

SHANE PRISBY
Trails Program Director



WHAT IS A LAND TRUST?

A nonprofit (501©3) organization that permanently protects land and water through land purchases, donations, and conservation easements for the benefit of present and future generations.

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA



WHY IS LAND PROTECTION IMPORTANT?

Land and water conservation enriches lives by providing clean drinking water, food security, increased economic development and tourism, and recreation opportunities.

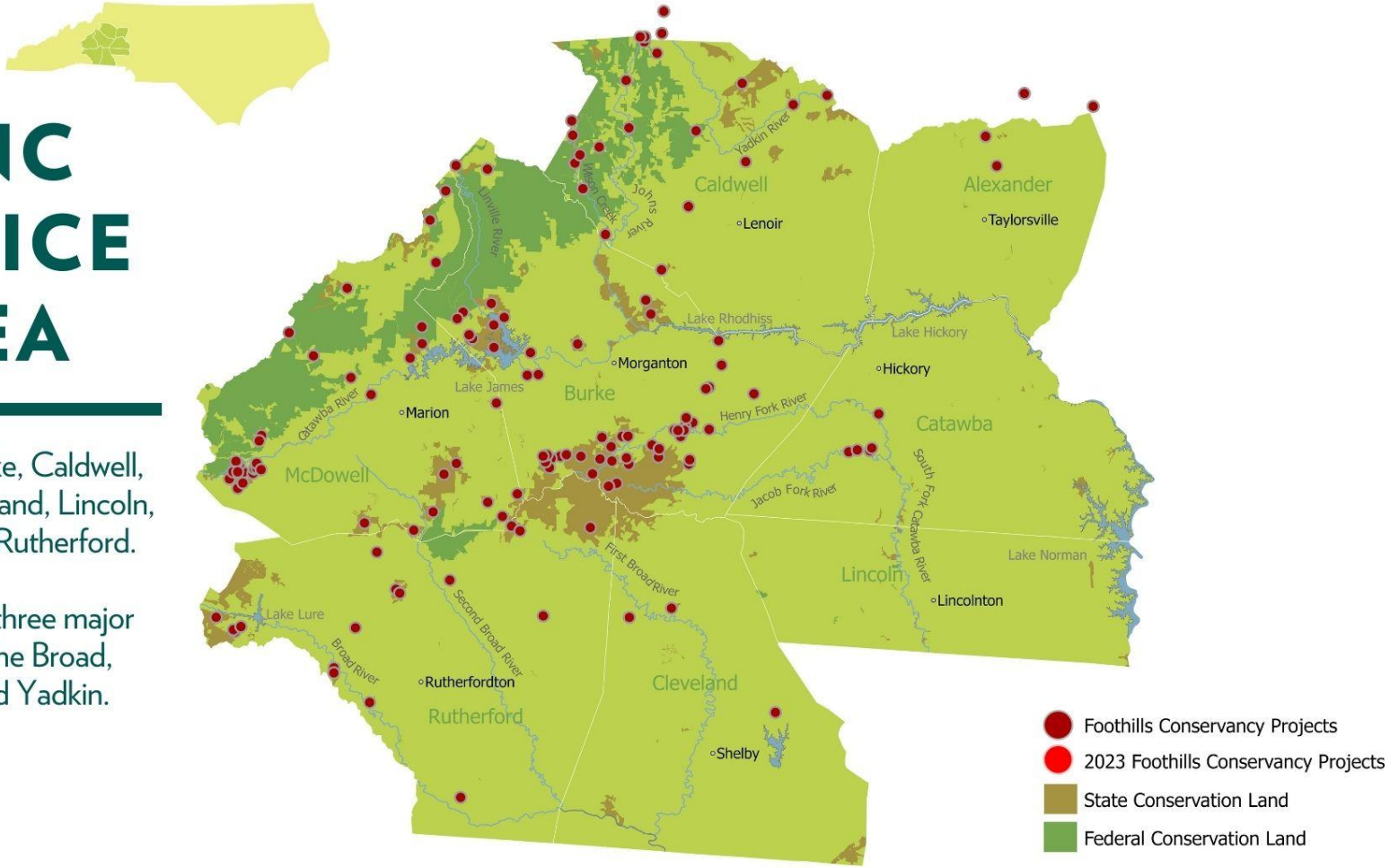
FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA


FCNC
PROGRAMS
Conservation Program
Stewardship & Land Management
Volunteer & Engagement
Public Trails
Fundraising & Development
Outreach & Communications
FOOTHILLS
CONSERVANCY
OF NORTH CAROLINA

FCNC SERVICE AREA

Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell and Rutherford.

We also serve three major river basins: the Broad, Catawba, and Yadkin.




71,490
acres protected since 1995
10,677 acres
48 properties
Fee-owned conservation properties
5,309 acres
36 properties
Conservation Easements Held & Stewarded
54,382 acres
67 properties
Acquisition Assists & Land Transfers to Public Natural Resource Agencies

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

- Preserve Lands (acquisition, bargain sale, donation)
- Buy - Hold - Transfer (Public Lands)
- Acquisition Assist (Public Lands)
- Conservation Easement (acq., bargain sale, donation)
- Public Trails & Parks

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA

THREE WAYS WE AQUIRE LAND

Fee-simple

the purchase of property where the buyer obtains complete ownership and control of the land.

Donation

the land is donated to our organization

Conservation Easement

a legal agreement between a landowner and the land trust that permanently limits the type and amount of development that can occur on the land while allowing the landowner to continue owning and using the land.

