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Western North Carolina Communities and Organizations Receive over \$11 million in Vital Support for Outdoor Infrastructure through Great Trails State Program

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA JULY 22, 2025 – Last week, North Carolina Governor Josh Stein announced that the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has awarded [more than \\$11 million in grants from Great Trails State Program funding](#), authorized by the NC General Assembly, to communities and nonprofits in Western North Carolina.

“It is incredibly rewarding to see communities’ diligent work recognized through this catalytic infusion of support, particularly as the region approaches the one-year milestone of Hurricane Helene,” said Allison Smith, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow serving the Made by Mountains Partnership and Building Outdoor Communities Program.

Several awardees participated in Made by Mountains’ [Building Outdoor Communities](#) (BOC) Program, including Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, McDowell, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties. This 7-month planning curriculum aligned key stakeholders, identified priorities, developed implementation pathways to advance outdoor infrastructure projects, gathered vital county-level [participation data](#), established tools to help measure the economic impact of a trail, and broadened opportunities to advance the outdoor economy at a local level.

Cherokee, Graham, and Wilkes Counties each received [Planning and Capacity Building Grants](#) from Made by Mountains in 2023 to advance local outdoor recreation infrastructure projects. Building from the solid foundational groundwork laid through these planning grants, the following counties also received funding from the [Great Trails State Program](#):

- Cherokee County: Town of Murphy, \$500,000 for Murphy Riverwalk Primitive Loop Improvements.
- Graham County: Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT), \$285,600 for Robbinsville Greenway Project.
- Wilkes County: Town of Wilkesboro, \$499,100 for Bridge Between the Boros.

“We are excited about this award, and feel Made by Mountains gave us the jumpstart on it with their award. Our coalition couldn’t be happier to move this project forward,” said Heather Murphy, Executive Director of The Health Foundation.

Building Outdoor Communities created the intentional space and foundational setting in which communities identified and activated local trail champions, established new or expanded existing trail and greenway systems, improved access points, formed maintenance plans, and aligned with greater regional systems and state trails. This significant investment from Great

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Trails State Coalition, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, NC State Parks, the Office of Governor Stein, and the NC General Assembly further affirms the value of their efforts. “Communities across Western North Carolina are growing opportunities for local outdoor recreation, and we couldn’t be more thrilled to see their strides gaining further momentum,” adds Smith.

The Made by Mountains Partnership currently serves in the pivotal role of supporting the region’s outdoor industry and communities in their recovery from the impacts of Hurricane Helene. The Partnership is convening conversations with cross-sectoral industry leaders and public lands managers, exploring how to amplify stories of recovery and welcome residents and visitors back into outdoor spaces. Additionally, the recent launch of [Waypoint Resilience Program](#) in collaboration with Mountain BizWorks and the NC Outdoor Economy Office underscores the Partnership’s prioritization of support for the region’s outdoor businesses. Through its efforts, the Made by Mountains Partnership helps increase long-term stability and resilience in WNC’s businesses and communities.

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About the Made by Mountains Partnership

The Made By Mountains Partnership (MADE X MTNS) is working to expand the outdoor industry and economy across North Carolina’s Appalachian region and catalyze rural development by building vibrant outdoor communities, growing outdoor businesses, and amplifying outdoor culture. For more information, visit madexmtns.com or [@madexmtns](#)