Budget Amendment to Establish Conservation Easement Projects in Open Space Bond Fund

Presented by

Ariel Zijp

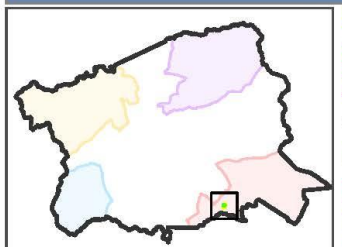
Farmland Preservation Manager

Ag and Land Resources Department

March 17, 2026



Dador Farms Phase 2 Conservation Easement Area



Easement Areas
Residential Building Area (+/- 0.5 acres)
Farmstead Building Area (+/- 0.5 acres)

Conservation Focus Areas

Candler-Hominy Valley
Fairview-Broad River
Greater Barnardsville
Leicester-Sandy Mush

Dador Farm Phase 2

+/- 31 acres on Brush Creek Rd, Fairview

- Full Donation Easement
- 100% prime, local, statewide and unique soils
- Corn, largely forested
- Adjacent to existing Dador Farms easement
- Fairview – Broad River Conservation Focus Area
- Existing/Future Building Plans
  - 1 Residential Building Area
  - 1 Farmstead Area



Dador Farm Phase 3

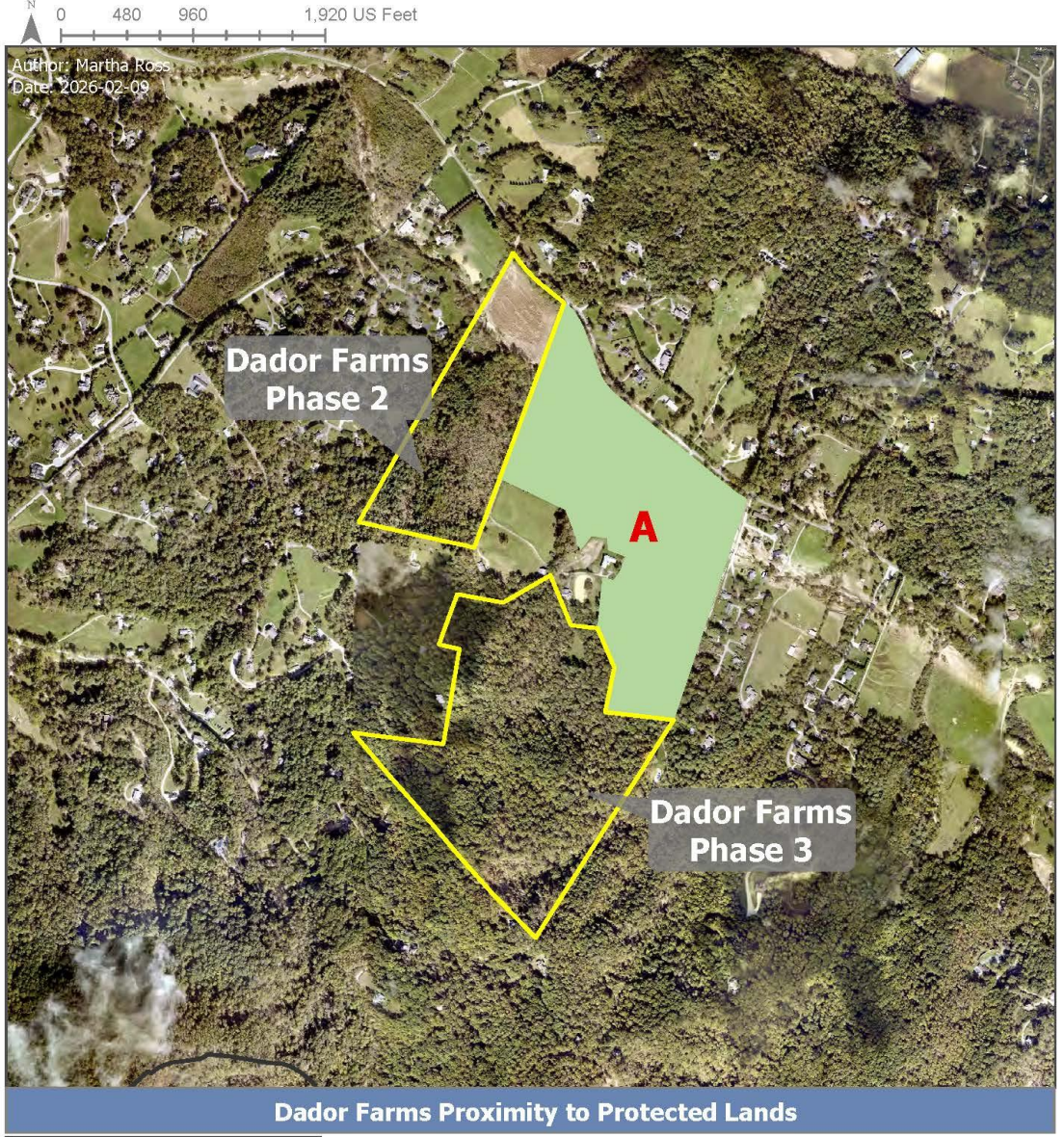
+/- 65 acres on Brush Creek Rd, Fairview

