

September 16th, 2024

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|---------|--|
| Request | Letter of Support request for “Resilient Haywood” EPA Community Change Grant |
| From    | Hanni Muerdter Conservation Director, SAHC                                   |
| Contact | <a href="mailto:hanni@appalachian.org">hanni@appalachian.org</a>             |

**\*\*\*Please submit Letters of Support (template provided, attached) by noon on Monday, September 30 to [hanni@appalachian.org](mailto:hanni@appalachian.org)\*\*\***

## GRANT BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

[Click here](#) for Community Change Full Grant Notice.

### **Background**

There is a unique opportunity out of the EPA, described below, to provide transformative financial support to communities, through its **Community Change Grants** (rolling applications, aiming for Oct. 1), under the Environmental and Climate Justice Program (ECJP) created through the Inflation Reduction Act.

### **Community Change Grants Summary for Haywood County Coalition**

ECJP is releasing \$2 billion in the form of \$10-20 million grants to community coalitions in [Disadvantaged Communities \(DACs\)](#). They're looking for 3-year projects to build resilience against disproportionate climate and pollution burdens. There are multiple census block groups in [Haywood County that qualify as DACs](#).

Because Haywood County has a relatively well-explored **Greenway Plan, in-progress River Access Plan and Flood Mitigation Plans**, diverse board members from several town/county/regional organizations have assessed the grant's potential for advancing regional environmental goals related to:

- parkland/river access
- public health
- cleaner air
- farmland/floodplain protections/flood mitigation
- economic revitalization in the outdoor recreation sector

### **What the Grantor Wants:**

-Community-driven projects (completed within 3 years) addressing detrimental health, pollution, and environmental impacts

- Outputs and outcomes that are measurable (related to climate resilience, pollution reduction, park access, health and economic benefits)
- Cross-sectorial, multi-faceted collaborations from the community

**What the Grantor Requires for Projects (Track I-Community-Driven Investments for Change):**

- Partnership agreement between a non-profit CBO + local government / another CBO
- Description of Climate Action Strategy (Green Infrastructure + Nature-based Solutions)
- Description of Pollution Reduction Strategy (Outdoor Air Quality + Community Health Improvements)
- Community Engagement + Collaborative Governance Plan
- Community Strength Plan (maximizing benefits, minimizing risks)
- Readiness Approach (must start w/in 120 days, and be completed within 3 years)
- Compliance Plan (legal and statutory requirements)

**Projects currently contemplated for the grant application:**

1. Implement priority shovel-ready projects within existing greenway plans and in-progress Pigeon River Access Plan to increase public parkland access, community health near population centers and benefit local economy:

Canton:

- Champion Drive
- Park Street Promenade
- Park Street Pigeon River Access

Clyde:

- Spruce Street River Access & Greenway sections

Waynesville/Haywood County:

- Richland Creek Greenway sections
- Raccoon Creek Greenway sections

2. Reduce flood risk and improve water quality:

- Working with interested landowners, permanently protect flood-prone properties via conservation easements or acquisitions (Haywood Soil & Water, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy).
- Increase septic repair program in Disadvantaged Communities (Haywood Waterways Association)
- River monitoring and emergency equipment upgrades (Haywood EMS, Haywood Waterways Association)
- Incorporate river-friendly resilient design features in above riverside greenway projects and river access projects

**Individuals/organizations who consulted on grant application process:**

[Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy](#) (SAHC) was asked to be the lead non-profit applicant on the grant by community stakeholders. In April-August 2024, SAHC met with the

following stakeholder representatives to understand community and capacity needs and assess a Community Change Grant application. A working group was assembled and priority projects were selected as identified in these conversations and that best fit the grant requirements.

