

Linking Lands and Communities in the Land-of-Sky Region

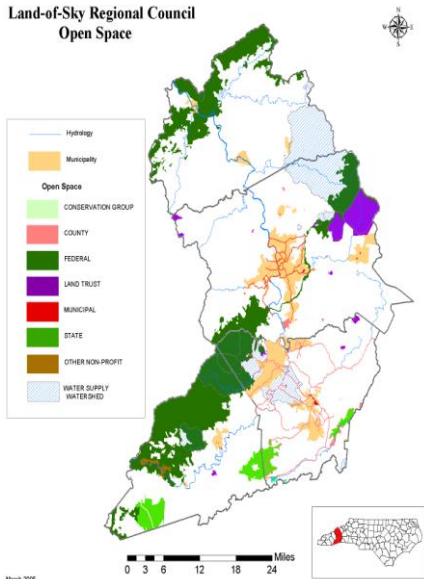
Creating a framework for conservation and development that respects community values and natural systems

The Regional Conservation and Development Network is

is an interconnected network of areas valuable for their ecological systems and services including farmlands, forests, water resources, wildlife habitat, recreation areas – and areas most suited for future growth and development.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Land-of-Sky Regional Council
Open Space



In response to unprecedented development in Western North Carolina, Land-of-Sky Regional Council is working with local and regional interests to design a regional framework for conservation and development that will strategically guide future growth for Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania counties while respecting the integrity of the region's ecosystems.

The Linking Lands and Communities project is creating a forum for practitioners, citizens, local governments and organizations to build a common understanding of the region's ecological systems and services and build relationships across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. By using a collaborative approach, this effort will help to link urban and rural communities and protect the area's rich natural and cultural heritage.

The Regional Network Will...

- *Identify our area's green infrastructure* - valuable ecological systems, farms and forests, recreation lands
- *Identify patterns future growth and development.*
- *Illustrate the importance of interconnectivity in our conservation efforts and development patterns* in order to maintain ecological values and functions necessary for healthy sustainable communities.
- *Serve as a resource for decision-makers and developers* to balance economic and environmental needs of our communities.

Why a Regional Network?

- **Healthy ecosystems produce services** for our communities, like clean drinking water, carbon storage, flood storage, local food supplies, and other goods and services
- **Natural systems don't pay attention to jurisdictional boundaries** – they must be protected, managed, and restored at the larger landscape level. This can only be accomplished by communities throughout the region working together.
- **By incorporating the needs and benefits of healthy natural systems into existing planning processes** at the municipal and county levels, **our communities are better prepared** to make land use decisions that sustain human communities and natural systems for the long term.

Elements of the Green Infrastructure Network



Water Resources



Farmlands



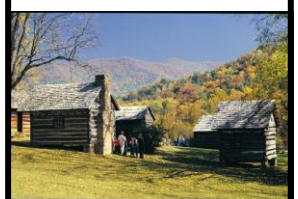
Recreation Lands



Wildlife Habitat



Forestry Lands



Cultural Resources

Funding for Linking Lands and Communities Project Provided by:

The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area,
Federal Highway Administration, RENCI at UNC Asheville

Project Partners

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau
The Biltmore Estate
Blue Ridge Forever
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
Buncombe County
Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Commission
Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
City of Asheville
City of Hendersonville
NC Farm Bureau
Friends of DuPont State Forest
Madison County
Mars Hill College
Mountain Council for Accountable Development
Natural Resources Conservation Service
NC Cooperative Extension Service – County Offices
NC Department of Agriculture
NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NC Division of Community Assistance
NC Division of Forest Resources
NCSU Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center
NC Wildlife Federation
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Open Space Institute
RENCI@UNC Asheville
RiverLink
Self Help Credit Union/Self Help Ventures Fund
Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Southern Environmental Law Center
Sustainable Big Ivy
Sustainability Strategies, LLC
Transylvania County
U.S.D.A. Forest Service Southern Research Station
UNC Asheville
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Warren Wilson College
Western North Carolina Alliance
WNC Green Building Council

What is our Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is our community's life support system - an interconnected network of land and water that is managed for its natural resource values and for associated benefits for people.

A green infrastructure network connects ecosystems and landscapes, including:

- Conserved natural areas, such as wetlands, woodlands, waterways, and wildlife habitat
- Working lands, including farms and private forests
- Publicly managed lands, including national and state parks, nature preserves, wildlife corridors, and wilderness areas
- Recreation areas, including hiking and biking trails, parks, and blueways
- Cultural sites and resources, including historical sites, community gathering places, and interpretative trails

Ecological assessment being conducted as a part of the Linking Lands and Communities project to determine:

- ▶ Where is our green infrastructure?
- ▶ What condition it is in?

Project Schedule and Upcoming Events

Water Quality, Agricultural Lands, and Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity Assessments completed – October 2009

Public Open Houses for review and comment:

- November 4, 5 in Marshall
- November 9, 10 in Brevard
- November 19, 20 in Asheville

Green Infrastructure Design Workshop – January/February 2010

Public Sessions; Future Scenarios Workshop – March 2010

Complete Regional Network and Plan – May 2010

Community input will be solicited throughout the project.

For more information or to get involved, please contact:
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