



# Buncombe County Farmland Preservation Program

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*Presented by*

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Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District

Buncombe County Agricultural and Land Resources Department





# History of the Program

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- 1989- Farmland Preservation Ordinance
- 1989 - Farmland Preservation Program
- 2005 - County budgeted funds for easements
- 2007 - Farmland Protection Plan adopted
- 2008 - County hired a Farmland Preservation Coordinator

# Guiding Plans That Support Our Work

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- **Farmland Preservation Ordinance** - guiding document that allows for the:
  - Creation of the Agricultural Advisory Board that oversees the Farmland Preservation Program
  - Rules and processes around our programs (easements, VAD/EVAD, etc.)
- **Farmland Protection Plan** -allows for local leaders to set priorities and goals for farmland preservation (update every 5-10 yrs)
- **Strategic Plan** - justify budget tied to goals
- **Comprehensive Plan** -helps plan future land use



# Buncombe County Ag & Land Resources Department

## BC Soil & Water Conservation District

## BC NC State Extension

### Agricultural Advisory Board

### BCSWCD Board

### Land Conservation Advisory Board

Evaluates FPP  
conservation  
easements and  
makes  
recommendations  
to Commissioners

Holds FPP  
conservation  
easements

Formed by BOC to  
evaluate and  
make  
recommendations  
for land trust  
easements (not  
always ag-related)



# Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)

- Recommendations on the Farmland Preservation Program and agricultural issues to the County Commissioners
- 9 county residents, minimum of five of the Board members must be actively engaged in farming with regional representation.
- Focus Areas: farm and forestland
- Serves as an advisory role for the Buncombe County Farmland Preservation Program and helps select and vet easement projects

# Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB)

- Evaluates conservation easement projects brought forth by nonprofit land trust partners and makes recommendations to County Commissioners
- Focus Areas: wildlands, viewsheds, farmland, forestland, stream/riparian, and/or public benefit
- Land Trust partners are so valuable & helpful to spread the county funding and maximize land protection
  - Leveraging staff power
  - Leveraging Funding
  - Leveraging Acreage



# Farmland Preservation Program – Staff Responsibilities

- Two full-time staff
- Landowner outreach & field visits
- Conservation easement management
  - Grant applications for easement funding
  - Coordinate contractors & all easement due diligence
  - Recording keeping – landscape, etc.
  - Annual monitoring
- Board coordination
  - Agricultural Advisory Board
  - Land Conservation Advisory Board
- Facilitate VAD/EVAD program
  - Annual renewals & keeping data up to date
- Agritourism programs
- Agricultural community events
- Facilitate Open Space Bond easement funding



**Ariel Zijp,**  
Farmland Preservation Manager



**Avni Naik,**  
Farmland Preservation  
Coordinator



# What type of property do we conserve?

## Conservation Values:

- Prime agricultural soils
- Water quality – streams, springs, rivers, watersheds
- Unique species
- Wildlife habitat
- Historic importance
- Scenic viewshed

## Other factors we consider:

- Size of property
- Close to other protected lands
- Active working farm
- Century farm
- Legal access

We have an evaluation system for AAB Projects & a system for LCAB projects



# Two Types of Easements

Donation Easement	Grant Funded Easement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Landowner donates 100% of the Easement Value</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bargain sale easement purchase with grant funding compensates for a portion of the easement value, but landowner still donates 25-50% of the easement value.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No cash compensation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Apply for grant funding to provide a portion of the value of the development rights. The other portion is considered a landowner donation. Grant funding is competitive statewide</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Project timeframe = 1-2 years from the time we start the project (not from the time you apply)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Project timeframe = 2-5 years from the time we start the project (not from the time you apply)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Landowner still owns property and is responsible for all management decisions and costs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Landowner still owns property and is responsible for all management decisions and costs</li></ul>





# How do we fund our easement projects?



## Easement Acquisition Funds

- Grant Funds –
  - NCDPA ADFPTF
  - USDA ACEP ALE
- County Funds –
  - County budget
  - Open Space Bond

## Transaction Costs

- Buncombe County
- NCDPA ADFP for supplemental costs

Funding source is determined after considering:

- Bargain-sale vs. donation
- Grant eligibility/competition



# Common Transaction cost amounts

\$35,000 - \$65,000 in Transaction costs per project

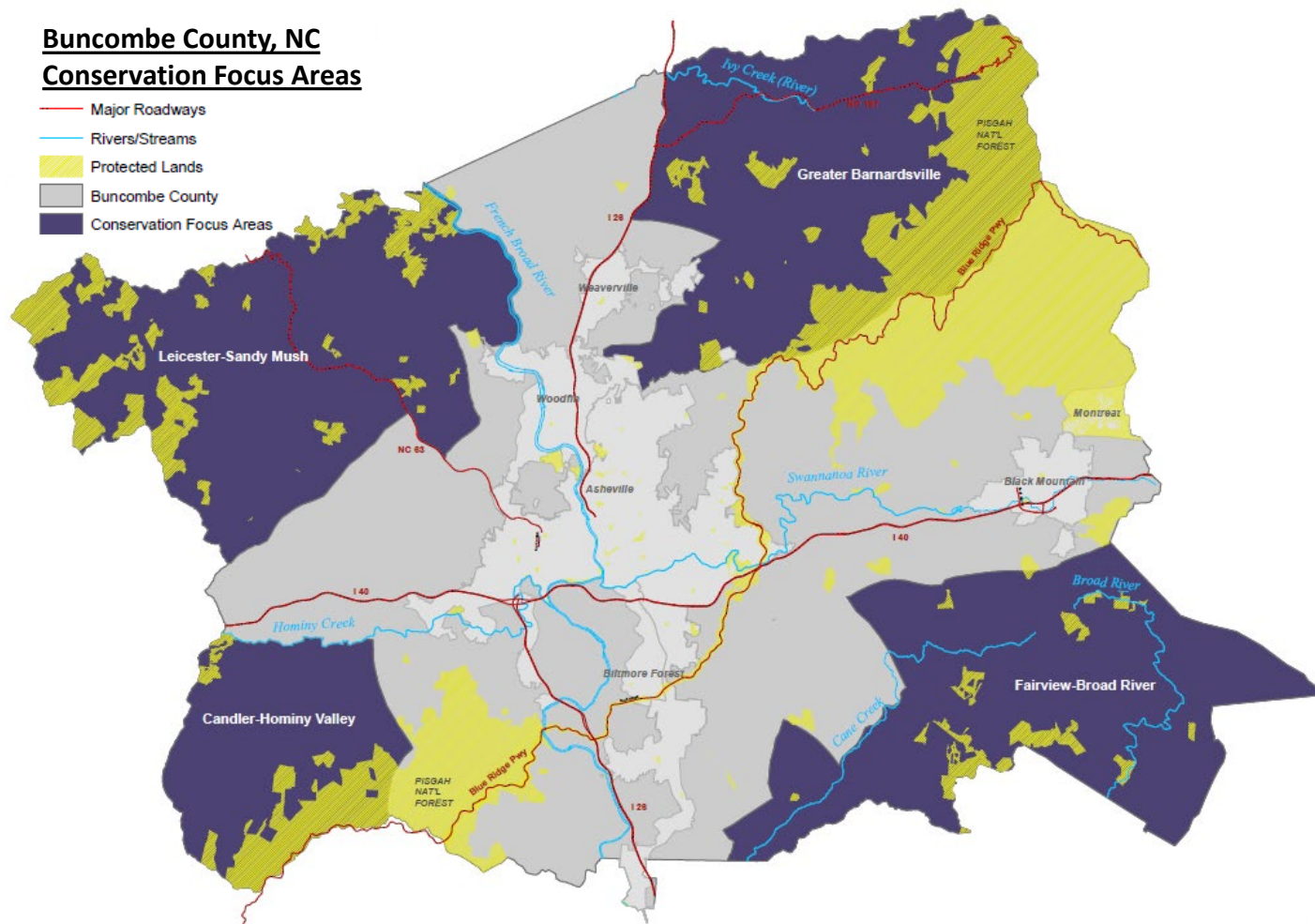
Types	Costs
Pre-appraisal for funding	\$1,500
Appraisal	\$5,000 - \$10,000
Survey	\$12,000 - \$45,000
Baseline Documentation Report	\$3,500 or in kind
Forest Management Plan	\$1,500
Environmental Assessment	\$2,500
Legal Fees	\$4,000 - \$7,000
Closing Costs	\$500 - \$1,500



# Buncombe County, NC

## Conservation Focus Areas

- Major Roadways
- Rivers/Streams
- Protected Lands
- Buncombe County
- Conservation Focus Areas



Consider: Which areas do we want to focus our conservation efforts on? Where is our agriculture concentrated vs. where does it make sense for development to occur?