Individuals/organizations consulted to date:

Town of Canton: Byron Hickox

Town of Clyde: Joy Garland

Town of Maggie Valley: Sam Cullen

Town of Waynesville: Elizabeth Teague

Town of Waynesville Sustainability Advisory Committee: Paul Carlson and Aparna Keshaviah;

Haywood County EMS: Cody Parton and Cody Grasty

Haywood County Chamber of Commerce, Haywood Advancement Foundation, formerly with  
Haywood County: David Francis

Haywood County TDA: Corrina Ruffieux

Haywood Soil & Water Conservation District: Duane Vanhook and Bill Yarborough

Haywood Waterways: Preston Jacobsen

Land of Sky and French Broad River MPO: Tristan Winkler

Haywood County Recreation Advisory Committee: Kevin FitzGerald

Haywood Regional Medical Center: Chris Brown, CEO

Haywood County Greenway Advisory Committee: Steve Law

NCDOT: Wanda Payne, Steve Williams

Conversations with additional leaders in Haywood County are ongoing.

(Graphic slides describing grant and  
application are on following pages.)





## Community-Driven Investments for Change

- Funding Available: approx. \$1.96 billion
- Number of Awards: approx. 150
- Per Award Amount: **\$10M – and cannot exceed \$20M each**

*Applications rolling, due Nov 2024*

*Awards must be spent in 3 years*





# COMMUNITY CHANGE GRANTS

Environmental and Climate Justice

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## Objectives

1

**Increase**  
community  
climate resilience



2

**Reduce** local  
pollution & improve  
public health



3

**Center** meaningful  
community  
engagement



4

**Build**  
community  
strength



5

**Reach**  
priority  
populations



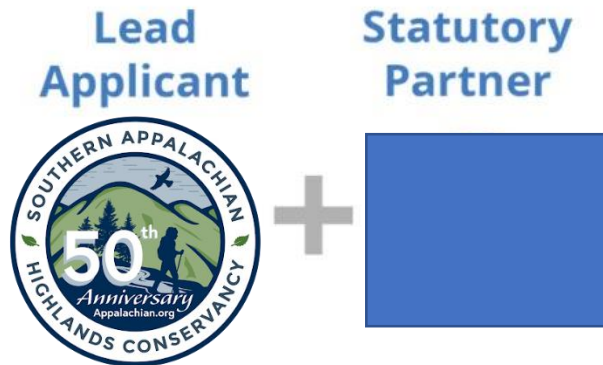
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**Maximize**  
integration across  
projects

