



HAYWOOD COUNTY

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

EPA Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights
ATTN: Community Change Grant Review Panel
CCGP@epa.gov

September 25, 2024

Dear Community Change Grant Review Panel,

I am writing on behalf of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) Board of Directors in support of the “Resilient Haywood” application to the EPA Community Change Grant program, submitted by Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC).

My name is Corrina Ruffieux, and I am the Executive Director of the HCTDA, dba Visit Haywood. We are the legislatively mandated entity responsible for collecting occupancy tax and allocating those funds to drive overnight visitation to Haywood County. We also operate a Welcome Center to provide information and resources to our destination’s visitors. We know that a primary reason visitors come to Haywood County is to enjoy our public lands and waterways, so our organization places great value on diversifying our product offerings and infrastructure, as well as promoting the stewardship of our natural assets.

The Resilient Haywood project would protect the river and floodways by addressing historical flooding issues and significantly advancing a program to repair malfunctioning septic systems, therefore increasing water quality – an especially important goal considering Haywood County is a headwaters watershed. This project would also advance established plans to increase recreational access to the Pigeon River. Developing a cohesive town-centered greenway network and completing park projects along the Pigeon River would revitalize the community’s connection to the river and offer easily accessible outdoor spaces for residents and visitors to utilize year-round.

As we move to incorporate stewardship and accessibility into our own guiding principles, the HCTDA Board and staff proudly support and advocate for the Resilient Haywood Project. The Community Change Grant would provide the resources to develop a comprehensive approach to reestablishing the Pigeon River as an asset for recreation, conservation, and economic revitalization for Haywood County.

The HCTDA Board of Directors voted to express their support of this grant application and submitting this letter of support during their September 25, 2024, board meeting. **Motion passed _____.**

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Corrina Ruffieux, Executive Director