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL PARKS & CONSERVATION AREAS

STATE AND FEDERAL DESIGNATED TRAILS, & LOCAL TRAILS

LANDSCAPE-SCALE CONNECTIONS

WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED PROTECTION

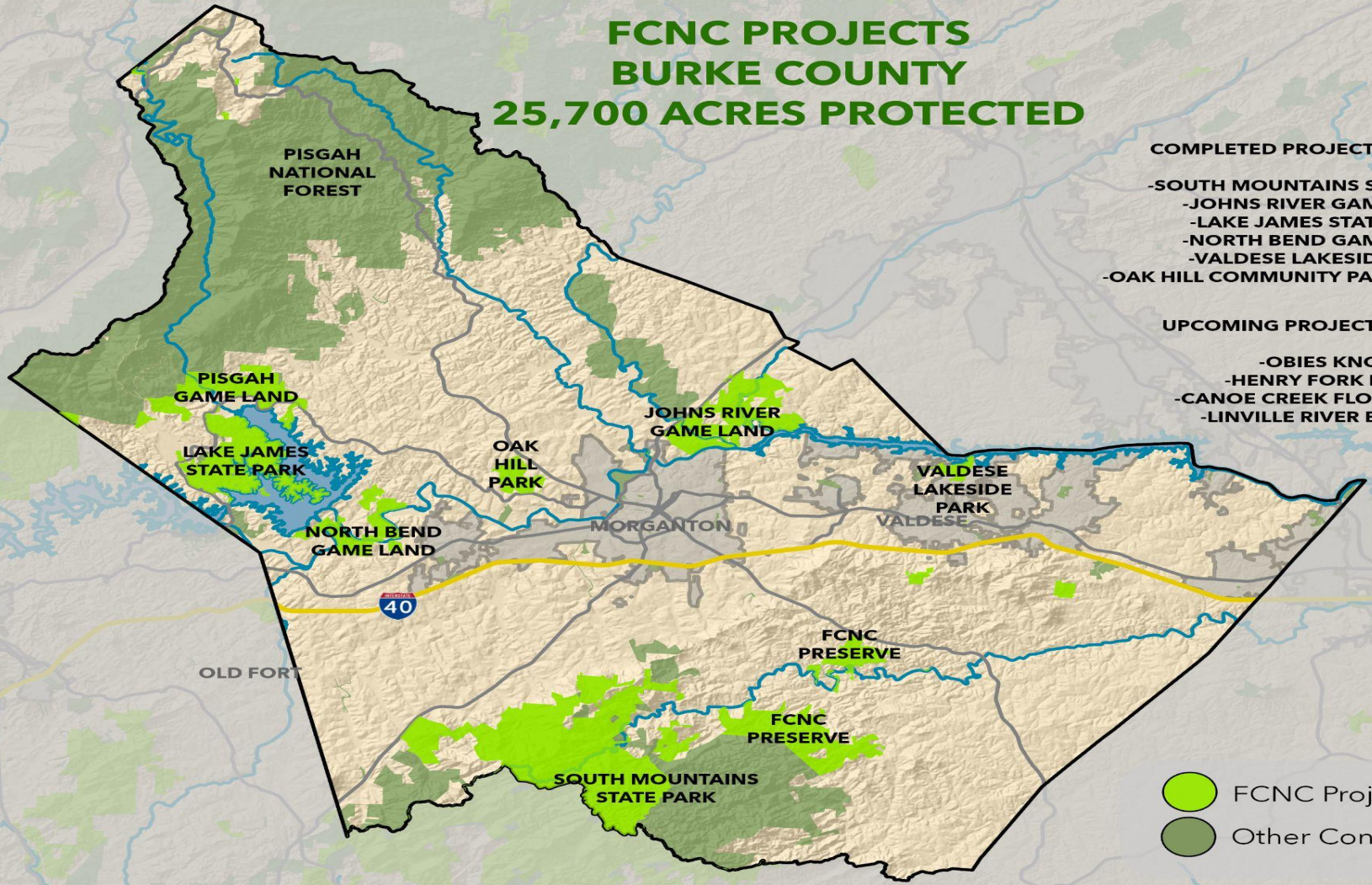
WORKING LANDS: PRODUCTIVE FARMS & FORESTS

CLIMATE RESILIENT LANDSCAPES & PROPERTIES

SENSITIVE, THREATENED & ENDANGERED HABITATS, NATURAL COMMUNITIES & SPECIES

SIGNIFICANT WATERWAYS FOR AQUATIC HABITAT, WATER QUALITY PROTECTION, & RECREATION

FCNC PROJECTS
BURKE COUNTY
25,700 ACRES PROTECTED



COMPLETED PROJECTS INCLUDE:

-SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK,
-JOHNS RIVER GAME LAND
-LAKE JAMES STATE PARK
-NORTH BEND GAME LAND
-VALDESE LAKESIDE PARK
-OAK HILL COMMUNITY PARK AND FOREST

