

**Henderson County
Farmland Preservation Taskforce: September 16, 2024**

The Farmland Preservation Taskforce held a meeting on September 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the King Street Meeting Room located at 100 N. King Street.

Taskforce Member	Present	Absent
Commissioner Rebecca McCall, Chair	✓	
Commissioner David Hill, Chair	✓	
Hunter Marks – Planning Board		✓
Danny McConnell – Soil & Water Conservation District		✓
Gary Steiner – NC Cooperative Extension	✓	
Jimmy Cowan – NC Farm Bureau		✓
Joffrey Merrill – AgHC		✓
Randy Newman – Hendersonville Board of Realtors		✓
Jason Edney – At large	✓	
Justin Patwin – At large		✓
Linda Pryor – At large	✓	
Alan Ward – At large	✓	
Danielle McCall – At large	✓	

Also present:

Chris Todd, Assistant County Manager
 Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director
 Liz Hanson, Planner
 Dr. Terry Kelley, NC Cooperative Extension
 Kieran Roe, Conserving Carolina
 Jeffrey Darnell, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

R = attended remotely

Commissioner and Taskforce Chair Rebecca McCall called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance:

Taskforce Chair Rebecca McCall lead the invocation and pledge after the meeting was called to order.

Adjustment and Approval of Agenda:

Taskforce Chair Rebecca McCall motioned to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment for this meeting.

Adjustment and Approval of August 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes:

Taskforce member Gary Steiner motioned to approve the August 12, 2024; meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Discussion:

Chapter 45 Amendments Continued:

The Taskforce continued their discussion of the proposed amendments to the Land Development Code Chapter 45 – Farmland Preservation. Taskforce members had an opportunity to ask Staff questions regarding the proposed changes and provide clarifications. Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director, stated that the County’s Agricultural Advisory Board would be holding a special called meeting to discuss the proposed changes to Chapter 45. Once the Agricultural Advisory Board has had an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed changes, Staff will bring those changes back to the taskforce. Staff also described the next steps if the taskforce was to recommend the proposed Chapter 45 amendments to the Board of Commissioners.

PUV Rollback:

The taskforce previously requested Staff to provide more information on the County’s Present-Use Value Rollback funds, as a potential tool for farmland preservation funding. Staff provided the most recent figures for PUV rollback amounts. Staff also provided an overview of how a property could “lose” Present-Use Value status, and when PUV land is audited by a County tax assessor.

Draft Taskforce Recommendations:

Staff created a list of Draft Taskforce Recommendations based on previous taskforce discussions and meetings. The Taskforce had an opportunity to review the recommendations and provide their feedback. If agreed upon by the Taskforce, these recommendations will also be presented to the County Board of Commissioners for approval.

Next Meeting:

The next taskforce meeting was scheduled for October 14, 2024, but was cancelled due to Hurricane Helene. The next taskforce meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the King Street Meeting Room. There being no further business, the taskforce adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Commissioner Rebecca McCall, Chair and Commissioner David Hill, Chair
Henderson County Farmland Preservation Taskforce



Henderson County Farmland Preservation Taskforce

Monday, November 18, 2024 - 6:00 PM
King Street Meeting Room
100 N. King Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792

Agenda

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda
4. Public Comment
5. Approval of September 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes
6. Staff Updates
7. Agricultural Growth Zone Grant Application
 - a. Scoring Criteria
 - b. Priority Areas
8. Next Meeting
9. Adjourn



FARMLAND PRESERVATION TASKFORCE

Henderson County



November 18, 2024 • 6:00 PM • King Street Meeting Room



MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation & Pledge
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Public Comment
5. Approval of September 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes
6. Staff Updates
7. Agricultural Growth Zone Grant Application
8. Next Meeting
9. Adjourn



The background is a solid dark brown color. It features decorative elements: three stylized leaves in shades of cream and light pink at the top and bottom center. In the four corners, there are clusters of four small white dots of varying sizes. Large, soft-edged, light brown shapes are positioned on the left and right sides, resembling abstract leaves or petals.

