



# Approval of Open Space Bond Projects and Agricultural Growth Zone Grant Match

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# Open Space Bond Overview

## \$30M Open Space Bond

- Greenways
- Passive Recreation Lands
- Land Conservation
  - Protect farmland and natural resources while also contributing to BC's goal of conserving 20% of County land by 2030



# The Project Selection Process

## Criteria

Farmland	Natural Land
Farmland Soils Assessment	Parcel Size
Forestland Soils Assessment	Ridge Tops or Highland Protection
Clustering Potential	Proximity to BRP
Farmland Potential	Historic & Working Farmlands
	Water Quality Protection
	Proximity to Protected Areas
	Ecologically Sensitive Areas

## Two Boards oversee the Process:

- **Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB)**
  - Eligible Funding Recipients: Nonprofit land trusts
  - Focus Areas: Wildlands, viewsheds, farmland, forestland, stream/riparian, and/or public benefit
- **Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)**
  - Eligible Funding Recipients: County-led Farmland Preservation Program
  - Focus Areas: Farm and forestland



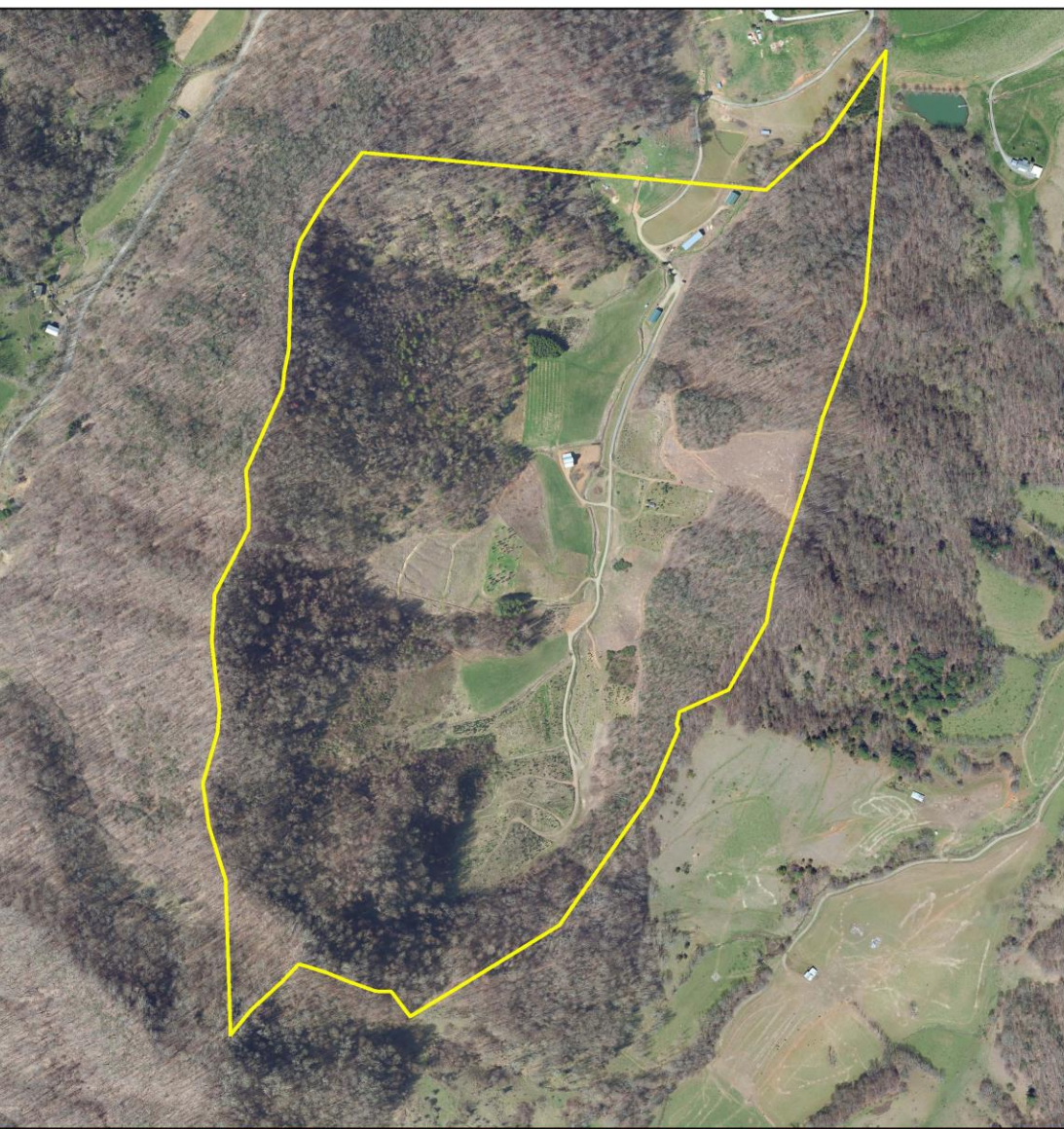
# Sandy Hollar Farm



# Sandy Hollar Farm

**+/- 150 acres on Bald Creek Rd, Sandy Mush**

- 17.7 % Prime Soils
- Century Farm
- Adjacent to other protected land
- Sandy Mush-Leicester Priority Conservation Focus Area
- Nationally known Christmas Tree Farm
- Growing – Christmas Trees, Berries, Vegetables, Seasonal pumpkins & fiber arts



Sandy Hollar Farm Ph II - Easement Boundary Map



- Easement Area, +/-150 acres
- County Boundaries
- Conservation Focus Areas



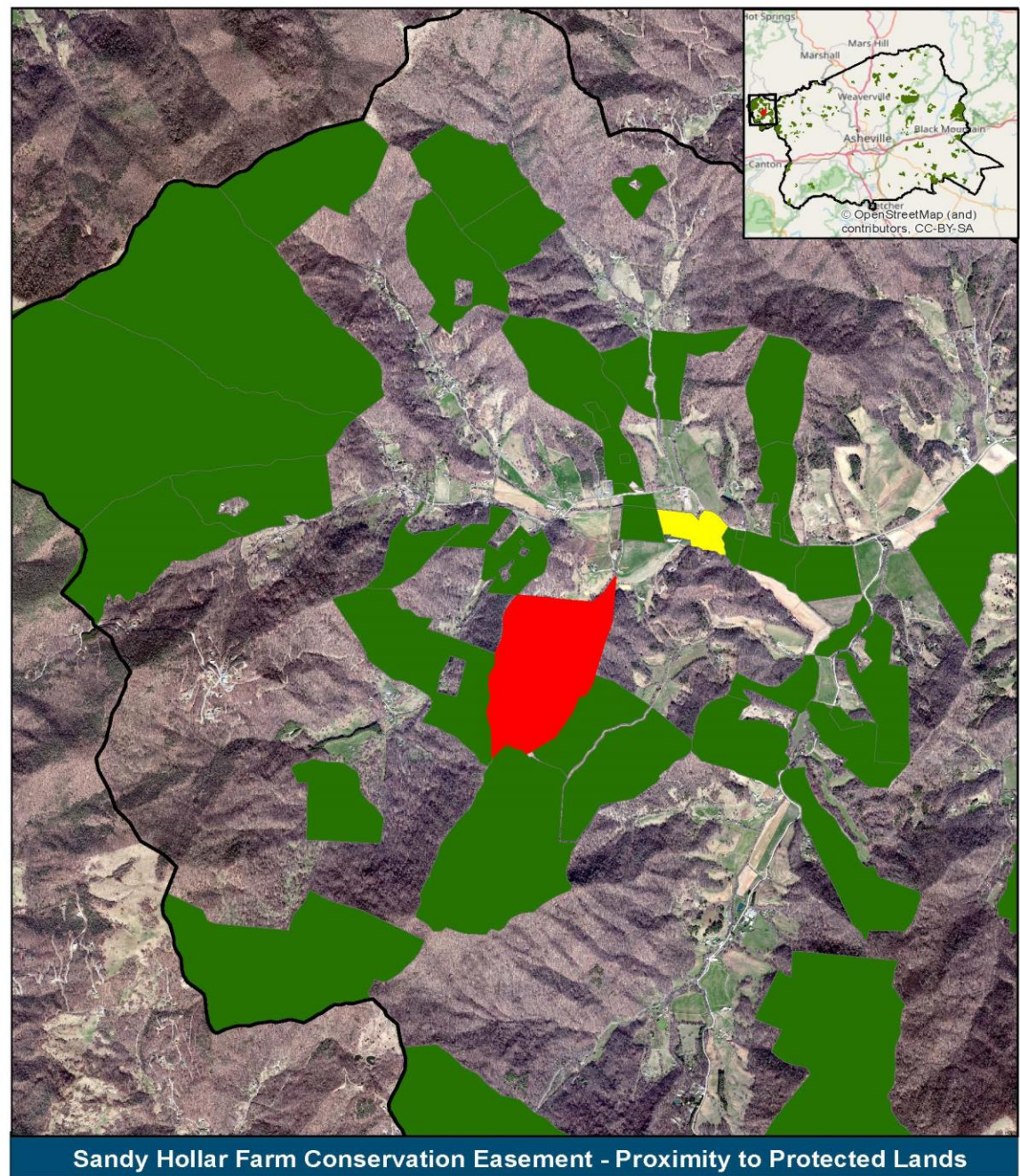
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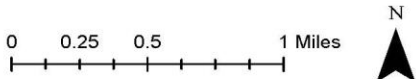
# Sandy Hollar Farm Funding