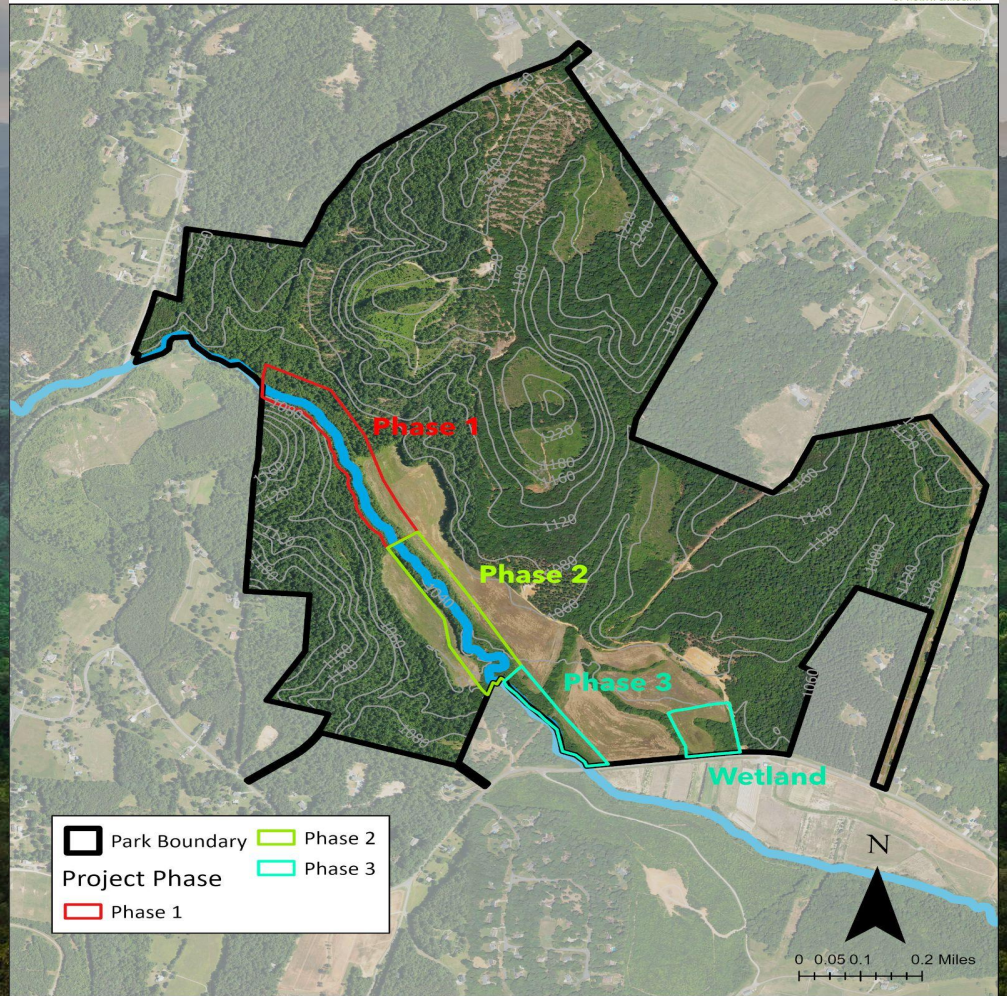
UPCOMING PROJECTS INCLUDE:

-OBIES KNOB
-HENRY FORK RIVER
-CANOE CREEK FLOODPLAINS
-LINVILLE RIVER BRANCH

FCNC Projects

Other Conservation

Oak Hill Community Park & Forest
Canoe Creek Restoration Project - April





TRAILS PROGRAM

Wilderness Gateway State Trail (McDowell, Catawba, and Burke)

Catawba Meadows (Burke County)

Oak Hill Community Park and Forest (Burke County)

Fonta Flora State Trail (McDowell County)

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA


OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY
1780
NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL
TM

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Bob Benner Memorial Trail



May all adventures on this trail be dedicated to:

BOB BENNER

A valiant traillblazer for outdoor recreation and conservation, Benner is a founding board member of Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and a recipient of The Order of the Long Leaf Pine award. He helped build and maintain 70 miles of the Mountains to Sea Trail and his passion for the outdoors inspires the protection of natural places, like this one, for future generations.

Welcome
to the South Mountains Headwaters Preserve

The South Mountains Headwaters Preserve was first established in 2015 by Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina to further protect land and water resources in the South Mountains. Since the initial land purchase, FCNC has grown the preserve to 1,885 acres by 2019. Starting in 2015, FCNC has taken steps to restore native hardwood and pine forests on the property through sustainable forestry practices. More than 80,000 native pines have been planted on the preserve as of 2024.

About
Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina inspires conservation in Western North Carolina by permanently protecting land and water for the benefit of people and all living things. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, FCNC serves eight counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell, and Rutherford, in three major river basins: the Broad, Catawba, and Yadkin.

Our regional land trust supports and responds to community needs across our programmatic focus areas: land and water protection, farmland preservation, wildlife habitat improvement, forest health and management, public park management, public trail development and maintenance, improving access to natural spaces, community education, and volunteer engagement.

Trail Description

This moderately strenuous trail is approximately 1.3 miles long and is 500' from the parking area to the highest point. The trail utilizes existing logging roads in different sections, so be aware of turns onto and off of the logging roads.

Legend

Overlooks | P Parking Area

0 500 1000 Feet

N W E S

Trail Safety

When using this trail, please follow Leave No Trace trail etiquette. Please keep your dogs leashed and under your control and stay on the trail at all times.

The trailhead is located at 5142 Old NC 18, Connelly Springs, NC. In case of emergency, please call or text 911.





Trail End Overlook

This overlook provides a stunning view into the heart of the South Mountains and is the perfect reward for your hike. The bench at the end is a great place for quiet reflection and appreciation of our wild spaces.