STAFF UPDATES

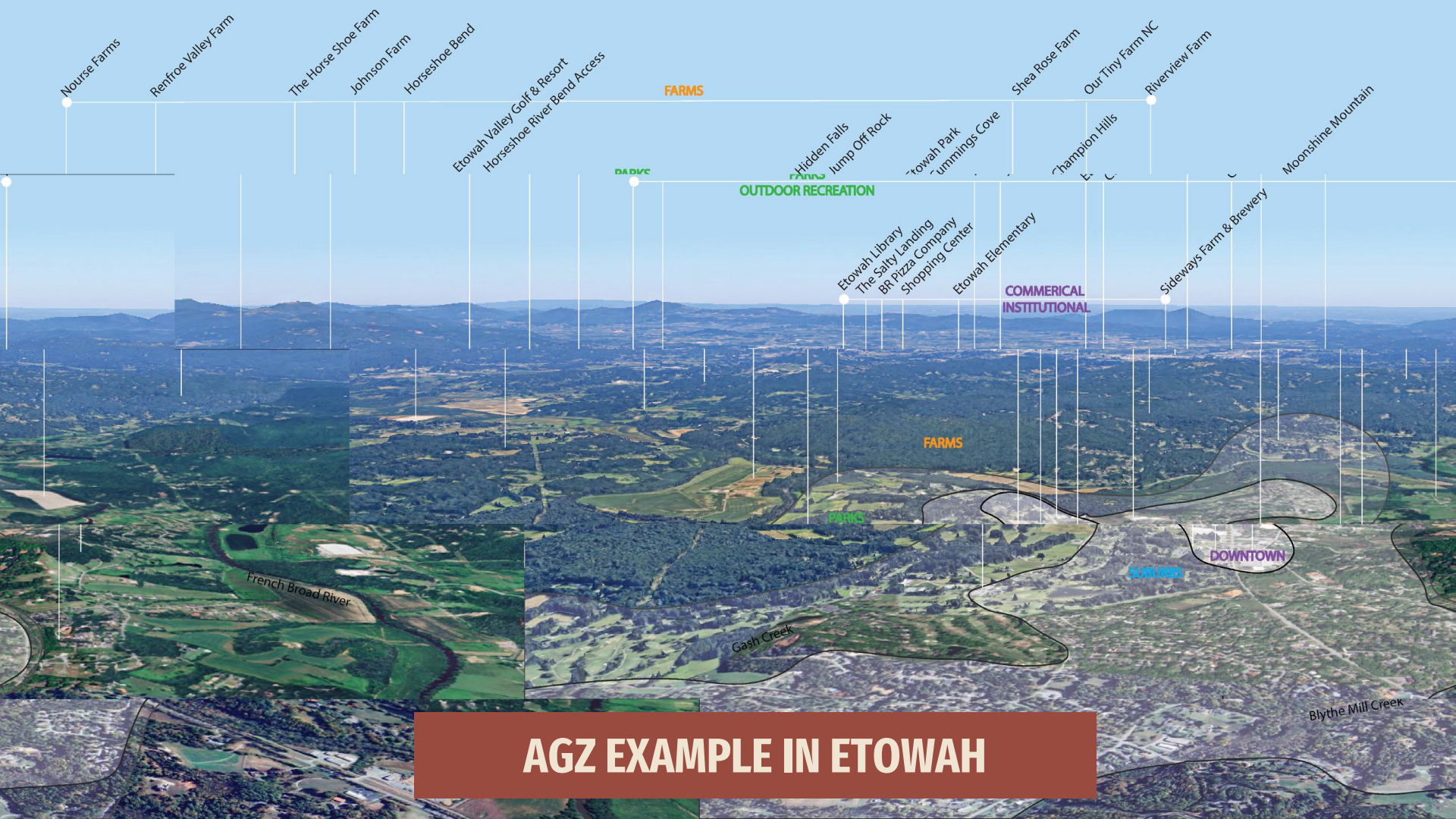
AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ZONE GRANT UPDATE

- The **Board of Commissioners** have directed Staff to apply for the AGZ Grant funds
- Deadline for applications extended to **January 17, 2025**
- Staff currently working on AGZ grant application
- **Taskforce's recommendations on prioritization are needed!**



The purpose of the Local Agricultural Growth Zones (AGZ) Application is to allow counties and conservation nonprofit organizations to enhance local investments in the acquisition of **agricultural conservation easements** by applying for **matching funds** from the state.

- Permanently preserve farmland
- Create a buffer between urban areas and agricultural land
- Slow down urban/suburban sprawl
- Reduce farmland fragmentation
- Increase production and distribution efficiency



Nourse Farms

Renfro Valley Farm

The Horse Shoe Farm

Johnson Farm

Horseshoe Bend

Etowah Valley Golf & Resort
Horseshoe River Bend Access

FARMS

Shea Rose Farm

Our Tiny Farm NC

Riverview Farm

Hidden Falls
Jump Off Rock

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Etowah Park
Lummings Cove

Champion Hills

Moonshine Mountain

Etowah Library
The Salty Landing
BR Pizza Company
Shopping Center

COMMERICAL
INSTITUTIONAL

Etowah Elementary

Sideways Farm & Brewery

FARMS

FARMS

DOWNTOWN

URBAN

French Broad River

Gash Creek

Blythe Mill Creek

AGZ EXAMPLE IN ETOWAH



TWO MAIN COMPONENTS

If you are located *outside* of a designated Priority Area, you can still apply for grant funds!



