

Greenway network gets \$1.5 million

State grants will help fund Carolina Thread Trail connecting 15 counties.

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Posted: Saturday, Jan. 16, 2010

The Carolina Thread Trail, a network of greenways and trails that will connect 15 counties, will get \$1.5 million from state grants Gov. Bev Perdue released Friday.

The money from the state Clean Water Management Trust Fund is the largest public funding for the Thread Trail since its 2007 launch. It's the first installment of a \$3 million grant the trust fund awarded in 2008 but had been withheld because of the state's budget problems.

The grant will be used to support communities as they buy land for trail segments.

"Public funding such as Clean Water is a critical complement to the private funds used to support communities as they plan for the protection of vital lands and waterways for generations to come," said Dave Cable of the Catawba Lands Conservancy, lead agency for the Thread Trail.

The Thread Trail uses private donations to leverage public funding. The organization has awarded \$820,000 from its private capital campaign to help start community efforts.

Completing the Thread Trail was originally estimated to cost \$150 million, with \$1 in private donations matching \$3 in public grants. The Clean Water fund was expected to make up the largest portion of state grants.

The slowdown in state spending gave communities time to advance the planning of where trails should be located, organizers say. Six counties have fully adopted trail plans. Mecklenburg County is updating its greenways master plan, and Stanly and Catawba counties are in the planning stages.

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