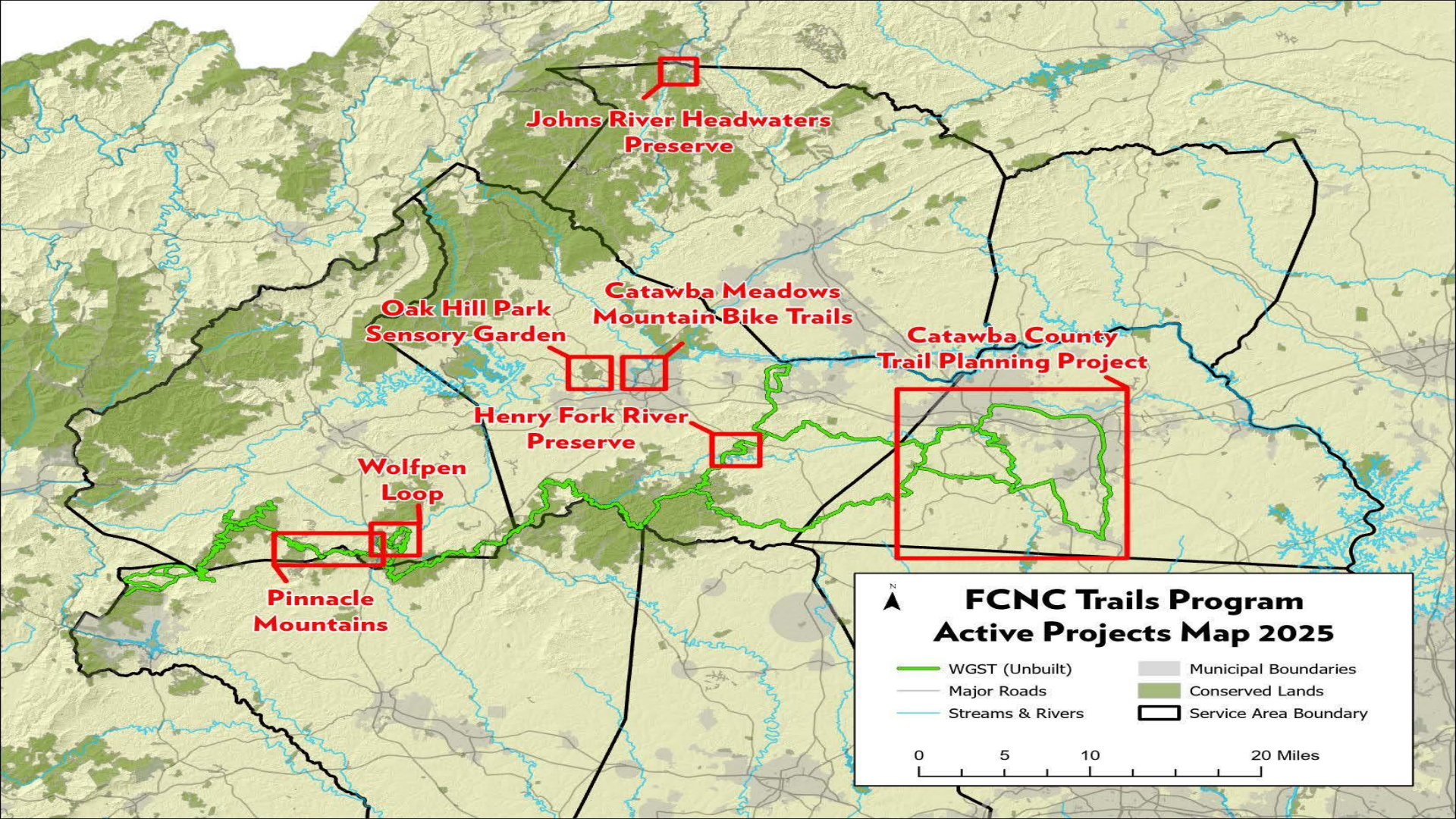


First Overlook

This gorgeous view gives you an early look at the majesty of the South Mountains right after the first uphill section. It provides a stark contrast between the South Mountains and the piedmont beyond.

Help Protect These Places!

Follow the QR Code to donate to the permanent protection and preservation of this and other lands in our region. You can learn more at: foothillsconservancy.org


Johns River Headwaters Preserve
Oak Hill Park Sensory Garden
Catawba Meadows Mountain Bike Trails
Catawba County Trail Planning Project
Henry Fork River Preserve
Wolfpen Loop
Pinnacle Mountains
FCNC Trails Program
Active Projects Map 2025
WGST (Unbuilt)
Major Roads
Streams & Rivers
Municipal Boundaries
Conserved Lands
Service Area Boundary
0
5
10
20 Miles

Welcome to the FOOTHILLS MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL SYSTEM at Catawba Meadows Park

Morganton, NC

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA

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Learn more at: foothillsconservancy.org

PARTNERSHIPS MADE THIS HAPPEN

This 4.5-mile trail system was made possible through a collaboration of the City of Morganton, Overmountain Cycles, and Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina (FCNC). FCNC worked with professional Trail Builders, Black Diamond Designs, to create a trail network that highlights the landscape of the park while delivering different experiences for riders of varying skill levels. The green and blue trails have been designed and built to the National Interscholastic Cycling Association race standards, so that events can be held at the park.

ABOUT THE TRAIL SYSTEM

The green trails are 4 ft wide with little elevation change. Turns are gentle and wider.

The 4 ft wide blue trails are a big step up from the green trails and are made up of a climb route and a down hill run with high berms and other features to carry speed.

The 3-4 ft wide black trails provide a skills challenge for advanced riders that includes hand dug single track with unique stone features. They feature steeper grades and technical challenges.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE AND SAFETY

Please stay on the trail and be respectful of other riders and trail users. Make sure to follow all signage and obey the single direction on the blue and black trails for everyone's safety. Pedal assist only (Class I & III) eBikes are welcome on these trails.