- Full donation easement
- 51% prime, local, statewide and unique soils
- Forested
- Adjacent to existing Dador Farms easement
- Fairview – Broad River Conservation Focus Area
- Existing/Future Building Plans
  - 1 Residential Building Area
  - 1 Farmstead Area

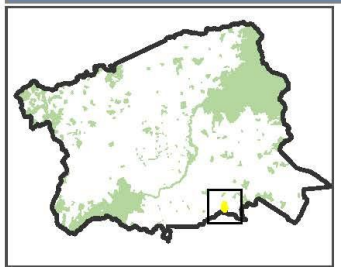
Dador Farm Phases 2 & 3

Previously Protected

A. Dador Farms Easement



Dador Farms Proximity to Protected Lands



Easement Areas
Protected Lands

Easement Project Budgets
FY26 Easement Funding Request – Fund 224

Owner	Size	Region	Funding	Transaction Costs (Fund 224)
Dador Farms- Phase 2	31	Fairview	Donation	$46,500
Dador Farms- Phase 3	65	Fairview	Donation	$53,900
Total				**$100,400**



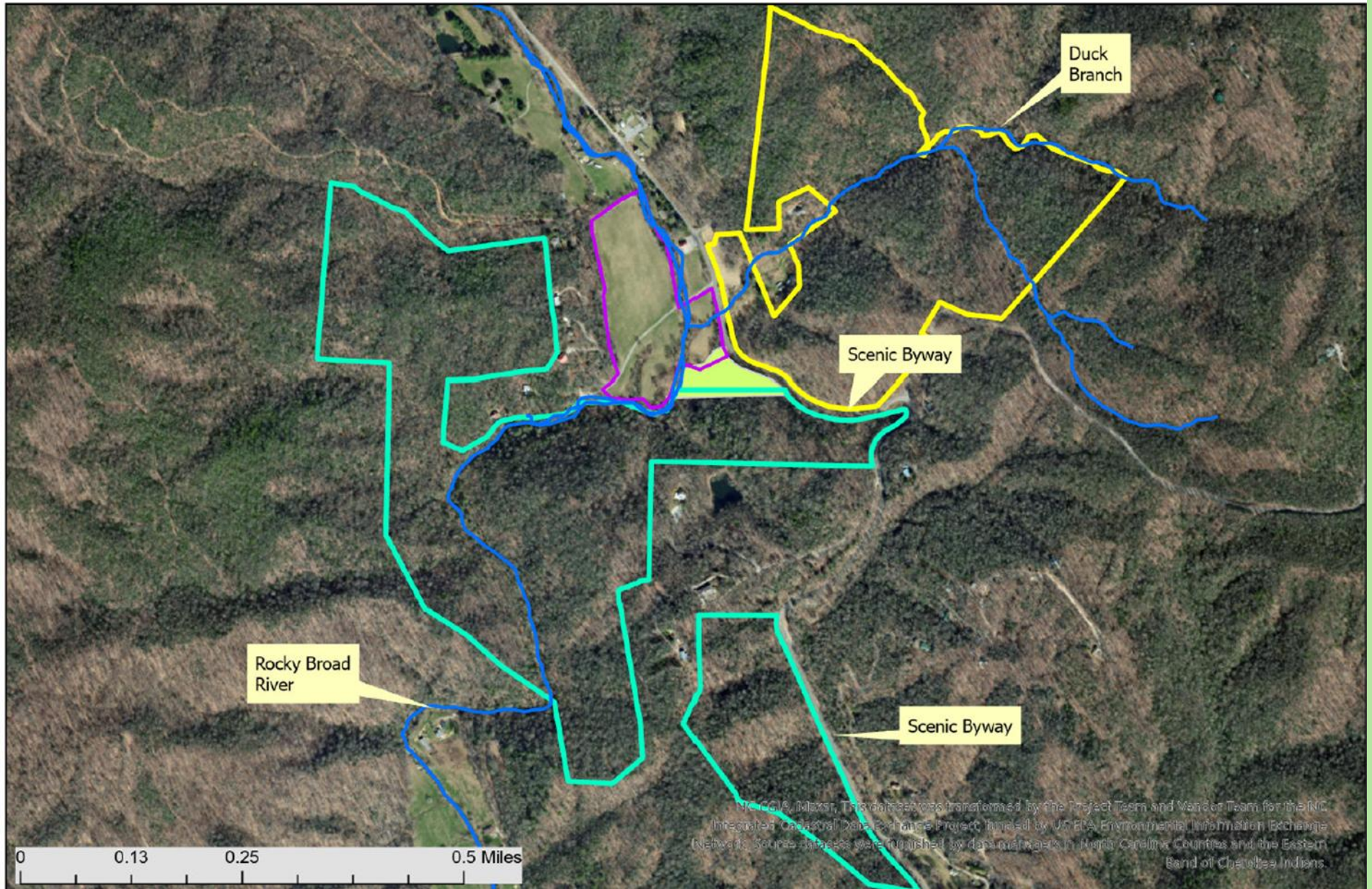
Buncombe County Open Space Bond

Duck Branch, The Light Center Farm and Nature Preserve

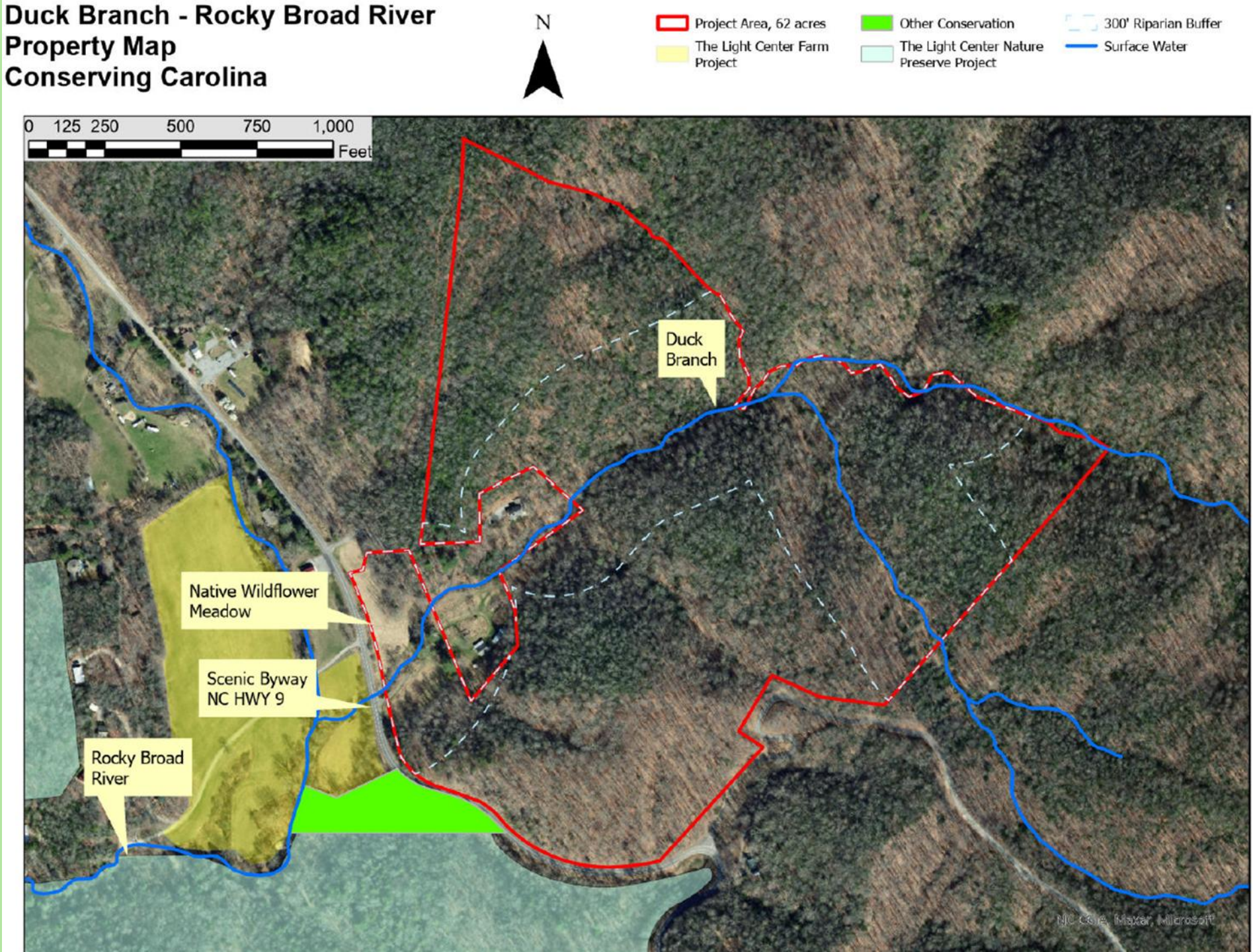
--protecting the Black Mountain Rag Scenic Byway in the Broad River Focus Area

Tom Fanslow, Land Protection Director

Broad River Priority Region
How Three Projects Fit Together



Duck Branch Conservation Easement Project



Duck Branch Conservation Values

Scenic Viewshed Protection:

- The Project protects the view along more than 1,600’ of the Black Mountain Rag, an official North Carolina Scenic Byway.

Natural Areas Protection:

- NC Natural Heritage Program has designated the entire Projects as a Natural Area
- Above average resilience to climate change*
- Above average landscape diversity*

