



Soil & Water Conservation District

Buncombe County Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB) Land Conservation Grant Request

The Land Conservation Advisory Board was established in December 2003 and was directed to inventory protected land and to recommend land for future protection. Since 2003, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners has provided funding for Land Conservation Agencies in the community to help with conservation of valuable land within the Community.

Buncombe County accepts project applications from qualified agencies and organizations for funding to conserve conservation easements (transaction fees or land acquisition) within Buncombe County. Project applications will be reviewed and evaluated by the Land Conservation Advisory Board, and recommendations will be made to the County Manager and Board of Commissioners regarding the selection of project(s). The Board shall have final approval regarding the funding of a proposed conservation easement. The County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications and/or requests for funding completely or in part.

After approval, the County and the project administrator(s) may enter into agreement(s) for the performance of all activities related to the successful completion of the proposed conservation easement project. Please submit an original and one copy of the proposal application and any attachments thereto. Proposals should be submitted to Buncombe County Ag and Land Resources Department.

General Information

The Land Conservation Advisory Board will recommend funding for two types of projects to the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners (BOC):

- 1) Transaction Costs funding to assist with Donated or Bargain Purchase Conservation Easements
- 2) Easement Purchase funding for Bargain Purchases of Conservation Easements

Eligible applications for grants include qualified non-profit conservation organizations and units of government. Each proposed conservation easement project shall be administered and created by a qualified agency or organization (project administrator) that can demonstrate its capability and capacity to provide planning, implementation, and stewardship of said easement. The project administrator shall provide or arrange for the administrative, technical, financial, legal, and other services and activities needed to undertake and successfully complete the establishment and future management of the conservation easement. Transaction costs shall not include travel or staffing cost for the applicant's agency.

Criteria to Be Considered for Funding

In selecting projects to be funded, consideration will be given to proposed conservation easements that meet the following criteria:

- a. **Applicants Organization Track Record:** The organization has demonstrated a track record of completed and successful conservation easements or provided evidence that the conservation easement/deal can be completed.
- b. **Long-Term Protection of County's Investment in Project:** The application has demonstrated that the County's investment of public funding for the easement will be protected not only through the establishment of the conservation easement, but through proof of a dedicated plan/funding for stewardship of the land protected.
- c. **Evidence of Collaboration among Conservation Organizations, Other Agencies, and Communities.** The applicant has provided evidence of collaboration among conservation organizations, other agencies, and the community committed to the conservation of land in Buncombe County.
- d. **Project Completion.** Applicant has shown that the project can be completed in a timely manner by providing a proposed schedule for establishment of the easement.
- e. **Value of the Project Substantiated.** Applicant has provided documentation and evidence showing how the proposed value of the easement was established and has been substantiated.
- f. **Integrity of the Easement.** Applicant has shown that the integrity of the easement shall remain in intact.

Scoring/Evaluation of Project for Funding

Projects meeting the above criteria to be considered for funding will then be scored based on the following criteria:

Public Benefit/Conservation Value (70 points)

Project would provide a distinguishable public benefit, and provides conservation value based on the areas of conservation that the Land Conservation Advisory Board has determined are priority areas:

- Scenic/Viewshed Protection
- Natural Areas Protection
- Water Quality Protection and Restoration
- Farmland Preservation
- Working Forest Protection
- Recreation/Public Access Protection
- Historic/Cultural Resource Protection

Value Added/Leveraged by the County (30 points)

Amount of value being leveraged by the County through funding of easement.

