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The towns of Greenwood, Bethel and Laurel, Del., all got a boost recently from the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund.

They were among towns selected by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to receive financial or technical assistance through the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund that helps local communities restore and protect water quality and vital habitats within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Major funding is provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service and Altria Client Services. Additional funding is provided by the D.C. Department of the Environment, FedEx, Northrop Grumman, Wal-Mart Acres for America and Wells Fargo.

"Improving stormwater management by implementing low impact development, green infrastructure and other stormwater management practices are breaking new ground when it comes to reducing water pollution" said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin at a recent event celebrating the towns' efforts.

“They will help take us to the next level of innovation and creativity, spurring new ideas and showing people living throughout the watershed how restoring clean water benefits local communities.”

The projects support efforts to meet the State of Delaware’s goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) by helping the towns overcome barriers to improving water quality of Delaware’s Chesapeake Bay tributaries, he explained. To accomplish reductions in nutrients and sediment flowing into the Nanticoke River and Broad Creek, the WIP calls for projects that reduce pollution from urban stormwater runoff and that stabilize stream banks.

“The projects in Greenwood, Laurel and Bethel will improve the water quality of our local streams and rivers, reduce flooding and enhance the quality of life for local communities,” said Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Secretary Collin O’Mara. “By federal, state and local partners working together, we are securing resources necessary to ensure that our waterways are safe, swimmable, and fishable for current and future generations.”

The Town of Greenwood was awarded \$35,000 to restore a buffer of native vegetation along 1,000 feet of the Cart Branch Tax Ditch, which drains into the headwaters of the Nanticoke River. They will restore stormwater runoff from two large industrial buildings, as well as the park. Greenwood was awarded the federal funding by providing \$67,500 in in-kind technical services and cash from local partners.

“This project will reduce and treat stormwater runoff at the Brenda Jones Park, the surrounding homes and industrial buildings, reducing localized flooding and erosion and helping improve water quality of the Nanticoke River,” said Mayor Donald Donovan in a statement. “The project has the added benefits of providing an educational opportunity for school children at Woodbridge Elementary School. On behalf of everyone in Greenwood, I want to thank the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for this grant that will do so much for our town.”

The towns of Laurel and Bethel partnered in submitting their request for support and were chosen to receive technical assistance from NFWF’s Local Government Capacity Building Initiative, valued at \$100,000. They will use the support to develop green infrastructure design and construction plans for projects along the Broad Creek in both communities. To be selected for the grant, the towns and partners are providing up \$82,500 in matching funds or in-kind resources.

Laurel’s request focused on the design of projects that will reduce stormwater runoff from entering the town’s sewer system, which currently results in extensive flooding along 6th Street and discharges into Broad Creek.

The funding will also be used to assess the capacity and condition of stormwater outfalls, as well as to identify potential restoration areas and design plans for the reduction and treatment of stormwater discharge, stream bank

stabilization and a greenway connection to the three waterfront parks — Janosik, Broadcreek Walkway and Laurel River.

“And that not only helps clean the bay, it creates an amenity for their town,” said David O’Neill, director of the Eastern Partnership Office of the NFWF. “They figured out, by greening their town, they can improve amenities and make their town more livable and green at the same time. It is very forward-thinking for small towns and they should be congratulated.”

Bethel’s projects include developing engineering plans that eliminate flooding and identifying possible solutions to restoring the town’s historic section, which could include a permeable pavement along South Street, a bio-retention area near the town Wharf and a living shoreline and wetland area for an eroding section of Broad Creek.

“Bethel, with its shipbuilding heritage and its current, active agricultural community has always been a diligent custodian of its historic and environmental assets. The funding will allow our town to continue this tradition in new ways that will benefit Bethel and all of our neighbors who share the Chesapeake Bay Watershed,” said Bethel Town Council President Jeff Hasting.

O’Neill explained that the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is a large watershed and every little bit helps.

“We are looking at a whole bunch of measures to improve water quality in our own local water. It’s pretty interesting,” he said. “It is a massive watershed in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and Pennsylvania, with 3,000 local governments, and each has their relative responsibilities. And a few of the smaller towns in Delaware really stepped up.”