- **Transaction Costs** - \$66,000 Previously Funded from FY24 budget
- **Easement Acquisition** – 50% request
  - **Open Space Bond \$760,000**
  - Landowner Donation \$760,000
  - Not competitive for state or federal funds



Sandy Hollar Farm Conservation Easement - Proximity to Protected Lands

Yellow Splendor Valley (in the works)  
Red Easement Area, +/-150 acres  
Green Protected Land



# Kestrel Herb Farm



Photo credit from left to right: (top left) Our State, (bottom left) Buncombe County, (right) Harman Outdoor Photography

# Kestrel Herb Farm

+/- 70 acres off Sugar Creek Rd



- 28% Prime Soils
- Sandy Mush/Leicester Conservation Focus Area
- Predominantly Medicinal herb production
- Close Proximity to other properties under easement
- Agritourism on Property – plant sales, elopements, you pick flowers, farm dinners, classes



Kestrel Herb Farm - Easement Boundary Map



- Easement Area, +/-70.12 acres
- County Boundaries
- Conservation Focus Areas



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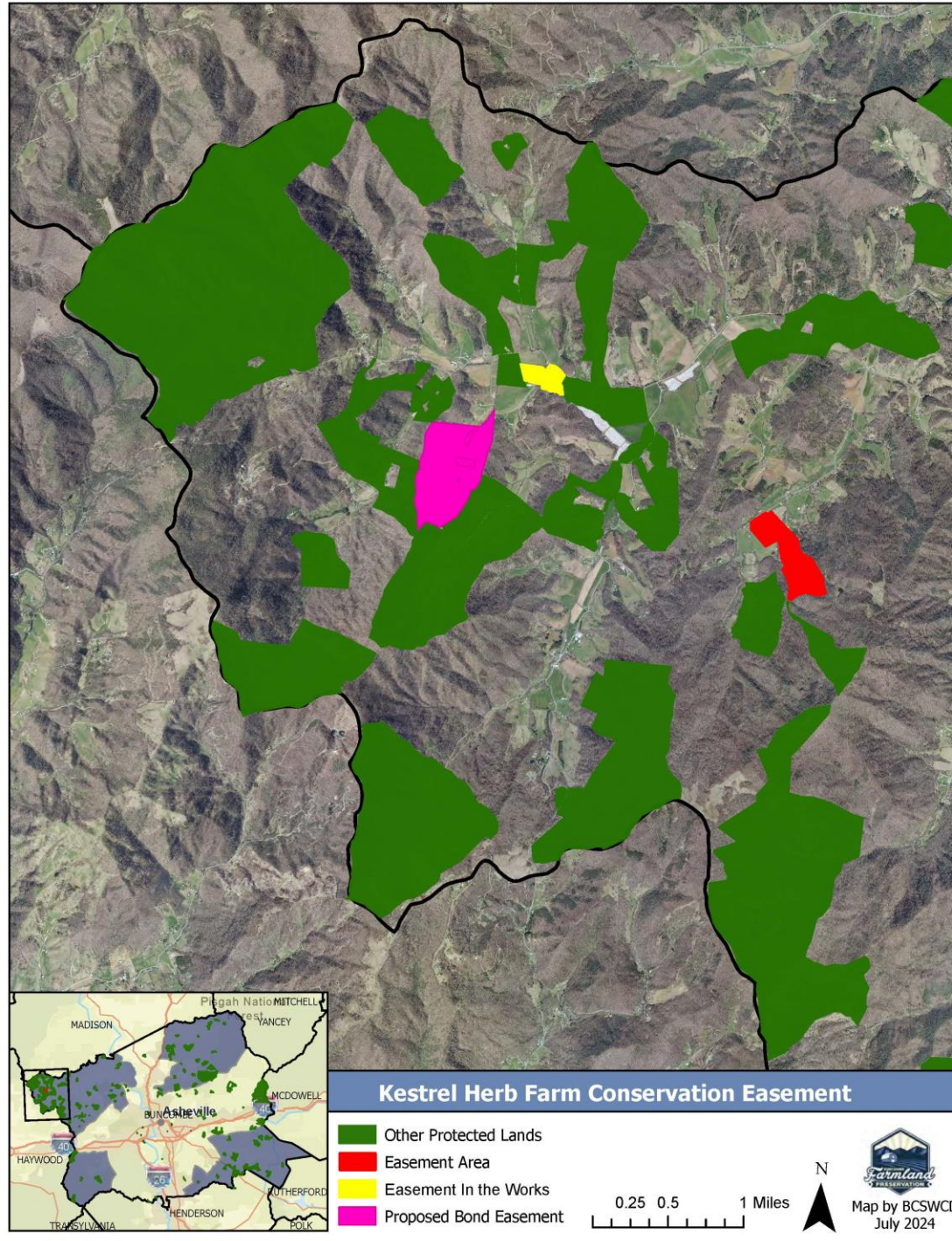