NC ADFPTF APPLICATION SCORING – CYCLE 17

QUESTION	POINTS
Is the proposed conservation easement perpetual?	0-2
What percentage of the proposed easement acreage of land is Prime, Unique or soils of statewide importance?	0-18
Does the landowner(s) have an economic interest as a producer in the agricultural production as defined in NC Statute 106581.1 on the proposed conservation easement acreage?	4
Is the landowner(s) pledging to keep the proposed conservation easement acres in availability for future production of agricultural commodities as defined in NC Statute 106581.1?	5

NC ADFPTF APPLICATION SCORING – CYCLE 17

Are other private entities with an economic interest as producers in the agricultural production as defined in NC Statute 106-5811 on the proposed conservation easement acreage? Designate only one response.	4-10
Are the proposed agricultural conservation easement acres currently enrolled in Present-Use Value (PUV) taxation?	2
Are the proposed agricultural conservation easement acres currently enrolled in VAD or EVAD?	3-5
Are the proposed agricultural conservation easement acres in the immediate vicinity of another agricultural conservation easement allowing the production of agricultural commodities as defined in NC Statute 106-5811?	0-7

NC ADFPTF APPLICATION SCORING – CYCLE 17

Are conservation land management plans being used on the proposed agricultural conservation easement acreage? Adjust using the following if applicable.	5
Is the proposed conservation easement property currently being used for agricultural production as defined in NC Statute 106-5811? If so, when was the last production?	0-4
Are there recognizable threats to non-compatible use for agricultural production within the area? Check only one response.	2-5
County of the proposed agricultural conservation easement based on the agricultural land acres projected to be converted to urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) uses in the runaway sprawl model by 2040 according to the American Farmland Trust.	0-5
County of the proposed agricultural conservation easement based on the agricultural land percentage projected to be converted to urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) uses in the runaway sprawl model by 2040 according to the American Farmland Trust.	0-5



HENDERSON COUNTY APPLICATION SCORING

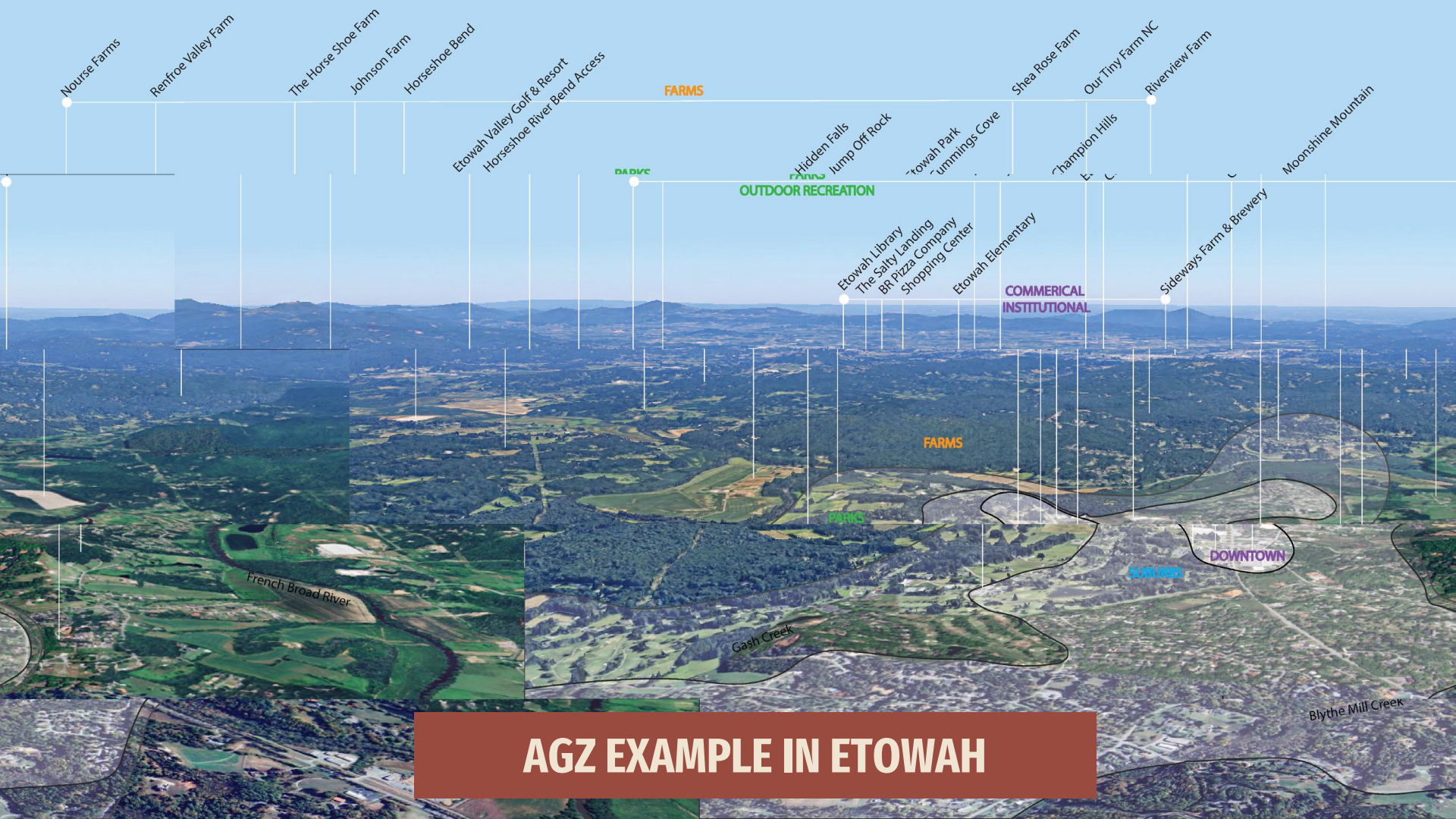
Development Pressure:

- Proximity to existing residential development/subdivisions
- Proximity to existing commercial development
- Proximity to industrial development along a major thoroughfare
- Proximity to municipal limits/ETJs

Other:

- Proximity to existing VADs
- Proximity to existing PUV
- Size of tract(s)
- Years/recency of consistent agriculture production
- Within an AGZ priority area





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AGZ EXAMPLE IN ETOWAH



PROPERTY PRIORITY ZONES

- Proximity to existing **VAD & PUV** parcels
- Proximity to existing **residential development** (subdivisions, residential suitability)
- Proximity to existing **commercial development** (commercial suitability)
- Proximity to **municipal limits** or **ETJ**
- USDA **Prime Soils** (requirement of grant application)





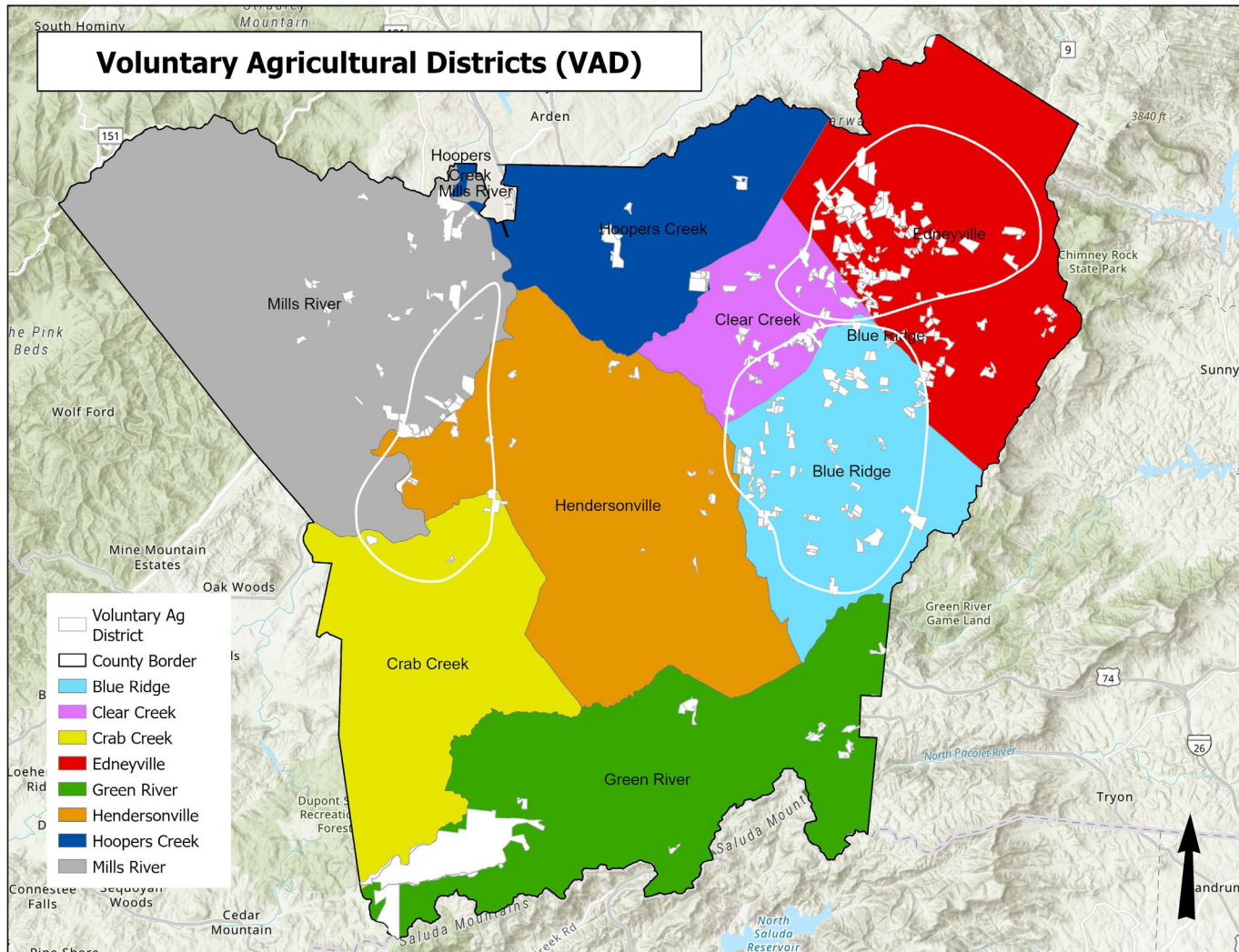
AREA #1 – BLUE RIDGE TOWNSHIP

AREA #2 – EDNEYVILLE TOWNSHIP

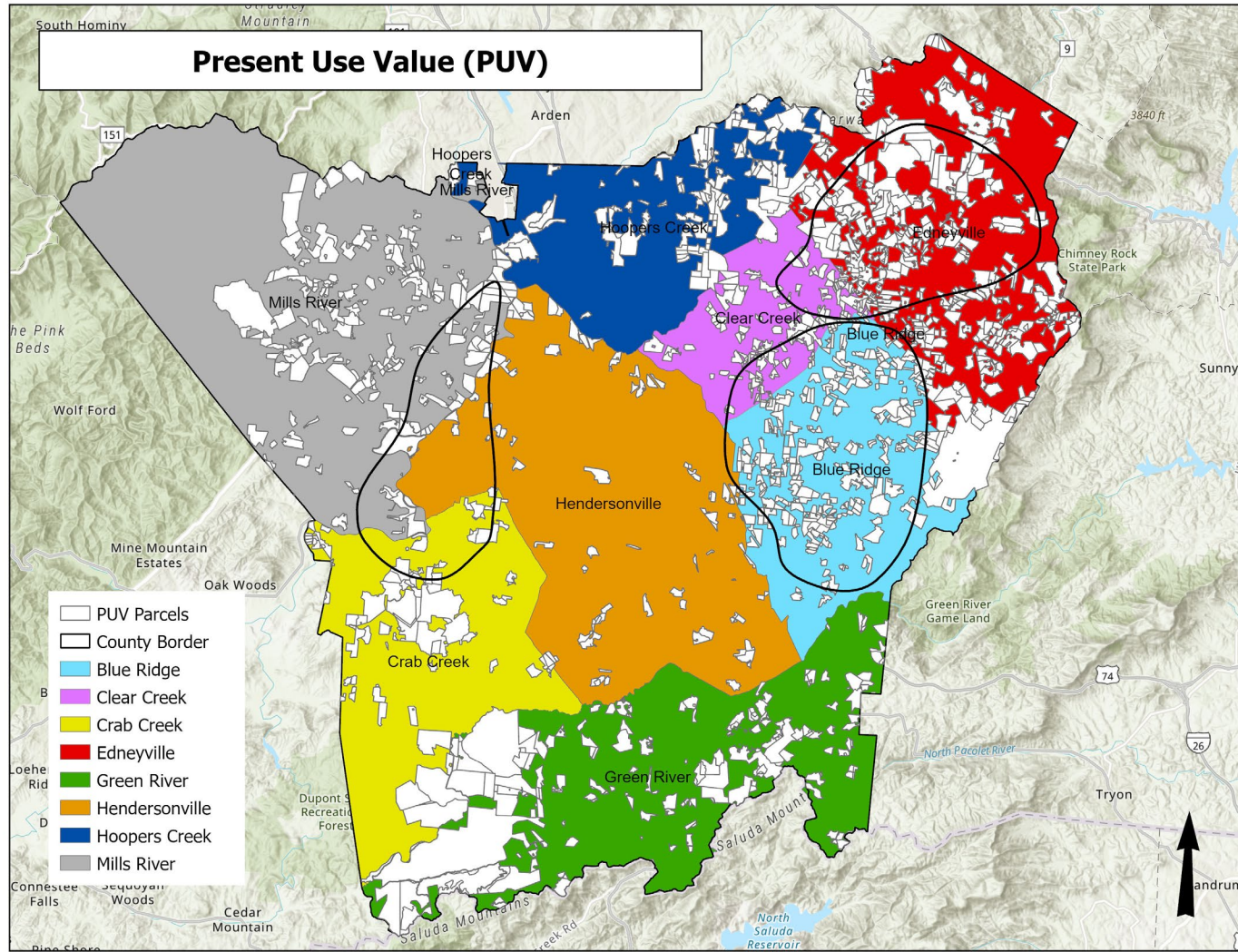
**AREA #3 – MILLS RIVER TOWNSHIP, ETOWAH/HORSE
SHOE**



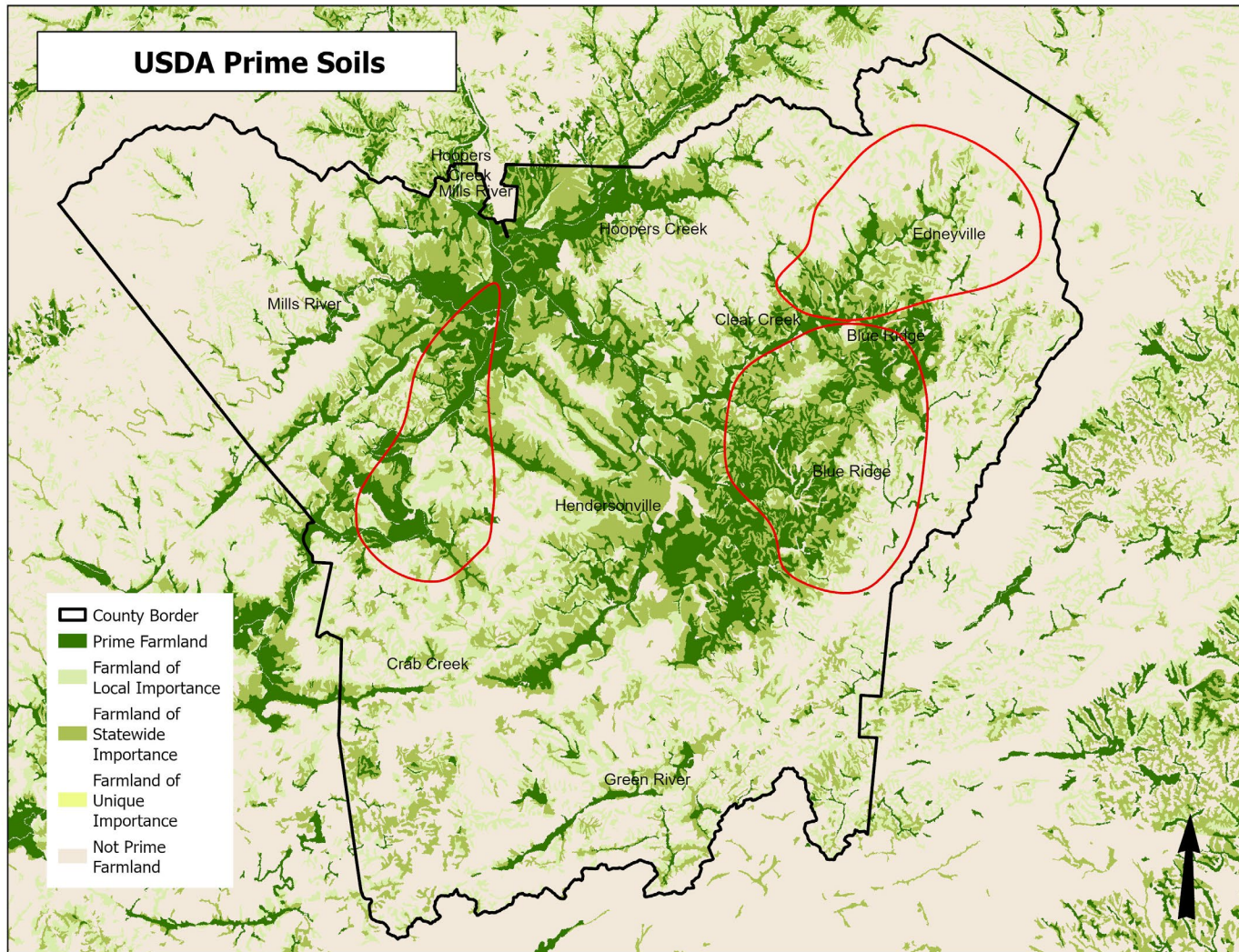
Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)