- a. **Leverage.** Project provides a substantial ratio of funds being leveraged by the county, as compared to the value of the easement and project (15 points).
- b. **Value Added to the Project.** The project provides "value added" in terms of monetary or social value by contributions of a wide variety of groups. This includes such things as matching funds from another grant program, planned improvements to the property in terms of conservation value, donations to the project from outside sources, proposed public access to the property, or other value added to the project (15 points).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE PROPOSAL PACKAGE

Applications must be completed in their entirety. Responses should be as brief and concise as possible. The format of the application must be followed when additional space is used. Additional supporting documentation may be attached to clarify information such as project description, feasibility, etc. Be sure to complete all information, submit one original, and one digital copy of the information to:

Buncombe County Ag and Land Resources Department
49 Mount Carmel Rd
Asheville, NC 28806

Attn: Ariel Zijp

For questions or more information, please contact:
Ariel Zijp, Farmland Preservation Coordinator
Ariel.zijp@buncombecounty.org
828-250-4794

Easement Information

Name of Tract/Project: _____

Property Location: _____

PIN Number(s): _____

Type of Project: Land Acquisition ___ Conservation Easement ___

Total Acres to Be Conserved: _____

Grant is requested for: Transaction Costs Only ___ Land/CE Purchase ___

Applicant Organization/Agency: _____

Project Administrator/Primary Contact _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Applicant Contact Person/Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Name of Property Owner(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Name of Property Owner(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Name of Property Owner(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Please attach the following to the application:

- A. Cover Letter Describing Project**
- B. Maps of Project**
- C. Photos of Project**
- D. Any additional information you feel is necessary or would be valuable in LCAB evaluating the project.**

Funding Level and Duration

Funding sought from LCAB:	
Total Cost of Project (<i>refers to the specific project to which LCAB funds will be applied. Please include all funding sources.</i>)	
Duration (<i>refers to time in months to complete the project.</i>)	

Project Budget

Item	Requested LCAB Grant Amount	Matching Funds (*)	Total Project Cost
A. Property Acquisition (Provide one line item for each tract; list acreage and whether transaction is fee simple purchase or conservation easement purchase) **			
B. Appraisals			
C. Surveys and Legal Descriptions			
D. Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessments			
E. Baseline Documentation Report- Required for Land Trust applicants who intend to hold and monitor the easement			
F. Ad Valorem Taxes (if applicable)			
G. Title Insurance (if applicable)			
H. Legal Fees and Closing Costs			
I. Recording Fees			
J. Rollback Taxes (if applicable)			
K. Stewardship Expenses or Endowment ***			
L. Property Management Costs			
M. Project Management Costs			
Totals			
Total project cost expressed as cost per acre			

The purpose of LCAB grant funds is for the purchase of property or conservation easements and conservation of the property only; funds may not be used for the purchase of any improvements or debris on the property; funds may not be used for Land Trust staff time.

(*) List sources and dollar amounts of matching funds here.

(**) Briefly outline how the costs of the fee simple purchase or conservation easement was estimated and document as needed. How did you establish market price? *Please note that LCAB cannot pay in excess of appraised value.*

(***) Please provide documentation of how stewardship costs were calculated, and the interest rate assumed. Include annual costs and hours for items such as monitoring, communications, data collection, maintenance, travel, and other costs (please specify).

Conservation Easement Criteria to be Considered:

- a. **Applicants Organization Track Record.** The organization has demonstrated a track record of completed and successful conservation easements or provided evidence that the conservation easement/deal can be completed.

Briefly describe the organization's qualifications to accomplish the proposed project. Has the organization previously received a grant from LCAB? If yes, what is the status of the existing contract(s) with respect to completion of outputs, reporting, and extensions?

Is the proposed project strategically related to a long-term management plan or a regional or larger scale planning project? Briefly outline any ongoing or previous efforts to protect land or improve/restore water quality in or near the project. Describe how these and possible future efforts may complement the proposed project.

- b. **Long-Term Protection of County's Investment of Project.** The application has demonstrated that the County's investment of public funding for the easement will be protected not only through the establishment of the conservation easement, but through proof of a dedicated plan/funding for stewardship of the land protected.

Provide details regarding the establishment of the conservation easement. What will the easement protect? What uses of the property will be allowed on the property? What restrictions will be placed on the property?