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# Kestrel Herb Farm Funding

- **Transaction Costs** - \$50,000 Previously Funded from FY25 budget
- **Easement Acquisition** - 50% request
  - **Open Space Bond** - \$259,000
  - Landowner Donation - \$259,000
  - Not competitive for state or federal funds



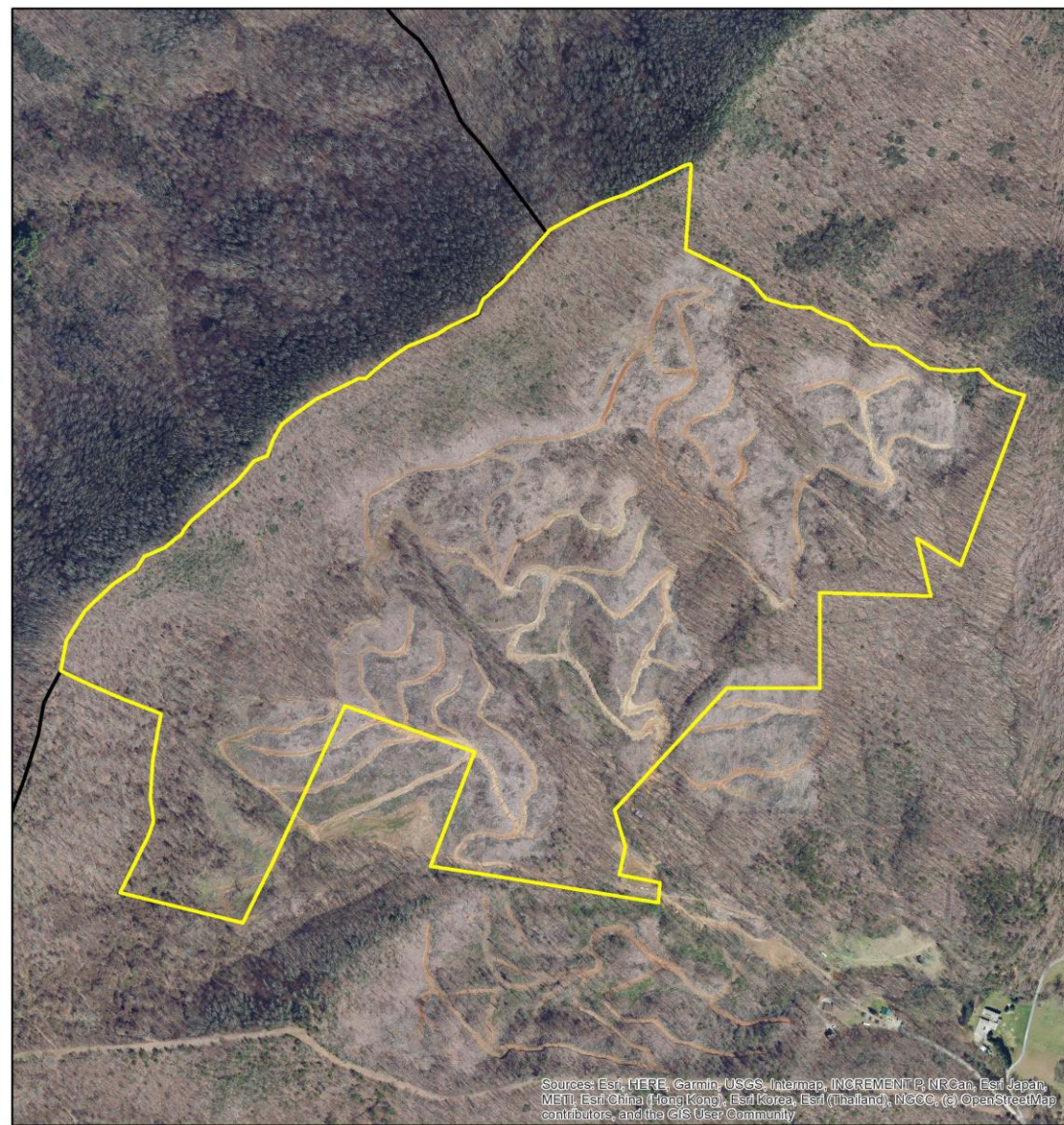
# Battle Forest



# Battle Forest

**+/- 167 acres on Georges Branch Rd**

- 9.6% Prime Soils
- Managed Forestland
- Scenic viewshed Protection-
  - Visible from I-40 and downtown
- Wildlife Habitat
- Water Quality Protection - +10 Springs and Waterfalls
- Intact Ridgeline – Buncombe/Haywood Line
- Opposite Ridgeline from Newfound Valley



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NCCO, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**Battle Forest Conservation Easement Boundary Map**