Pedestrians are welcome on the bike trails and bikes have the right-of-way. Keep right on the Greenway and remember that pedestrians always have the right of way on the greenway.

Use these trails at your own risk. Catawba Meadows Park is located at 701 Sanford Dr, Morganton, NC 28655.

In case of emergency, please call or text 911.

OVERMOUNTAIN CYCLES

Overmountain Cycles is a local, independent bicycle shop based in downtown Morganton, NC. Learn more at: overmountaincycles.com

BLACK DIAMOND DESIGNS

Black Diamond Designs is a North Carolina trail building company committed to sustainable, and environmentally friendly natural resource construction. Learn more at



Map Legend

- Beginner Bike Trails (Multi-Directional)
- Intermediate Bike Trails (Single Direction)
- Advanced Bike Trails (Single Direction)
- The Greenway (Pedestrians have Right-of-Way)
- 0.5 Mileage

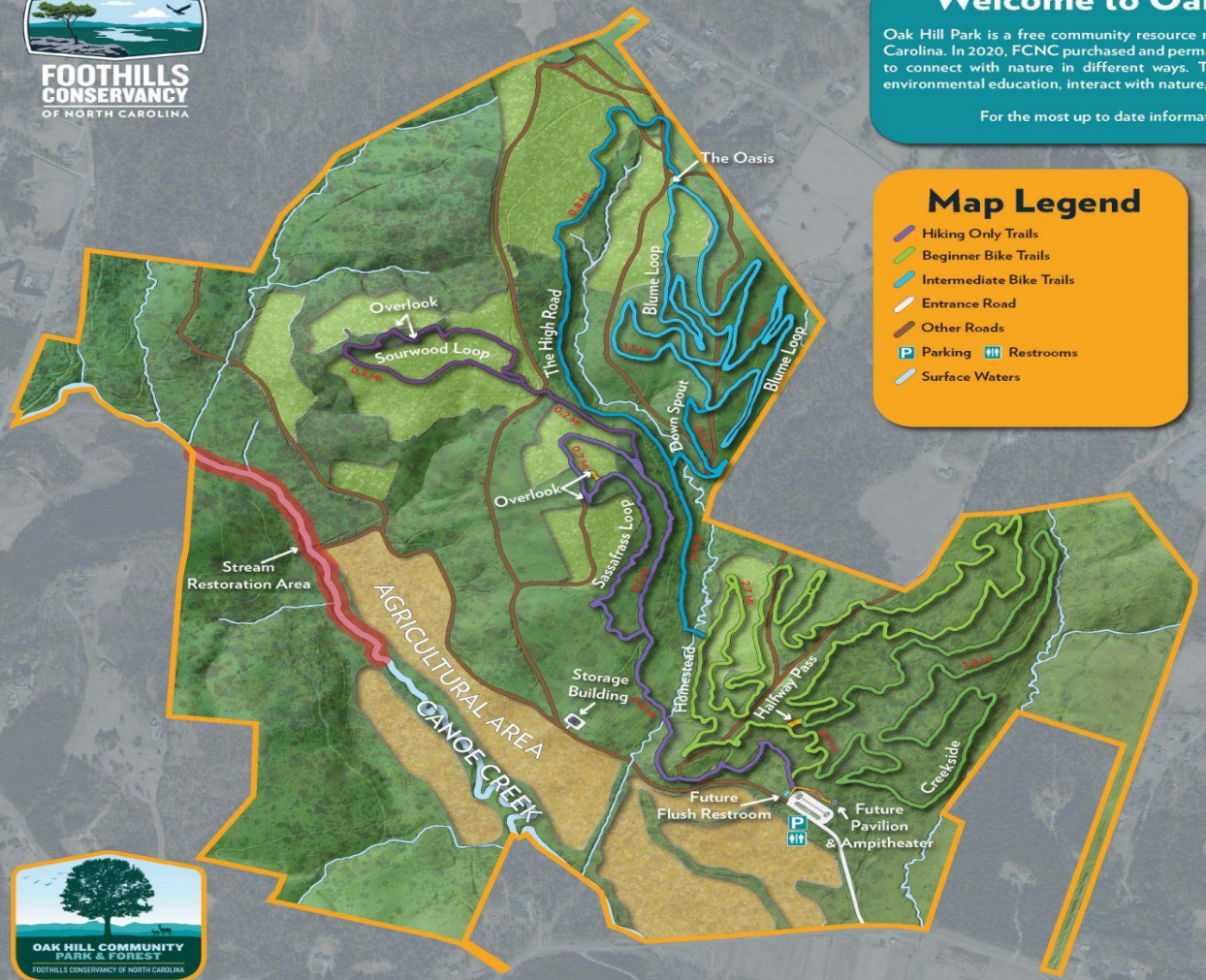
THE GREAT TRAILS STATE NC USA

FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Welcome to Oak Hill Community Park & Forest

Oak Hill Park is a free community resource made available for the enjoyment of all people by Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina. In 2020, FCNC purchased and permanently protected this 652-acre property to create a space where everyone is welcome to connect with nature in different ways. The park is a place to demonstrate sustainable land management, participate in environmental education, interact with nature, and enhance community wellness and personal health through outdoor recreation.

For the most up to date information on Oak Hill Community Park & Forest, please visit oakhillpark.org.



