



# HOUSE BILL 259: 2023 Appropriations Act, Sec. 14.6: Great Trails State Program

2023-2024 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	December 7, 2023
<b>Introduced by:</b>		<b>Prepared by:</b>	Aaron McGlothlin Staff Attorney
<b>Analysis of:</b>	Sec. 14.6 of S.L. 2023-134		

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**OVERVIEW:** *Section 14.6 of S.L. 2023-134 (i) establishes the Great Trails State Program as a special fund within the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) to provide matching grants to eligible entities for new trail development and extension of existing trails, and (ii) allocates \$12.5 million in nonrecurring funds to be used by DNCR in each year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium for the Great Trails State Program.*

*This section became effective July 1, 2023.*

## **BILL ANALYSIS:**

**Section 14.6** of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the Great Trails State Program as a special fund within the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) to provide matching grants of up to \$500,000 per project to municipalities, counties, regional councils, public authorities as defined in G.S. 159-7, and nonprofit entities for eligible trail projects. Projects eligible to receive matching grants under the Great Trails State Program include trail planning, design, and related environmental assessment or permitting activities; land and easement acquisition; construction of trails and trail structures; provision of trail amenities; and trail maintenance activities.

In evaluating applications for grant funding for trail projects, DNCR may consider such criteria as (i) the amount of additional funding being provided from other sources; (ii) current access to trails and other outdoor recreational facilities in the area of the proposed project; and (iii) the size and demographics of the population served by the proposed project. DNCR may determine the amount of matching funds that must be contributed by the eligible entity based on the wealth of the county where the trail project is located, ranging from a match of 25¢ to \$1 of non-State funds for every \$1 receivable from the Great Trails State Program. Non-cash contributions, such as fee waivers, in-kind services, and donated assets, may be considered towards meeting the matching requirements if quantifiable and documented in a manner specified by DNCR.

No later than October 1, 2023, DNCR must provide an initial report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division regarding the process for awarding grants and the metrics it intends to use in evaluating grant applications. Afterwards, DNCR must report annually no later than October 1 regarding the use of funds allocated to the Great Trails State Program.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This section became effective July 1, 2023.

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