*Source: The Nature Conservancy



Duck Branch Easement Budget

Requesting Transaction costs & Easement acquisition



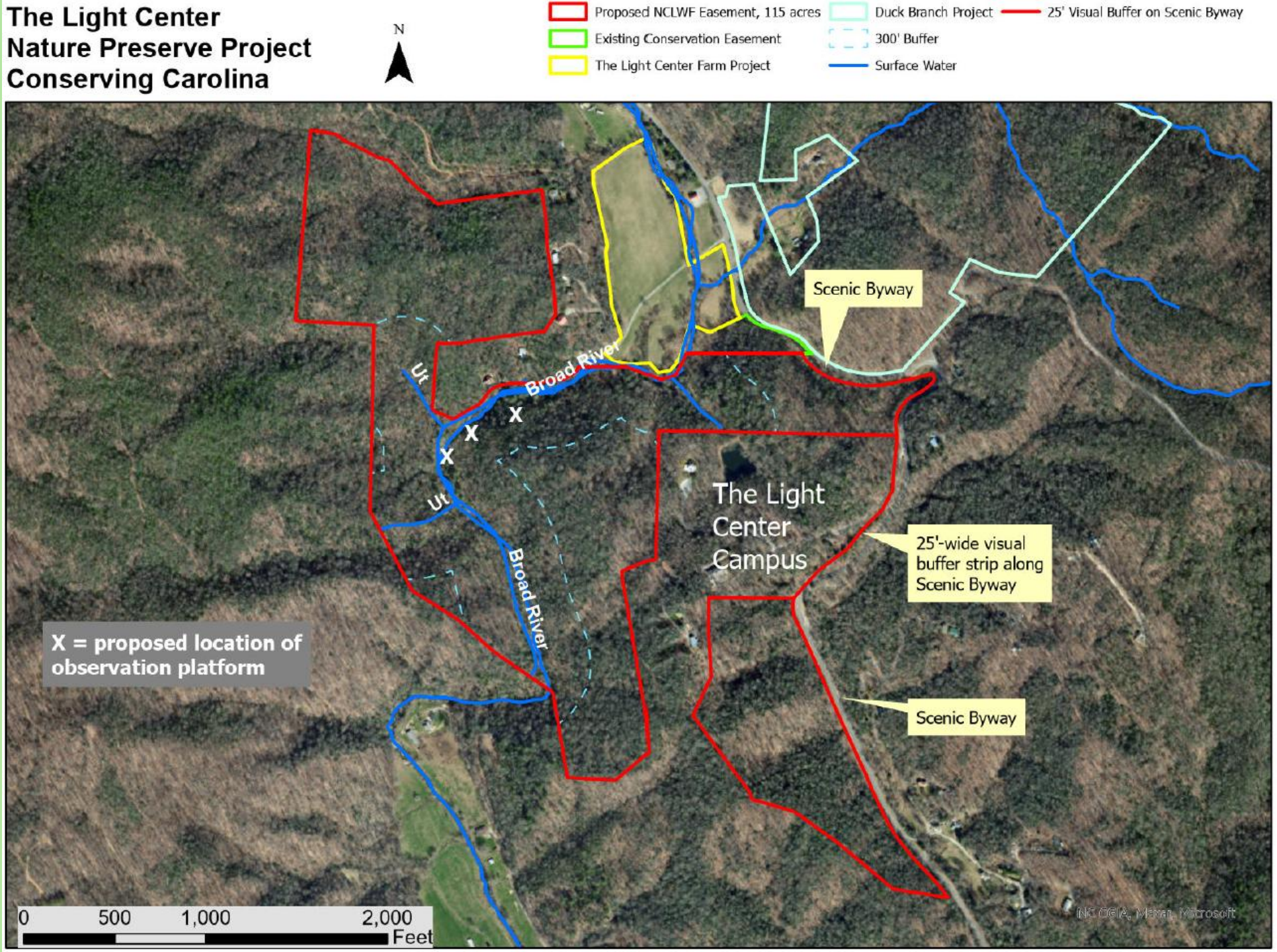
Buncombe County Open Space Bond Request
Easement Acquisition request: **$155,000**

Buncombe County FY26 Easement Funding:
Transaction cost request: **$21,000**

Buncombe request = 34% of project budget
66% leveraged match*

*$235,500 donated easement value & $147,000 funding from the NC Land & Water Fund (applied for 3-1-2026)

The Light Center Nature Preserve Conservation Easement Project



United Research, Inc. owns The Light Center and is a 501(c)(3)—

- The Light Center was created as a secluded place where people could come to pray, meditate, and rejuvenate in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is dedicated to prayer for individual and societal change.