Map Legend

- Hiking Only Trails
- Beginner Bike Trails
- Intermediate Bike Trails
- Entrance Road
- Other Roads
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Surface Waters

Park Rules

- Park is open dawn to dusk
- Remain on marked trails
- Park in designated areas only
- No motorized dirt bikes or ATVs allowed on trails
- No open fires or charcoal grills
- No alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or smoking/vaping
- Practice Leave No Trace Principles
- No firearms or hunting
- No overnight camping
- No horseback riding
- Dogs must remain on-leash at all time and their waste picked up and removed
- Carry-in/carry-out all trash and waste
- Use of the park is at your own risk

Volunteer

Conserving our natural and cultural resources is most successful when it is done as a community. You can make a difference at this park by helping to maintain trails, remove invasive plants, pick up litter, plant trees, host educational events, and so much more! Find the event that is right for you on our website calendar at www.foothillsconservancy.org/volunteer and join our facebook group: Volunteers of Foothills Conservancy to connect with others from your community.

Foothills Conservancy

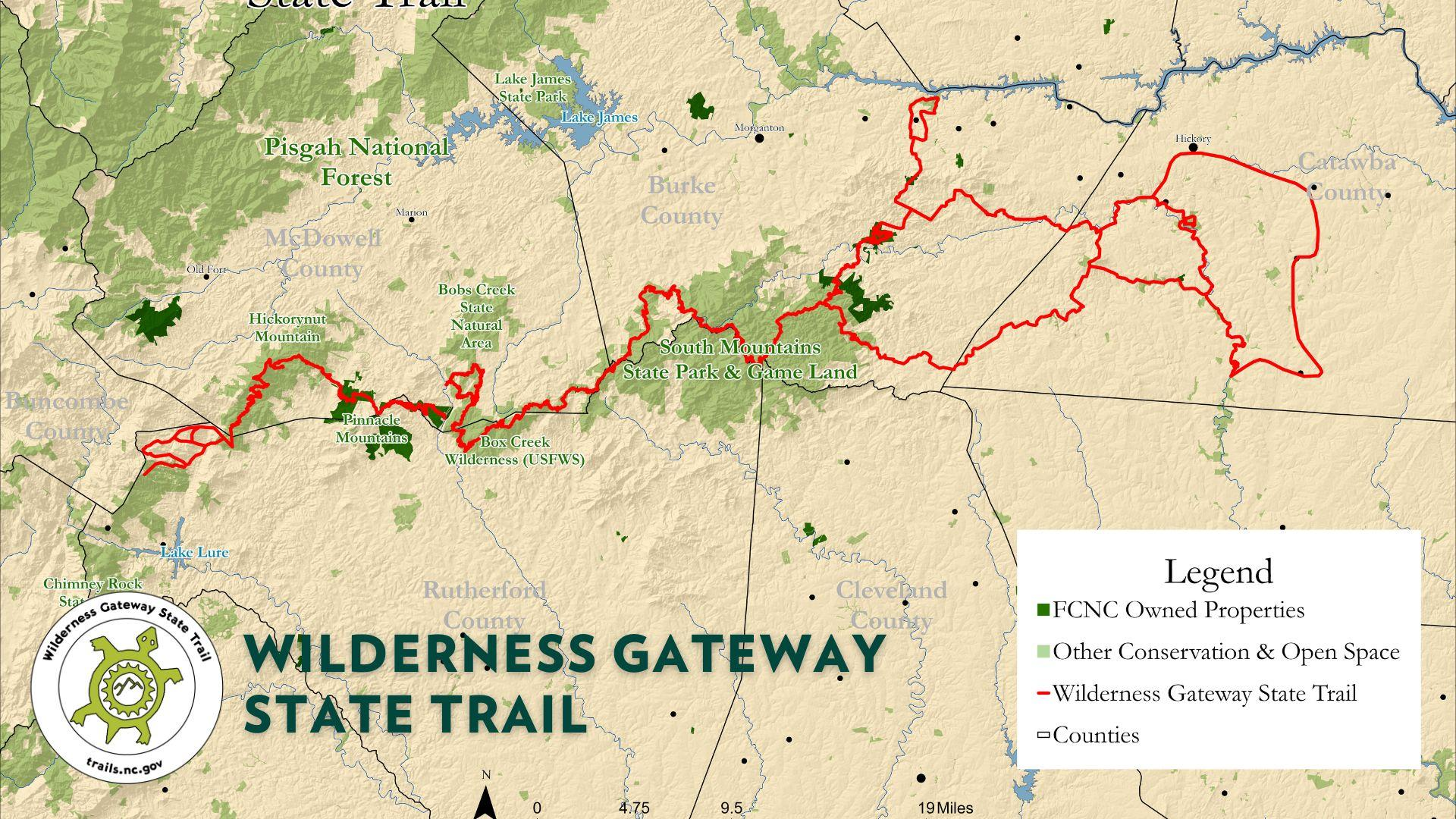
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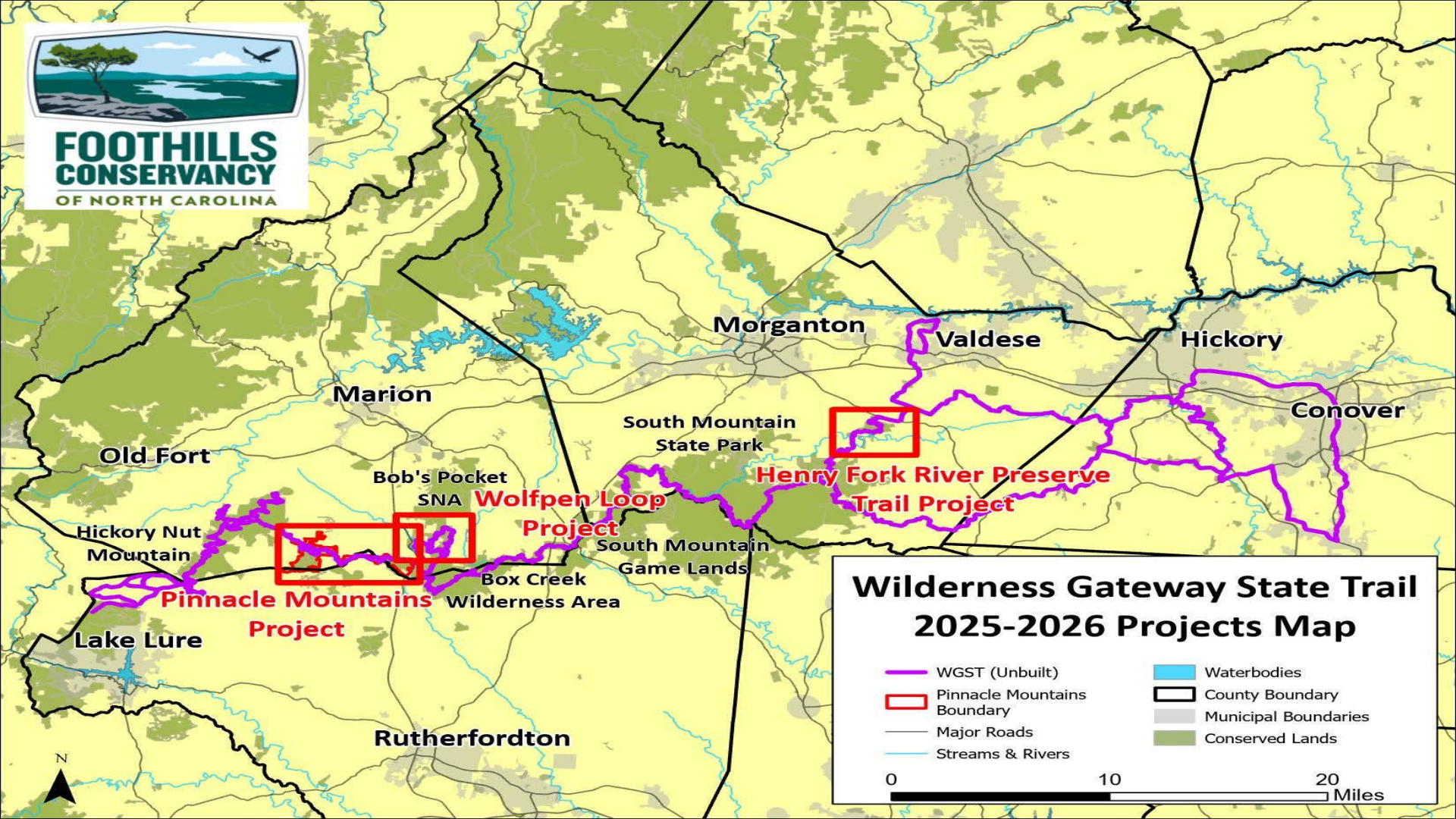
Donate