-  Easement Area, +/-167 acres
-  County Boundaries
-  Conservation Focus Areas

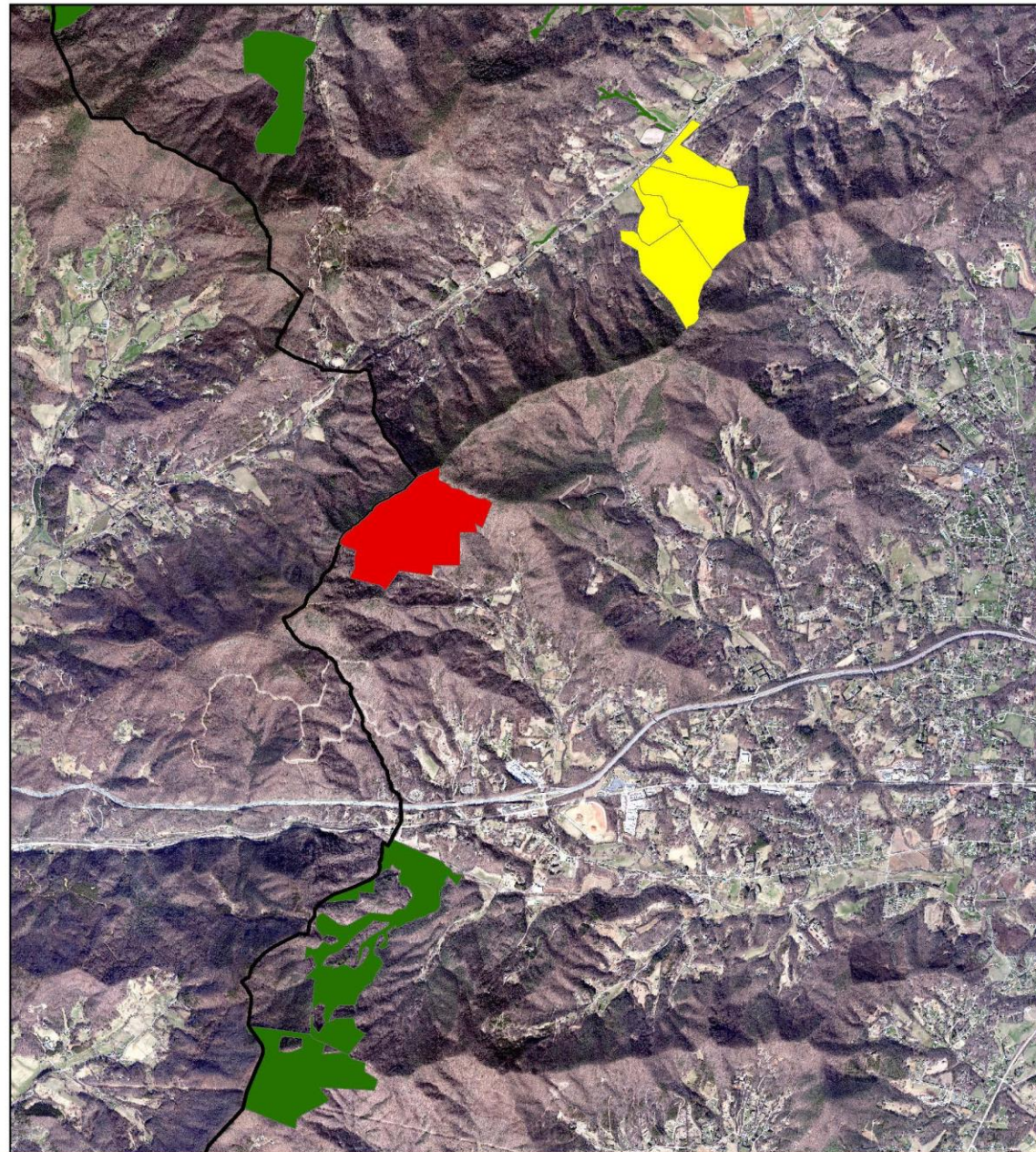


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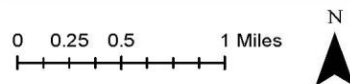
# Battle Forest Funding

- **Transaction Costs** - \$68,000 Previously Funded from FY24 budget
- **Easement Acquisition** - 50% request
  - **Open Space Bond** - \$375,500
  - Landowner Donation - \$375,500
  - Not competitive for state or federal funds



Battle Forest Conservation Easement - Proximity to Protected Land

- Jasperwood Farm (in the works)
- Easement Area, +/-170 acres
- Protected Land



# Buncombe County Farmland Preservation Program - Local Agricultural Growth Zones



# Agricultural Growth Zone Program

Local Agricultural Growth Zones (AGZ) program aims to enhance local investments in the acquisition of agricultural conservation easements.

AGZ program is funded by North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (NCDA ADFPTF).



# Buncombe received highest award in NC!

- NCDA&CS ADFPTF awarded Buncombe - **\$1,945,443**
  - Acquisition funds
- Buncombe Open Space Bond Required match – **\$ 2,345,443**
  - 1:1 match for AGZ Acquisition + transaction costs



# Open Space Bond Funds

<b>Authorized Bond Amount</b>	<b>\$30,000,000</b>
<b>Current Board of Commissioners-approved commitments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodfin Greenway (\$1,273,250)</li> <li>• Parham-Fortner Farm (\$150,000)</li> <li>• Lake Eden Preserve (\$250,000)</li> <li>• Ferry Road Open Space (\$3,000,000)</li> <li>• Deaverview Mountain (\$7,671,764)</li> <li>• Okoboji Farm (\$511,500)</li> </ul>	<b>\$12,856,514</b>
<b>For Consideration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy Hollar, Kestrel Herb Farm, Battle Forest and AGZ</li> </ul>	<b>\$3,739,943</b>
<b>Anticipated Commitments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enka Heritage Trail (\$2,000,000)</li> <li>• Pending Conservation Easements (\$1,305,800)</li> </ul>	<b>\$3,305,800</b>
<b>Projected Remaining Balance</b>	<b>\$10,097,743</b>







# Request for Board Action:

- Approve the Budget Amendment for Open Space Bond funding for these 3 Easement Projects
- Approve the Budget Amendments for Open Space Bond Match for the AGZ Award