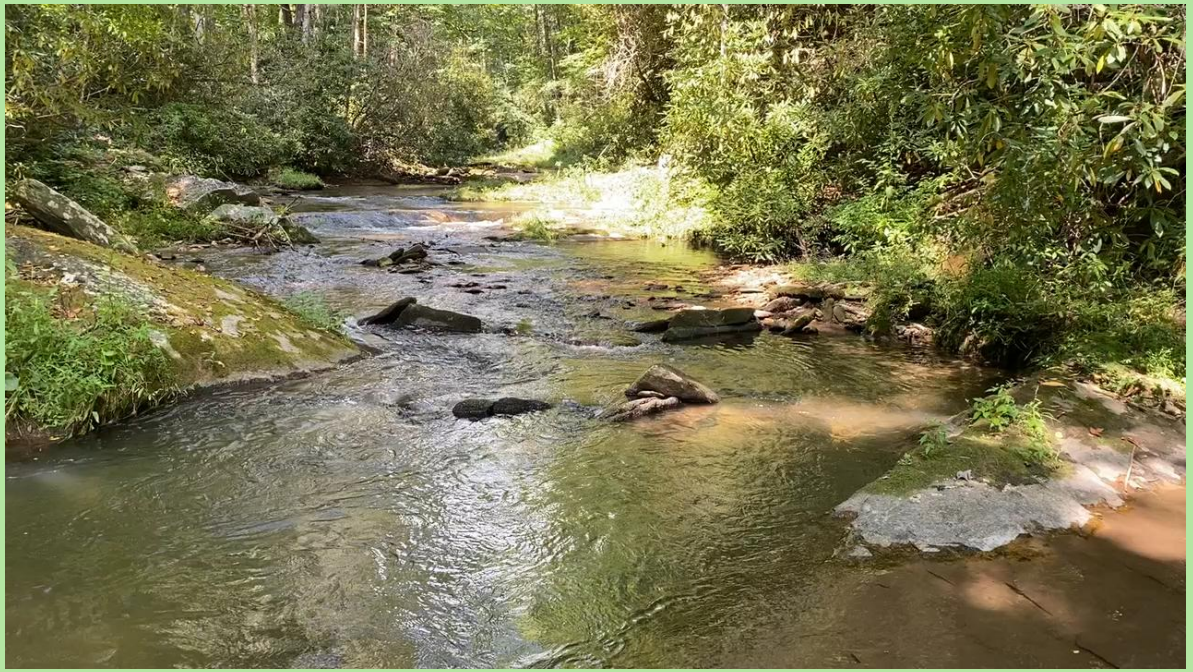




Meditation dome, labyrinth and library, **open to the public**.

- **Historic Preservation - <u>The "Convict Mill" -</u>** The mill ground mainly corn and some wheat for local farmers.

- **Water Quality Protection**
  - ranked as the third-highest priority for conservation in the Upper Broad River Riparian Corridor Conservation Plan funded by NC Land & Water Fund.
  - Buffers 2,715' of the Rocky Broad (Upper Broad) River and 1,110' of unnamed tributaries.
  - Buffers are 100% forested and exceed 300'



The Light Center Nature Preserve Easement Budget

Requesting Transaction costs & Easement acquisition

<u>Buncombe County Open Space Bond Request</u>
Easement Acquisition request: **$282,000**

