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Stimulus grant will help fund walkway's extension in Fletcher

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The town of Fletcher has used a \$390,000 stimulus grant to extend a walking trail along Cane Creek in Fletcher Park. Construction was recently completed on the 2,000-foot paved section, which should open to the public this weekend.

"It was basically an extension of the trail that starts at the park," said Fletcher Planning Director Eric Rufa.

The town began researching the possibility of applying for a stimulus grant last year shortly after the bill passed. They found a grant that fit with the town's plans and applied.

Fletcher was not required to match the federal grant with any local funds, Rufa said.

To get the project ready for funding, the town hired an engineer who completed the plan for the walkway extension.

"It is a lot more difficult for a small town to have something shovel-ready," Rufa said, meaning a project that is ready to start at any time.

Fletcher has a long-term master plan for the trail system. It hopes to eventually develop 13 miles of trails for the public.

"It's gonna get a lot of use," Rufa said of the new section. "Fletcher has a strong identity for parks and recreation."

To complete the project, Fletcher enlisted the help of Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, a local land trust. CMLC had purchased about 10 acres from Blue Ridge Metals for an earlier section of the trail.

The land was donated to the town. For the stimulus-funded project, CMLC purchased 12 acres from Rivercane LLC.

"Parks and recreational access has always been a part of our mission, but it seems like the last few years we have found more partnership organizations," CMLC



PATRICK SULLIVAN/TIMES-NEWS

Jamie Travers and Gerardo Gonzalez place some rocks along a trail Tuesday. The Town of Fletcher will open an addition to its greenway at Fletcher Park on May 2, adding 2,000 square feet to the existing system. The funding for the project came from a federal stimulus grant awarded to the town in January.

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Executive Director Kieran Roe said.

Rufa said the land is located next to the creek and within the floodplain. It could not have been developed by the companies.

"Passive recreation is a good usage for this type of land," Rufa said.

The town also received a \$390,000 stimulus grant. The money is being used to build a sidewalk off of Asheville Highway.

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