Present Use Value (PUV)



USDA Prime Soils





OBJECTIVES

- 1. Discuss Scoring Criteria**
- 2. Discuss Priority Areas**





N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
N.C. ADFP Trust Fund
Local Agricultural Growth Zones (AGZ) Information Packet



Purpose

The purpose of the Local Agricultural Growth Zones (AGZ) program is to allow counties and conservation nonprofit organizations to enhance local investments in the acquisition of agricultural conservation easements by applying for matching funds from the state.

Different regions in North Carolina have varying agricultural landscapes, land use pressures, and community needs. Local AGZs allow for strategic approaches to farmland preservation at the community level.

Description

According to research by the American Farmland Trust and the University of Pennsylvania, large blocks of permanently protected land are one of the most effective sprawl management tools. AGZs are local or regional areas of concentrated agricultural conservation easements.

Large blocks of protected farmland can be a physical barrier to urban and suburban sprawl. AGZs are permanently protected from development, creating a buffer between urban areas and agricultural lands. These protected farms and forests can slow down encroachment and preserve the rural character of an area.

The fragmentation of farmland results in inefficient land use patterns, increased infrastructure costs, and loss of prime agricultural soils. Fragmentation of working lands is a threat to the agricultural economy of communities because it makes it more difficult for farmers to manage their operations and reduce the economic viability of their farms. AGZs reduce the fragmentation of working landscapes by protecting land resources in concentrated areas.

The local agricultural economy can benefit from reduced fragmentation through increased efficiencies in production, distribution, and marketing. When large blocks of farmland are protected, it supports the long-term viability of agribusinesses and contributes to the community's overall economic health.

Large blocks of protected farmland are most effective when they are coordinated with other planning efforts at the local, regional, and state levels. This includes comprehensive land use planning, zoning, and other policy mechanisms that promote smart growth, land preservation, and sustainable agricultural practices. Coordinated planning efforts can help to ensure that large blocks of protected farmland are strategically located in areas that are vulnerable to sprawl and that they are managed in a way that maximizes their impact on mitigating sprawl and preserving agricultural viability.

Application

Qualifying entities (county governments or private conservation nonprofit organizations) may request up to \$2 million per Local AGZ application.

Local AGZ applications must include a cash contribution for agricultural conservation easement purchase equal to or greater than the ADFP Trust Fund grant request for agricultural



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conservation easement purchase. Future projections for cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase may be considered.

Higher consideration will be given to Local AGZ applications with secured cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase and other funds available to complete agricultural conservation easement projects.

Local AGZ applications may request ADFP Trust Fund grant funds for transactional costs to complete the agricultural conservation easements. Grant requests for transactional costs are limited to 10 percent of the total Local AGZ request, and each line item is capped at the maximum cost average for the region.

Local AGZs are restricted within the boundaries of one county. Applications may include priority zones or focus areas within a county.

Example Budget:

Line Item	ADFPTF Grant Request	Secured Cash Match	Secured In-Kind Match
Easement Purchase	\$900,000.00	\$900,000.00	-
Stewardship Endowment	\$27,000.00	\$27,000.00	-
Appraisal	n/a	\$40,000.00	-
Transactional and Due Diligence Costs	\$73,000.00	-	\$20,000.00
TOTAL	\$1,000,000.00	\$967,000.00	\$20,000.00

Property Eligibility

If awarded a Local AGZ grant, agricultural conservation easement projects may be submitted on a rolling basis during the Local AGZ grant contract period.

To be eligible for an agricultural conservation easement through a Local AGZ grant contract, the property must be privately owned and in working lands use (agriculture, horticulture, forestry). Minimum acreage requirements must follow the present-use value guidelines: Five acres for horticulture, 10 acres for agriculture (row crops or pasture), 20 acres for forestry, or a combination of working lands use. If there are existing easements that have removed the development rights from the property, those easement areas will be ineligible for the program and do not count towards the minimum acreage requirements.