### Commissioners 2022 Goal:

**“Buncombe County  
will help conserve  
20% of the  
county’s total acres  
by 2030.”**



Other tools to  
protect farms  
and  
agricultural  
viability:



**Education & Business  
Support**



**Land Access**



**Conserve Land**

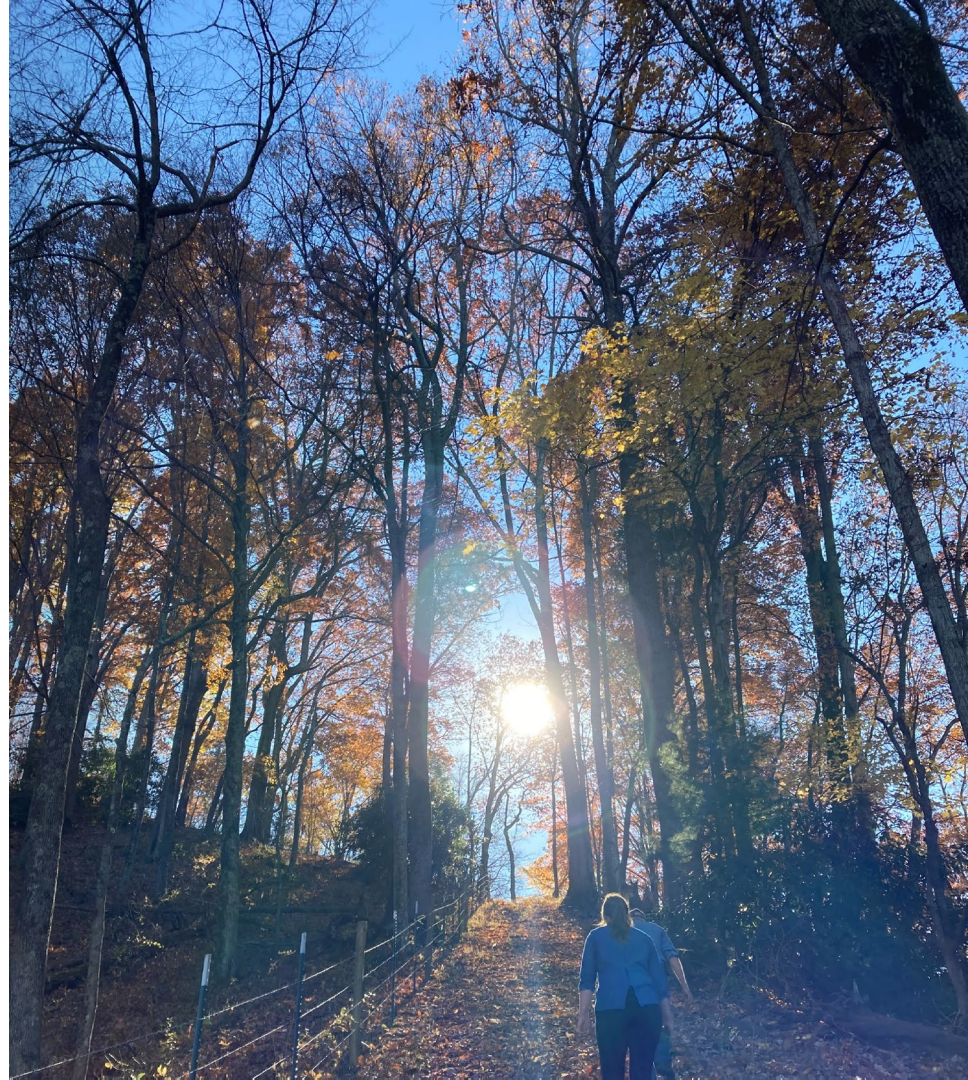


**Succession & Estate  
Planning**

Education & Business Support	Land Access	Conserve Land	Farm Succession Planning/Estate Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop series to inform ag community - easements, tax programs, cost-share etc.</li> <li>• New landowner guide - PUV</li> <li>• Friends of Agriculture Events</li> <li>• Equipment rentals &amp; Equip Demos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NC Farmlink</li> <li>• Incubator Farm</li> <li>• Partnering protecting lands with local land trusts</li> <li>• Buy-protect-sell model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation easements</li> <li>• VAD/EVAD</li> <li>• Increasing funding sources – open space bond, Agricultural growth zone</li> <li>• Prioritizing regions &amp; types of parcels for conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging farmers and landowners to plan</li> <li>• Cost-share Program for professional services (ASAP)</li> <li>• Becoming Certified Farmland Succession Coordinator</li> <li>• Succession/Estate Planning Workshop Series</li> </ul>

# Recommended Next Steps for Henderson

- Create a full-time Farmland Preservation Coordinator position
- Put reoccurring easement funding into your county budget for transaction costs
- Apply for Grant funds
- Update Farmland Protection Plan
- Create Conservation Focus Areas to prioritize funding
- Act Now! With significant Farmland loss there isn't much time to waste



# Questions?



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