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Focus Area Grants totaling $100,000 Awarded

(September 2025) The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) recently approved two focus area grants totaling $100,000.

“Over the last year, we have seen nonprofits pivot to support storm relief and recovery,” said Vice President for Programs Tara Scholtz. “These two grants are reminders that the work of these organizations continues in our new normal. Both projects offer the public, local and visitors alike, opportunities to recreate and connect outdoors, and they support our economic recovery.”

North Carolina Arboretum Society received a $40,000 Cultural Resources focus area grant to support **Trolls - A Field Study Exhibit: Art, Hope, Economic and Environmental Inspiration for WNC.** This premier U.S. exhibit of renowned Danish artist Thomas Dambo’s Trolls will run from November 2025 to February 2026, bringing art, hope, and economic and environmental benefits. Trolls is the most significant exhibit the Arboretum has hosted and overlaps with its annual Winter Lights event, increasing visitation to the region that will support local businesses and benefiting the community with content addressing environmental sustainability, hurricane recovery efforts, and connection with the natural world.

An anonymous fund provided co-investment for this grant.

Mainspring Conservation Trust received a $60,000 Natural Resources focus area grant to support short-term stewardship needs for the recently acquired 94-acre Slickens Creek tract, the last critical inholding in the Nantahala National Forest’s Panthertown Valley backcountry area. Surrounded entirely by public land and intersected by two popular trails, the tract will ultimately expand safe, managed public access to this region, known as the “Yosemite of the East.” However, before public access is allowed, immediate hazards must be addressed. The property contains derelict structures with debris and unmarked utilities that pose a risk to public safety. The requested funds will support site assessment, demolition, and cleanup, along with targeted road and trail improvements and restoration of an existing hand-hewn pole barn.

The Dogwood Charitable Endowment Fund, Stewart Fund for Life & Love, White Pine Fund and two anonymous funds provided co-investment for this grant.

CFWNC works with families, businesses and nonprofits to strengthen communities through the creation of charitable funds and strategic grantmaking. CFWNC awards discretionary funding in Education, Cultural Resources, Human Services, and Natural Resources. A permanent charitable resource, the Foundation manages over 1,300 funds and facilitated $69 million in grants last year bringing total distributions to more than $456 million since its founding in 1978. Learn more at www.cfwnc.org.

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