# Appendix



# SANDY HOLLAR FARM - OPEN SPACE BOND ELIGIBILITY

## County Easement Purchase Requirements

**Meets at least 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)



# KESTREL HERB FARM - OPEN SPACE BOND ELIGIBILITY

## County Easement Purchase Requirements

**Meets at least 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)



# BATTLE FOREST- OPEN SPACE BOND ELIGIBILITY

## County Easement Purchase Requirements

**Meets at least 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)



# Benefits of Protected Landscapes

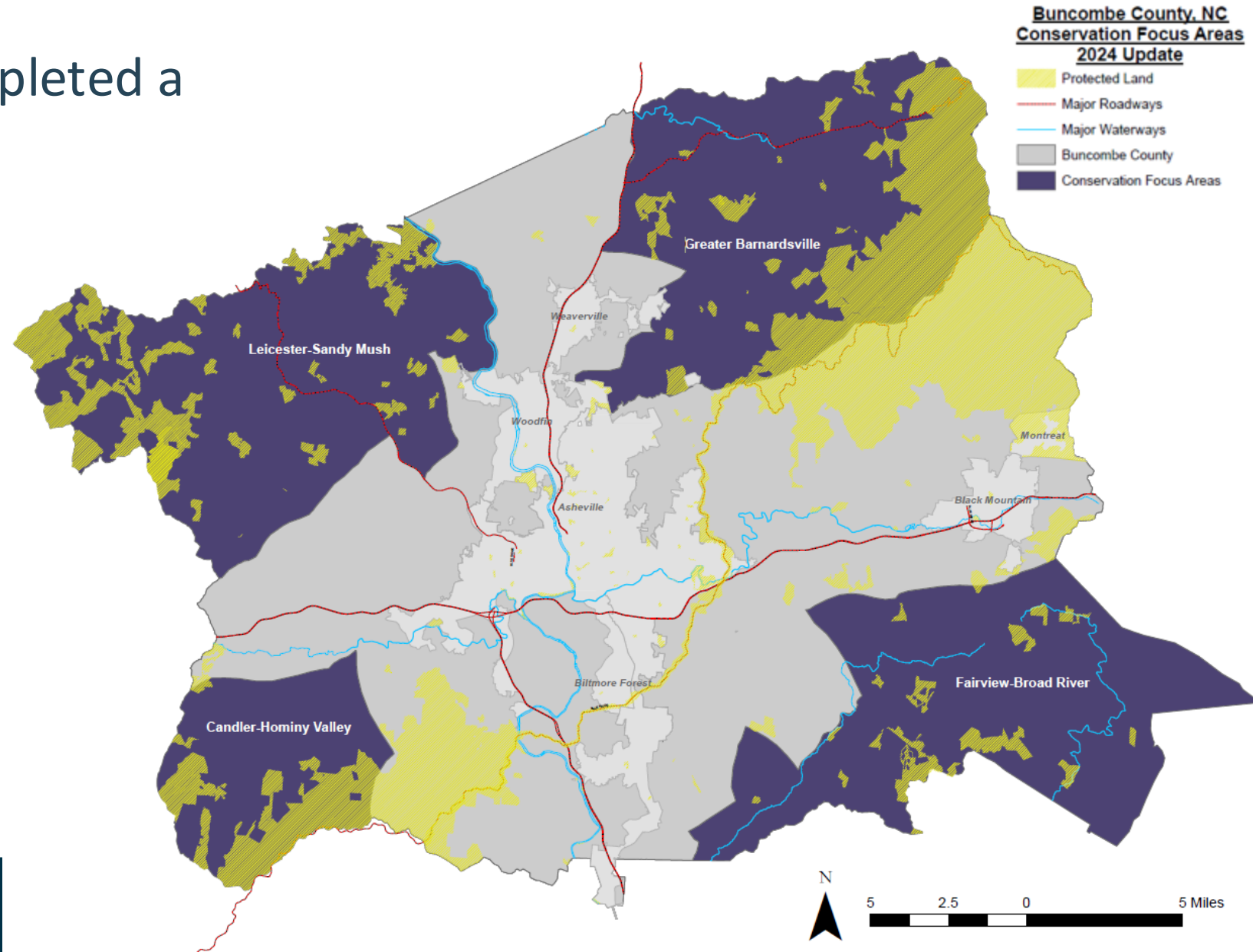
- Permanently protected individual parcels in close proximity
- Reduces fragmentation of farmland
- Increases efficiencies in production, distribution, and marketing



# Conservation Focus Areas

In 2022 – County staff completed a GIS site-suitability analysis:

