



# Budget Amendment: Open Space Bond Okoboji Farm Easement

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*Presented by*

Jill Carter, Open Space Bond Manager

Ariel Zijp, Farmland Preservation Manager

Board of County Commissioners Meeting

June 4, 2024



# Okoboji Farm Conservation Easement



# OKOBOJI FARM - OPEN SPACE BOND ELIGIBILITY

## County Easement Purchase Requirements

Meets 2 of the following criteria:

- Is this in one of our designated farmland priority regions?
- Is this property in proximity to other protected lands?
- Does this property have prime, unique, local, or statewide important agricultural soils?
- Is this a project with a significant environmental, or scenic importance?
- Is this an active working farm or century farm?
- Is the size of the property significant?
- Is this a time sensitive project? (Elderly landowner, financial hardship, forced sale)



# Okoboji Farm

**+/- 42 acres on Lower Brush Creek Rd**

- 92 % Prime Agricultural Soils
- Conservation Focus Area
- Viewshed protection in rural community
- Contiguous & Proximal to other properties under easement
- Active Working Farm – Hay & Beef Cattle
- Water Quality –
  - Cane Creek runs through property
  - Recent Stream restoration work with EWP
- Easement Held by Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation



**Okoboji Farm CE - Overview Map**

0 200 400 800 Feet

 Easement Area, +/- 47 acres

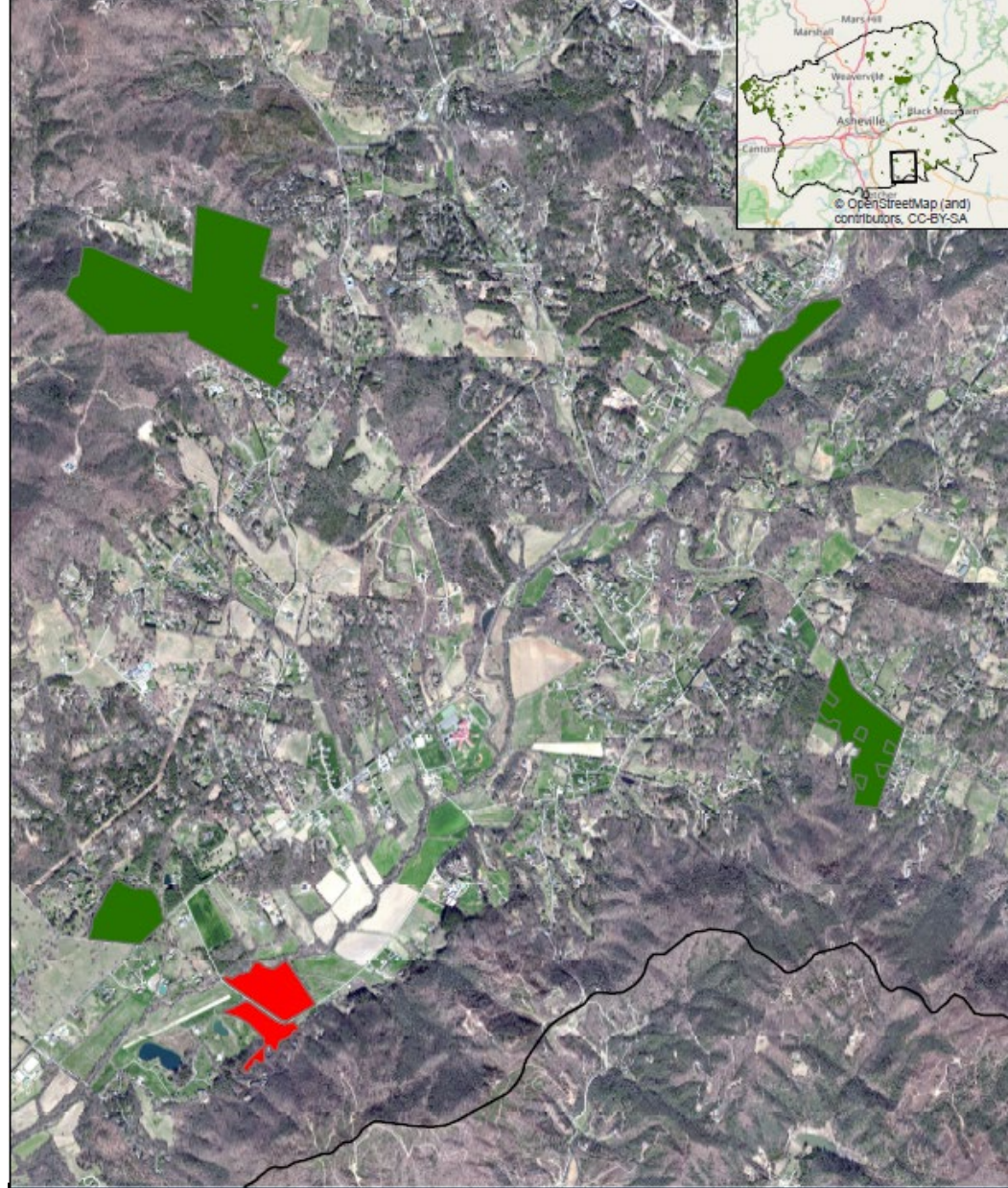


Map created by  
BCSWCD staff  
June 2023



5/29/2024

# Okoboji Farm – Proximity to Protected Lands



Okoboji Farm Conservation Easement - Proximity to Protected Lands





# Okoboji Farm Funding

- **Transaction Costs - \$43,000**  
Previously Funded from FY24 budget
- **Easement Acquisition -**
  - Applied for USDA Funding
  - **Open Space Bond \$511,500**
  - Landowner Donation \$511,500





# Budget Amendment: Special Program Easement Funds Warren Wilson College Conservation Easements

*Presented by*

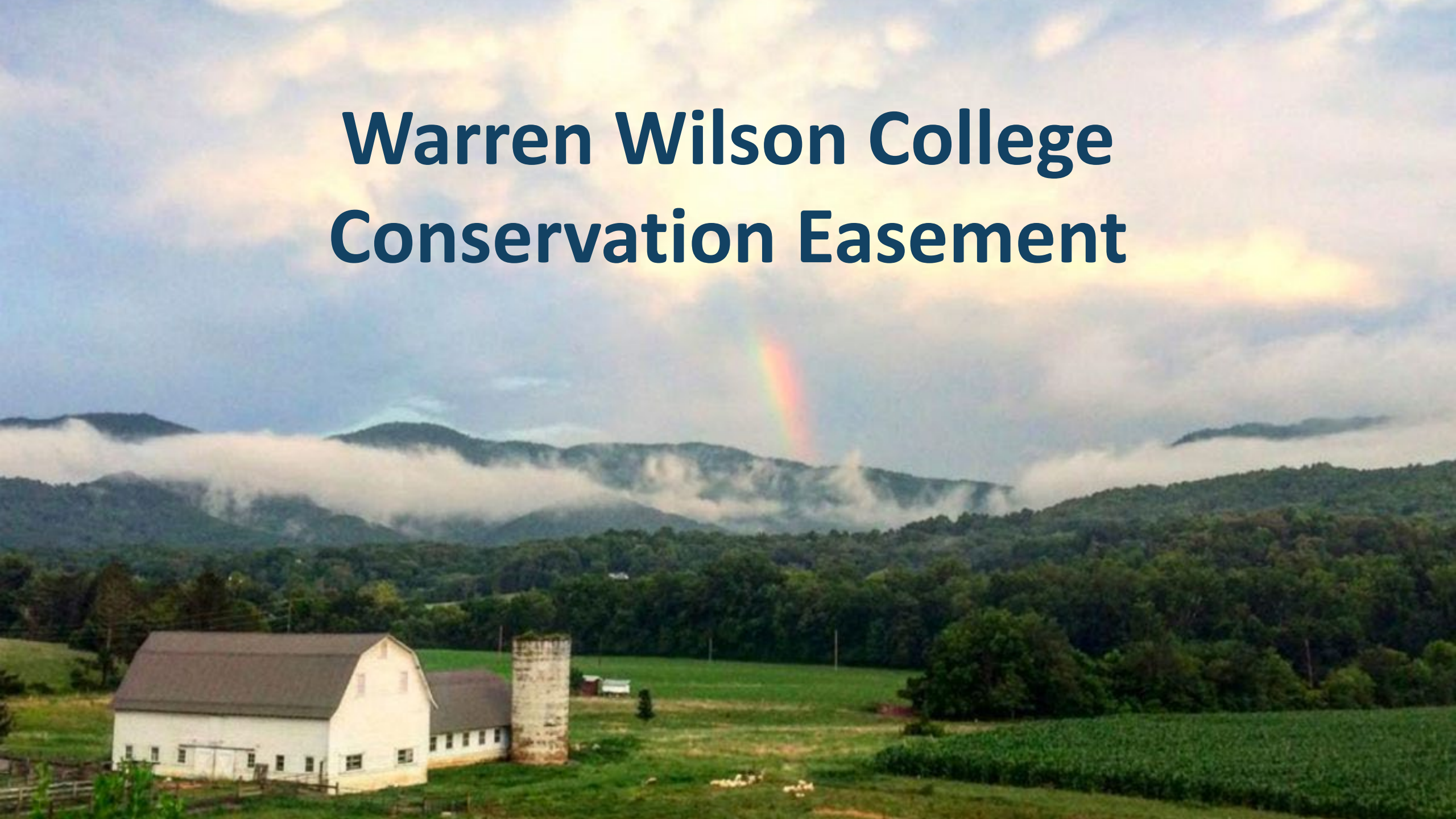
Jess Laggis, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