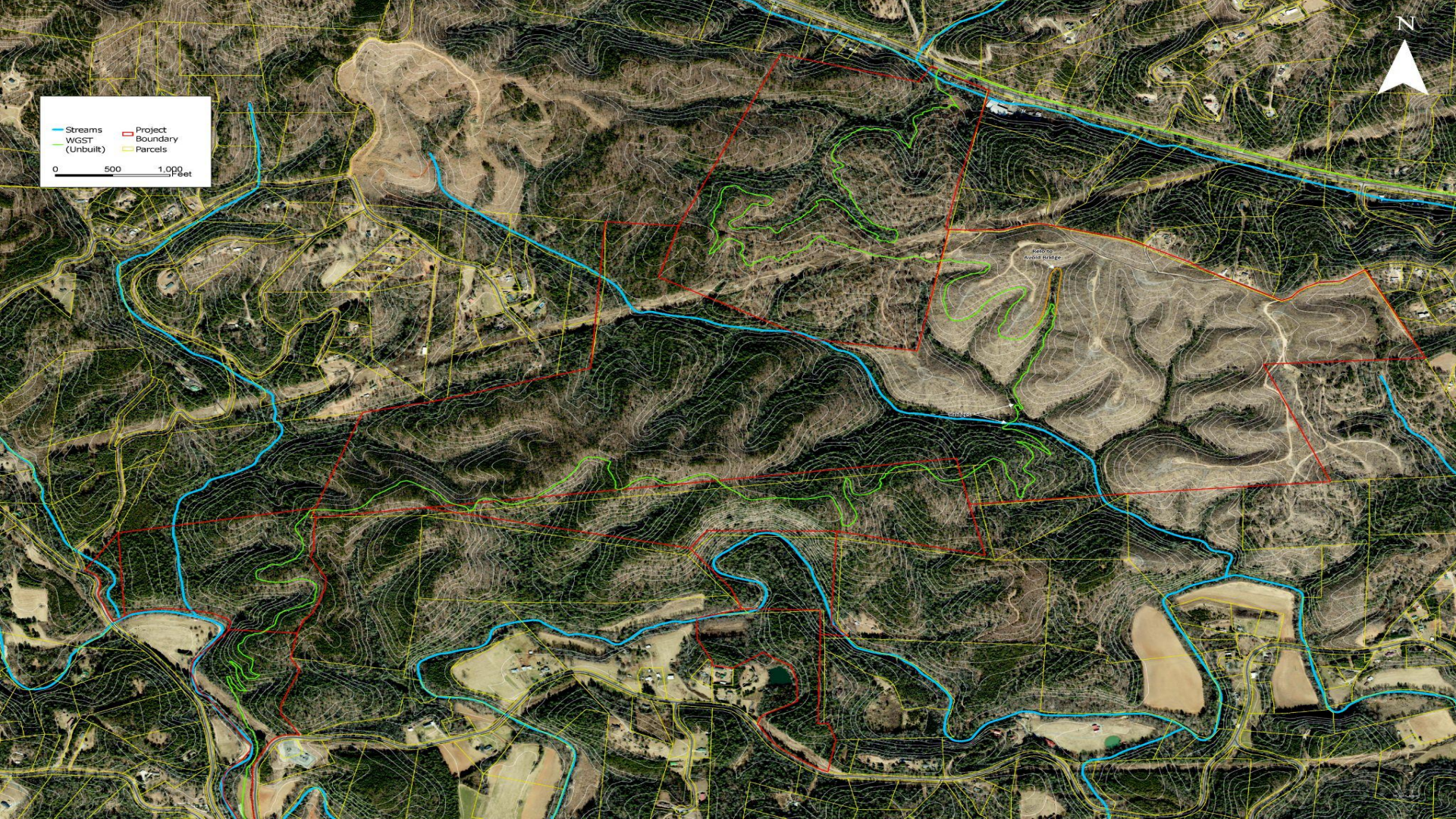
Want to see more features at Oak Hill Community Park and Forest? Scan the QR code to contribute to the growth and maintenance of park amenities.