How will the organization guarantee the long-term maintenance and protection of LCAB's investment in the project?

In the case of a conservation easement, does the applicant have a plan for acquiring and setting aside sufficient stewardship endowment resources to ensure its ability to monitor, enforce, and defend the terms of the easement into the future? What amount of funds has been calculated as necessary for upholding these stewardship responsibilities (please provide a copy of the calculation sheet)? What is the anticipated source of the funds?

Does the organization have policies, procedures and experience to guide its stewardship program? Has the organization adopted the Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices? Is the organization accredited with, or does it plan to pursue accreditation through, the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission?

In the case of land to be acquired outright, what is the applicant's plan for long-term management of the property? Will the property be conveyed to (another) public agency for long-term management? Will there be sufficient funds available to ensure protection of the property's conservation values into the future?

- c. **Evidence of Collaboration among Conservation Organizations, Other Agencies, and the Community.** By working collaboratively, organizations and agencies can help share costs and strengthen projects by contributing a variety of organizational resources and expertise. LCAB encourages applicants to partner on projects with other organizations, agencies, and the community that might have a shared interest in the success of a conservation project.

Has the lead applicant been in touch with other potential partners for this project? Is there a plan for sharing expertise and experience to strengthen long-term conservation? What partnerships have been formed/created for this project?

- g. **Project Completion.** The applicant has shown that the project can be completed in a timely manner by providing a proposed schedule for establishment of the easement.

Has the landowner signed an option, letter of intent, or other indication of their readiness to proceed under the terms of this grant request? What is the status of needed matching funds?

Provide a timeline for completion and establishment of the easement project.

- h. **Value of the Project Substantiated.** Applicant has provided documentation and evidence showing how the proposed value of the easement was established.

Provide a narrative regarding how the value of the conservation easement was determined and provide supporting documentation if available.

- i. **Integrity of the Easement.** Applicant has shown that the integrity of the easement shall remain intact. The easement shall adequately protect the conservation value of the property and not allow excessive use or development of the property, which would diminish the conservation value of the property.

Please describe all property rights to be reserved by the landowner that might affect protection of conservation values in the future. In particular, describe any rights that will be reserved for future residential development, roads/driveways/culverts, utilities and any other improvements. Will the landowner reserve the right for future tree-harvesting? Will the landowner reserve the right for future agricultural use, and if so, what rights for future agricultural out-buildings or facilities will be reserved? Please provide a map indicating locations of these potential future improvements.

Scoring/Evaluation of Project for Funding

Public Benefit/Conservation Value (70 points)

Project would provide a distinguishable public benefit, and provides conservation value based on the areas of conservation that the Land Conservation Advisory Board has determined are priority areas:

- Scenic/Viewshed Protection
- Natural Areas Protection
- Water Quality Protection/Restoration
- Farmland Preservation
- Working Forest Protection
- Recreation/Public Access Protection
- Historic/Cultural Resource Protection.

Scoring

Project will be scored on a scale of 0 to 10 points for each priority area. LCAB members should evaluate based on whether or not the priority area is fully protected; whether the priority area is mediocre or has reduced protections; or the priority area is nonexistent or not adequately protected.

Directions

Applicant shall provide a narrative and documentation in the forms of maps, acreages, etc.. for each priority area they are wishing to obtain points for. They shall also indicate which priority areas do not apply to the particular easement.