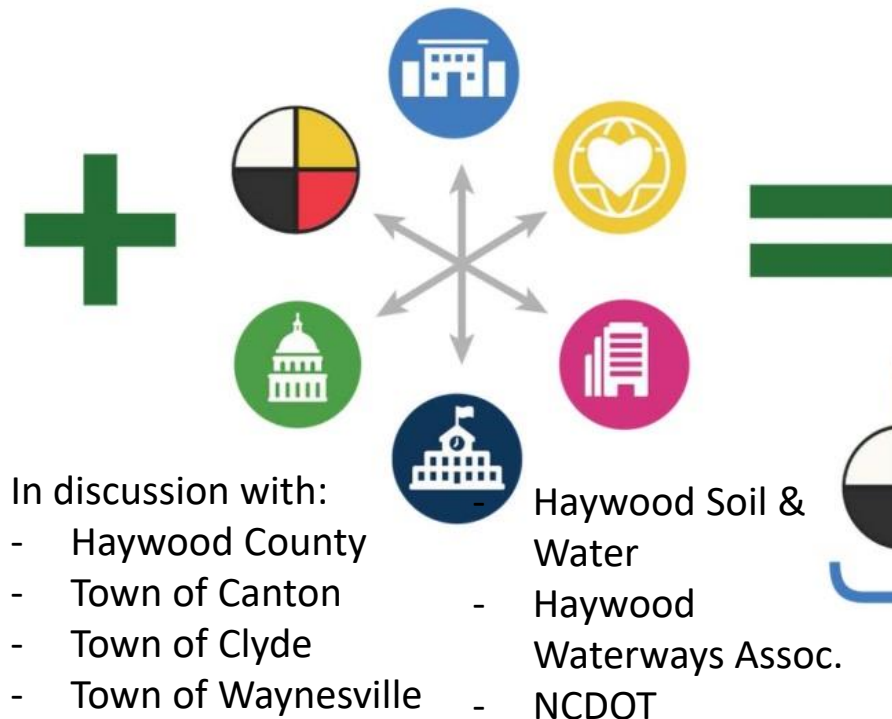


# How It Works

## FORM A STATUTORY PARTNERSHIP



## IDENTIFY COLLABORATING ENTITIES TO LEAD PROJECTS



## THE COLLABORATIVE



Lead Applicant

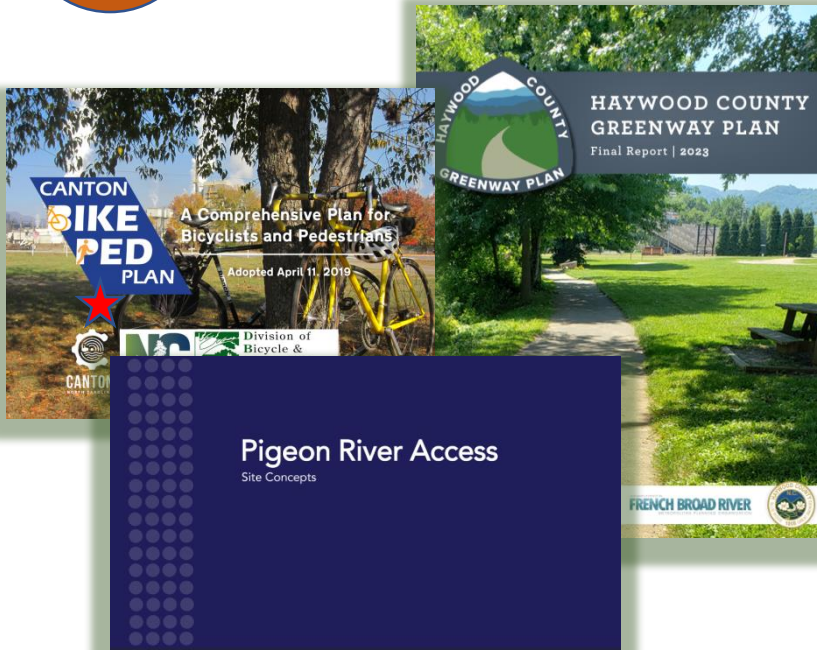
Statutory Partner



# “Resilient Haywood” Application

1

Increase outdoor and river **access**



Implement priority greenway  
& river access projects



Canton:

- Champion Drive
- Park Street Promenade
- Park Street Pigeon River Access

Clyde:

- Spruce Street River Access & Greenway

Waynesville/Haywood County:

- Richland Creek Greenway sections
- Raccoon Creek Greenway sections (near Lake Junaluska Elementary)



*Increase public health opportunities for Disadvantaged Communities by increasing outdoor and river access near towns*



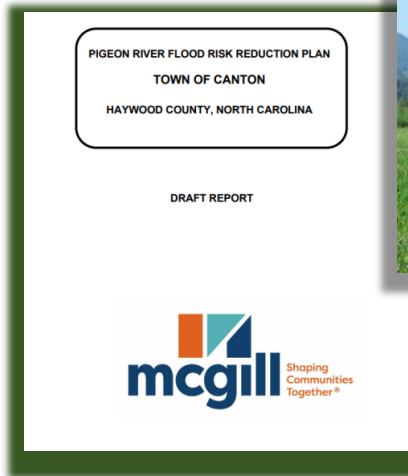
*Increase economic diversity and economic health for Haywood County and Canton following Pactiv Evergreen Mill closure*



# “Resilient Haywood” Application

2

Reduce **flood risk** and increase **water quality**



Work with landowners to permanently protect flood-prone properties  
(Haywood Soil & Water, SAHC)



River-friendly resilient design features in riverside greenways and access points



Increase septic repair program in Disadvantaged Communities  
(Haywood Waterways Assoc.)



River monitoring and emergency equipment upgrades  
(Haywood EMS, Haywood Waterways Assoc.)



# Haywood County Application

*"activate the eminence: access, clean, restore"*

## Project Location Map

Grants must benefit  
Federal Disadvantaged  
Communities  
(in orange)

