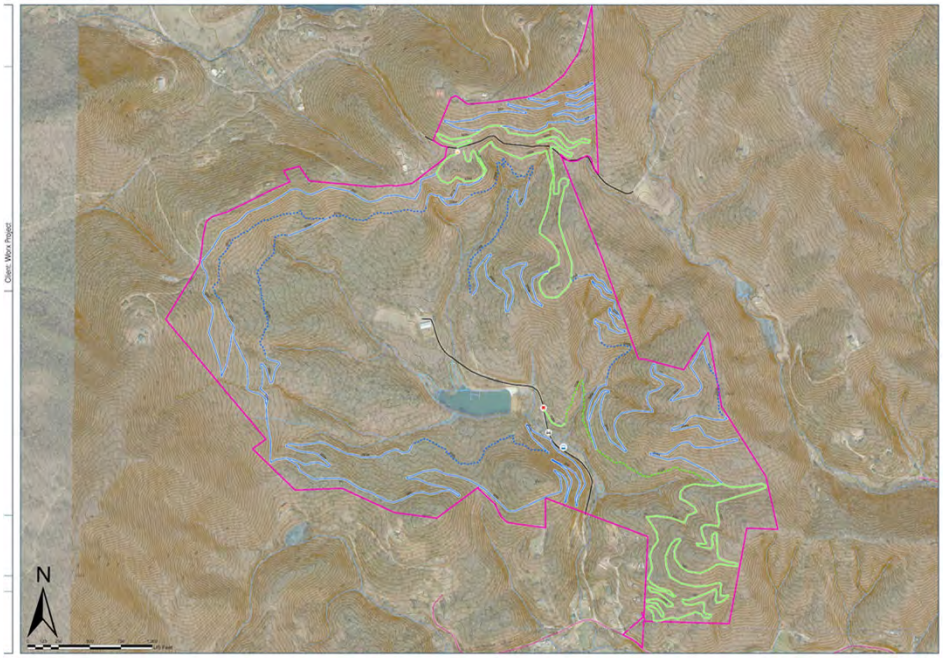
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Worx Community Forest Trail Development

Camp Grier

Recommended Funding: $675,000

The Worx Community Forest is a 225-acre conservation project surrounding a 35-acre learning campus. This funding would be used to develop 11 miles of multi-use natural surface trails designed for a beginner and intermediate hiking and mountain biking user experience.



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Funding Recommendations

These **9** projects are recommended for a total of **$6,291,827** which would leverage the following impacts:

1,604 Acres newly open to the public

378 Acres newly conserved

29 Miles of trails/multi-use path supported

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Open Space Bond Funds

Authorized Bond Amount	$30,000,000
Current Board of Commissioners-approved commitments • Woodfin Greenway ($1,273,250) • Parham-Fortner Farm ($150,000) • Lake Eden Preserve ($250,000) • Ferry Road Open Space ($3,000,000) • Deaverview Mountain ($7,671,764) • Okoboji Farm ($511,500)	$12,856,514
Anticipated Commitments • Enka Heritage Trail ($2,000,000) • Pending Conservation Easements ($5,045,743)	$7,045,743
Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee Recommendations	$6,291,827
Projected Remaining Balance	$3,805,916

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Future Funding

In addition to approving the 9 projects as recommended, the Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee requests that Commissioners the remaining balance for future Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee recommendation… to possibly include:

- Funding for the dprojects that need additional planning before they are ready for an award
- Other projects identified through a future call for proposals

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Recommendations

The following will come to the Board of Commissioners as a request for board action on October 15, 2024:

- Approve the funding recommendations as proposed
- Reserve the remaining balance for future Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee recommendations