Based on type of public benefit Indicated, provide information to support the public benefit and conservation value of the proposed easement.

a. Scenic/Viewshed Protection

Please describe the scenic values of the property that would be protected under the proposed project. Make specific reference to presence and visibility of ridge tops on property. Also describe the visibility of property from public roadways, including NC scenic byways (see list of state designated byways at http://www.ncdot.org/doh/operations/dp_chief_eng/roadside/scenic) and scenic overlooks, as well as from other federal, state, county or local public land (e.g. Blue Ridge Parkway).

b. Natural Areas Protection

Please describe the significant biological values of the property, including the presence of native natural communities, as well as occurrence of threatened, rare or endangered species or habitats. In particular describe endangered or significant habitats such as mountain bogs or wetlands present. Consult with NC Natural Heritage Program for maps and records of natural heritage occurrences on or near property.

c. Water Quality Protection/Restoration

Please describe the water quality benefits to be gained from protection of the property. In particular, please describe the presence and extent (i.e. stream footage) of surface waters on the property. Approximately how many acres lie within 300 feet of surface waters? Is there an intact natural buffer present on streams and will project provide for permanent protection of vegetated riparian buffers of at least 50-feet in width on either side of streams? Does the property lie within a floodplain area? Are there wetlands present, or hydric soils that could be restored to natural wetlands? Would the project provide for or permit restoration of wetland or streams if needed? What are the state classifications of the streams present on the property or within the watershed where the property is located (refer to NC DWQ: <http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/csu/swcfaq.html>)? Are there any aquatic species, particularly rare and endangered species that might benefit from protection of the property?

d. Farmland Preservation

Please describe how protection of the property will help contribute to maintenance of a viable farm economy in the county. In particular, describe whether the property is currently in agricultural production. Please be aware that the Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board also grants funding for farmland preservation conservation easements. Describe property soil types – in particular note the presence of any soils identified as “prime soils” for Buncombe County by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (refer to Loring McIntyre, District Conservationist, 828-250-4790 and the *Soil Survey of Buncombe County*). Is the property located in a county voluntary agricultural district (VAD) ? Is the farm managed under the guidance of a USDA/NRCS-approved farm management plan, and in accord with that agency’s conservation best management practices?

e. Working Forest Protection

Please describe the forest resources that would be protected by this project. In particular, note whether there is a NC Division of Forest Resources-approved Forest management plan (refer to Buncombe County Ranger Dillon Michael, 828-686-5885) that guides forest management on the property. How does the project contribute to maintenance of a viable forest resource economy in the county?

f. Recreation/Public Access Protection

Please describe the recreational benefits to be provided by protection of the property. In particular, note whether property will be available for public access. Would public access trails help fulfill existing county greenways plans or other plans for public recreation? If not available for public access, will protection of the property enhance nearby or related public recreation – for instance, does protection of property help conserve water quality on nearby streams which are stocked for game fishing? Will there be the possibility of limited future access, such as guided hikes or access for school groups?

g. Historic/Cultural Resource Protection

Please describe any historical or cultural resources to be provided by protection of the property.

Value Added/Leveraged by the County (30 points)

Amount of value being leveraged by the County through funding of easement.

- a. **Leverage.** Project provides a substantial ratio of funds being leveraged by the county, as compared to the value of the easement and project (15 points).

Leverage shall be calculated in ratio format and percentage format

Request Funding from LCAB/Total Cost of the Project (if project includes restoration, this shall be included in the total cost of the project).

Leverage Ratio:

_____ / _____

Percentage Cost of the Project Based on Leverage Ratio:

Scoring for Leverage

Applicant shall receive the percentage of 15 points based on the percentage cost of the project based on leveraged ratio. For example, a project with a percentage cost of the project based on leverage of 95%, shall receive 14.25 points.

- b. **Value Added to the Project.** The project provides “value added” in terms of monetary or social value by contributions of a wide variety of groups. This could be such things such as matching funds from another grant program, planned improvements to the property in terms of conservation value, donations to the project from outside sources, proposed public access to the property, or other value added to the project (15 points).

Directions

Applicant shall provide a narrative and documentation in the forms of maps, acreages, etc.. Providing value added to the project.

Scoring for Value Added

Applicant shall receive points based on evidence showing that the proposed project adds value based on the description listed above. Scoring shall be at the discretion of the Land Conservation Advisory Board.