OAK HILL COMMUNITY PARK & FOREST
FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA


Oak Hill Community Park + Forest
Sensory Trail + Orchard
Prepared for:
FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA
Prepared by:
EQUINOX
Optional Connection to other Oak Hill Park trails
Agriculture Education including: Orchard, Row Crops, Raised Beds
Production Orchard with Surrounding Fence
Park + Trail Entrance with Wayfinding Kiosk
Crosswalk
4' Mow Buffer along Fence Line
Orchard Trail
Existing Parking Lot with Stormwater Swale
Exploration Loop
Main Lawn + Event Space
Sensory Stations (see below)
Meadow Buffer, preserving existing native trees
Piedmont Prairie Meadow
Maintenance Entrance
Preserved + Expanded Forest Edge
Connection Trail
Sensory Stations will vary by location and may consist of one of the following:
- Water Play
- Clay Texture
- Seating + Play Boulders
- Bird Blind
- Meditation Pod
- Plant Scents
- Wind Art
Boardwalk Trail with Viewing Platform
Preserved + Expanded Forest Edge
Historic + Cultural Agricultural Education
Wetland + Floodplain Habitat
ak Hill Park, visitors are invited into the sensory trail and education orchard through eadow buffer punctuated by native trees. Immediately to the left, along the front er is the Main Lawn and Event Space. When it is not being used for the annual ors of The Foothills event or other occasions, it can serve as play and gathering e for park visitors. The entrance path takes visitors to a Wayfinding Kiosk. Directly nd this kiosk sits a fenced Agriculture Education area incorporating raised beds, crops, and a small orchard with a path running throughout. To the north, a path s through an Orchard production area edged by a 4' mowed buffer and fence. Back e main entrance, through the center of the Agriculture Education space, winds the oration Loop. This trail takes visitors through the park on a meandering trail between edmont Prairie Meadow and Forested Edge. Dotted along this trail are Sensory ons with various opportunities to engage the senses. As the Exploration Loop moves ards the south edge of the park, a Boardwalk Trail gives visitors the opportunity to out and view the unique wetland and floodplain habitat from the viewing platform. rtion of this wetland habitat can also be utilized to highlight historic and cultural ultural practices that have been conducted in floodplains. Finally, the Exploration winds back around to the Main Lawn, passing several Sensory Stations along the providing areas for engagement, learning, and sensory stimulation.
Highway 126
SCALE: 1/60'-0"


Lake James State Park
Lake James
Pisgah National Forest
Morganton
Hickory
Catawba County
Burke County
Marion
McDowell County
Old Fort
Bobs Creek State Natural Area
Hickorynut Mountain
South Mountains State Park & Game Land
Buncombe County
Pinnacle Mountains
Box Creek Wilderness (USFWS)
Lake Lure
Chimney Rock
Rutherford County
Cleveland County
WILDERNESS GATEWAY STATE TRAIL
Wilderness Gateway State Trail
trails.nc.gov
Legend
FCNC Owned Properties
Other Conservation & Open Space
Wilderness Gateway State Trail
Counties
N
0
4.75
9.5
19 Miles


FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY
OF NORTH CAROLINA
Morganton
Valdese
Hickory
Marion
Conover
South Mountain State Park
Old Fort
Bob's Pocket SNA
Wolfpen Loop Project
Henry Fork River Preserve Trail Project
Hickory Nut Mountain
South Mountain Game Lands
Box Creek Wilderness Area
Pinnacle Mountains Project
Lake Lure
Rutherfordton
N
Wilderness Gateway State Trail
2025-2026 Projects Map
WGST (Unbuilt)
Pinnacle Mountains Boundary
Major Roads
Streams & Rivers
Waterbodies
County Boundary
Municipal Boundaries
Conserved Lands
0
10
20
Miles


Streams
WGST (Unbuilt)
Project Boundary
Parcels
0
500
1,000
Feet
N
Relocate Avoid Bridge
Bridge







SHANE PRISBY
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FOOTHILLSCONSERVANCY.ORG