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Watauga River Partners, a nonprofit environmental organization based out of Boone, N.C., has received a grant from the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to develop a watershed rehabilitation plan for Beaverdam Creek, located in the western Watauga County community of Bethel. The North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources allocated $247,500 in 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Control funding to Beaverdam Creek because of water quality concerns. Although Beaverdam Creek flows through a picturesque landscape, the stream itself has been listed as “impaired” by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality. The presence of several pollutants, such as biological pollutants, sediment, or high water temperatures, could be the cause of the “impaired” designation. Impaired water quality from sediment, runoff and thermal pollution not only affects Beaverdam Creek, but also the overall water quality of the Watauga River because Beaverdam Creek is a headwater stream. Developing a plan to remedy these impacts is important to water quality in the Watauga River basin.

Funding for the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Restoration Project will be used to help landowners prevent land loss, improve drinking water and fish habitats, and implement best management practices for their farms.

Watauga River Partners is providing financial assistance to residents who own land along Beaverdam Creek or its tributaries and are willing to share costs, labor and equipment. The funding may be used for plants along creek banks, rain gardens, alternate watering and feeding approaches, cattle crossings and fencing, and other approved alternatives.

“This is a great opportunity for landowners to not only improve their property, but to insure the Watauga River remains a vital, healthy waterway for fishing, habitat and drinking water,” Kristan Cockerill, project manager for the Beaverdam Creek Watershed Restoration Project, said.

Watauga River Partners is working with Watauga County Cooperative Extension and North Carolina Division of Soil and Water Conservation to install projects in the Beaverdam community. Brushy Fork Environmental Consulting, Inc., Appalachian State University Department of Chemistry, and the N.C. Wildlife Commission are also assisting.