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# Warren Wilson College Conservation Easement







# Warren Wilson College 600 Acres of Farm and Forest in 4 Easements



# Warren Wilson College

- 600 (+/-) acres in 4 easement projects in Swannanoa Region
- 69% Important farmland Soils
- Farmland AND Mountain Land Model Top Priorities
- 4 bargain-sale agricultural conservation easements
- Adjoins Multiple Protected Lands
- Beloved scenic views, campus tailgate market, farm general store, and farmer and forester education
- Public Hiking Trails & public access/recreation;
- Excellent land stewardship; specialty product or crop production,
- Historic and cultural value; educational and social opportunities;
- Held by Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy



# Warren Wilson College Farm

- *Best College Reviews* rated at the top of their list of 20 college farms.
- The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources named WWC *Conservation Farm Family of the Year* in the Mountain Region.
- Recognized as a “River Friendly Farmer” by Buncombe County’s Soil and Water Conservation District Board.
- Received the national *Campus Sustainability Achievement Award* from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.
- Selected by Sustainable North Carolina as recipient of the *N.C. Sustainability Award*, in the Environmental Stewardship category.



# Leveraged Funding

- Estimated CE value = \$7,800,000
  - Easement Acquisition purchase price = \$5,322,619
    - Federal Grant - USDA ACEP = \$2,903,238
    - State Grant - NCDA ADFP = \$967,746
    - County - Open Space Bond = \$483,889 (future Easement Purchase bond request)
    - Private funding = \$967,746
  - Transaction Costs = \$393,000
    - Private funding = \$83,000
    - **County Transaction Costs request = \$310,000 = 3.7% of total project costs (approximately \$77,500/easement)**





# Request for Board Action:

Approve the Budget  
Amendments  
Establishing Easements  
as Projects



# Appendix





**Over 4 miles of streams protected, not including over 25 acres of existing mitigation easements.**



- 25 miles of hiking trails open to the public
- Trail system connects to Owen Park