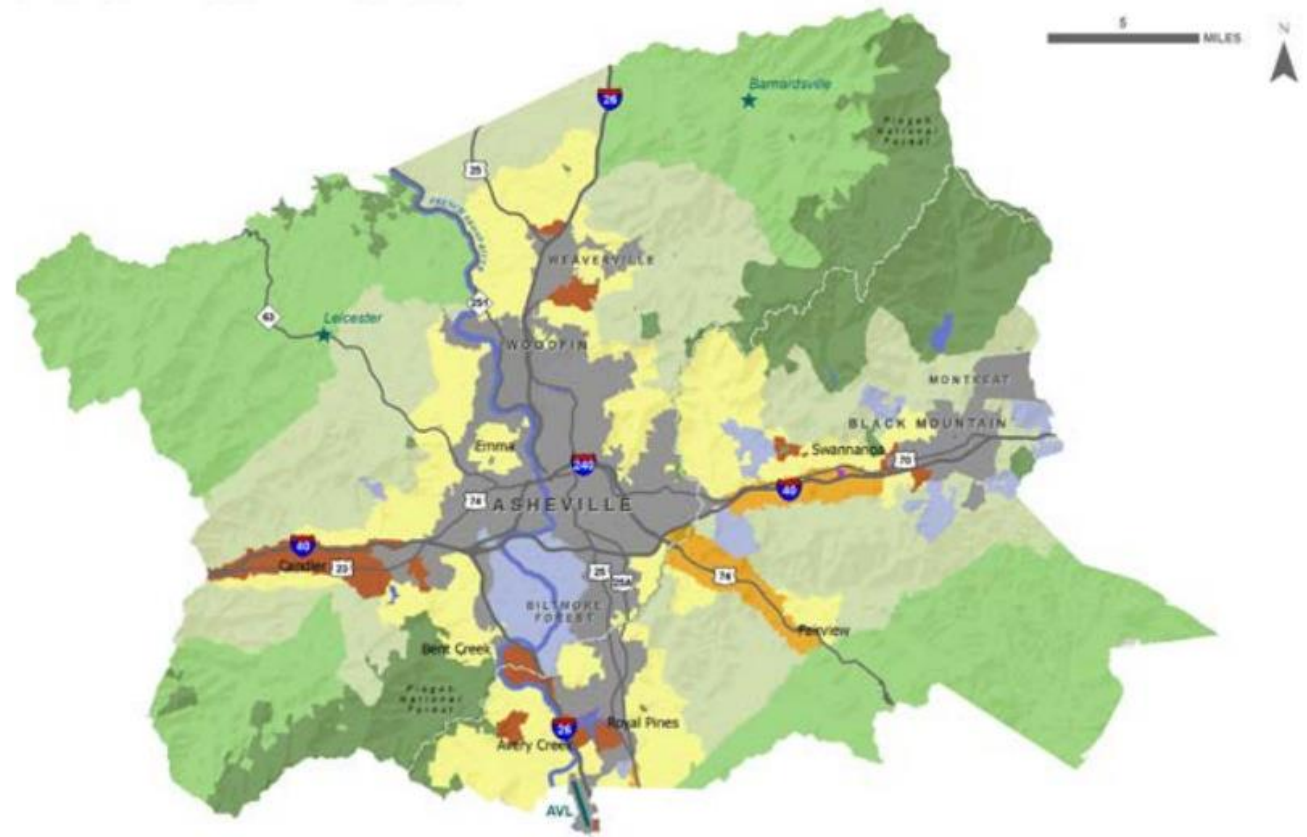
- Created a prioritization ranking tool for our conservation easements
- Created Conservation Focus Areas to prioritize County easement funding



# Working with Comp Plan

## GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK MAP

Conservation Focus Areas have been designated in the 2043 Comprehensive Land Use Plan



### Growth Areas

- Mixed Use Neighborhood
- Mixed Use I
- Mixed Use II
- Walkable Destination Center

### Conservation Areas

- Protected Public Lands
- Conservation Working Lands
- Rural Community
- Rural Center

### Other Areas

- Municipalities (including Montreat ETJ)
- Institutional

### Equity

The Equity Opportunity Areas (EOAs) are the only land use category that is not delineated on the map. EOAs offer an opportunity to examine equity throughout Buncombe County's planning and zoning jurisdiction. For more information, see page 47.