All agricultural conservation easements through a Local AGZ grant contract must work with a private nonprofit conservation organization or county government that will be responsible for agricultural conservation easement deliverables and will be the easement-holding entity

The contracted entity will submit each agricultural conservation easement project to the ADFP Trust Fund for review. The ADFP Trust Fund will verify property eligibility. Once property



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Local Agricultural Growth Zones (AGZ) Information Packet



eligibility is confirmed, a subcontract for the property will be executed with the private nonprofit conservation organization or county government that will be the easement-holding entity.

To complete an agricultural conservation easement project with Local AGZ funding, all ADFP Trust Fund program requirements must be completed.

Grant Funds

Local AGZ grant contracts must identify the source of cash contributions. These may be sourced from a local government, a private conservation nonprofit organization, or a combination of both. Federal, state, or outside private sources of funding are ineligible.

Future budget projections of cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase may be considered for budget planning purposes, but grant funds will only be expended for secured funding.

If a Local AGZ grant contract does not have secured cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase, no grant funds may be expended until those funds are secured.

Grantees are limited to the start of the next fiscal year after the execution of a grant contract to secure cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase. If cash contributions for agricultural conservation easement purchase from a local government or a private conservation nonprofit organization are not secured during this time period, the grant contract will be canceled.

Example: If a Local AGZ grant contract is awarded on October 1, 2024, the contracted entity has until July 1, 2025, to secure matching funds. The secured funds may be in whole or in part, but the maximum grant expenditures are limited to the secured matching funds.

Federal funding for agricultural conservation easement acquisition may not supplant or replace dedicated funding as identified in the Local AGZ grant contract.

If federal funds are secured for an agricultural conservation easement project approved under a Local AGZ grant, the funding from the local source and the ADFP Trust Fund must be reduced proportionally.



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Application Scoring

Scoring Question	Scoring Metrics	Points Awarded	Explanation
What is the amount of <u>Secured</u> Cash Match as a percentage of the ADFPTF grant request?	0 to 25 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	0	This scoring item is to incentivize more local investment in farmland preservation. Calculate this amount by dividing the secured cash match by the total ADFPTF grant request. (Secured cash match/ ADFPTF grant request)
	26 to 50 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	5	
	51 to 75 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	10	
	76 to 100 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	20	
	101 to 125 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	30	
	126 to 150 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	35	
	151 to 175 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	40	
	176 to 200 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	45	
	Over 200 percent of the ADFPTF Grant Request	50	
Does the Local AGZ proposal have a scoring rubric to prioritize agricultural conservation easement applications? If yes, upload the scoring rubric.	Yes	5	An established scoring rubric will provide an open and fair system for determining which parcels are selected for agricultural conservation easement funding. Aligning these with funding sources may increase the likelihood of additional funding.
	No	0	



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Does the Local AGZ proposal have a Property Priority Zones Map that identifies focus areas for funding? If yes, upload the map with the priority zones or focus areas.	Yes	5	Large blocks of permanently protected land are one of the most effective sprawl management tools. AGZs are local or regional areas of concentrated agricultural conservation easements.
	No	0	
Is the Local AGZ proposal open to any willing landowner with a qualifying farm or forest?	Yes	5	Although resources may be prioritized for focus areas, this public program should be available to any willing landowner with parcels that meet the land eligibility requirements.
	No	0	
Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmers or ranchers, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing historically underserved producers may help with potential barriers or constraints to enrolling the parcels.
	No	0	
Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize Got to Be NC members?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing Got To Be NC members may help promote and expand markets for North Carolina agricultural products both domestically and internationally.
	No	0	



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Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize Century Farm program members?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing Century Farm members may help preserve the agricultural heritage of communities by preserving farms that have continuous ownership by a family for 100 years or more.
	No	0	
Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize parcels enrolled in the Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) or Enhanced VAD program?	Yes	5	Voluntary Agricultural Districts are the first step in Farmland Preservation at the parcel level, and enrollment may strengthen the viability of agricultural communities.
	No	0	
Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize members or parcels with American Tree Farmers, Forest Stewardship Program, or Sustainable Forestry Initiative Certification?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing working forests with sustainable management plans may help with the long-term viability of timber operations.
	No	0	
Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize parcels within five miles of an existing agricultural conservation easement?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing areas of established agricultural conservation easements may provide a head start on creating large blocks of permanently protected land.
	No	0	



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Does the Local AGZ proposal provide additional scoring points or prioritize parcels within five miles of local, state, or federally owned lands that are managed for the protection and use of agriculture, plants, forestry, wildlife, historical, or cultural sites?	Yes	5	Providing additional scoring points or prioritizing compatible land uses in a specific geographic area may provide a head start on creating concentrated conserved areas.
	No	0	