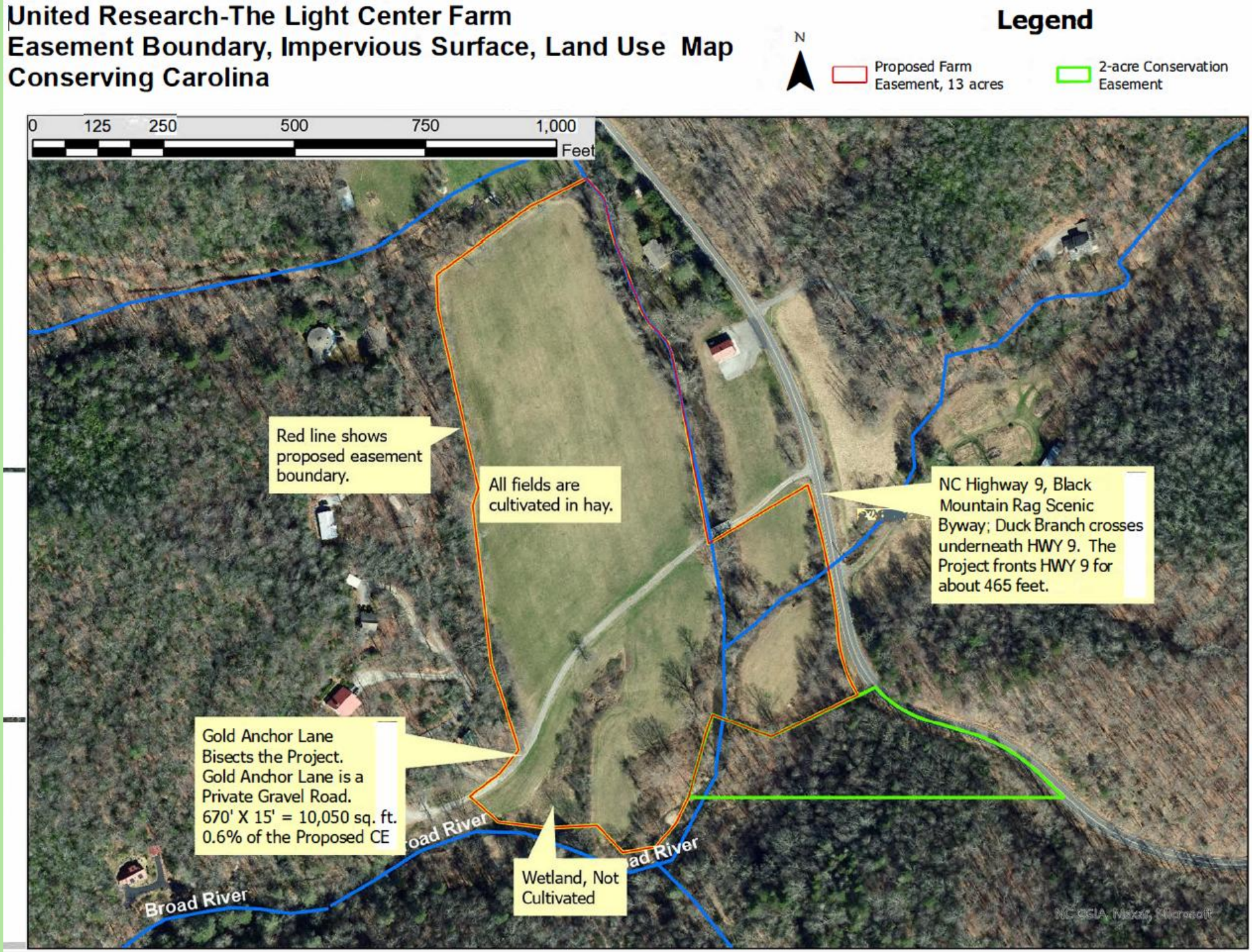
<u>Buncombe County FY26 Easement Funding:</u>
Transaction cost request: **$0.00**

Buncombe request = 29% of project budget
71% leveraged match*

*$282,600 donated easement value & $461,800 funding from the NC Land & Water Fund (secured by contract)



The Light Center Farm Conservation Easement Project



Conservation Values for Light Center Farm

- Proximity to protected lands
- Prime Agricultural Lands
- Scenic Viewshed Protection along scenic byway 9
- Water Quality Benefits:
  - Buffers about 1,800’ of the Rocky Broad (Upper Broad) River and Duck Branch;
  - 0.3 acres of wetland
  - Farm following NRCS best management practices for wetland and wooded buffer



The Light Center Farm Easement Budget

Requesting Transaction costs & Easement acquisition

<u>Buncombe County Open Space Bond Request</u>
Easement Acquisition request: **$46,000**

<u>Buncombe County Easement Funding:</u>
Transaction cost request: **$46,000.00** (previously awarded)

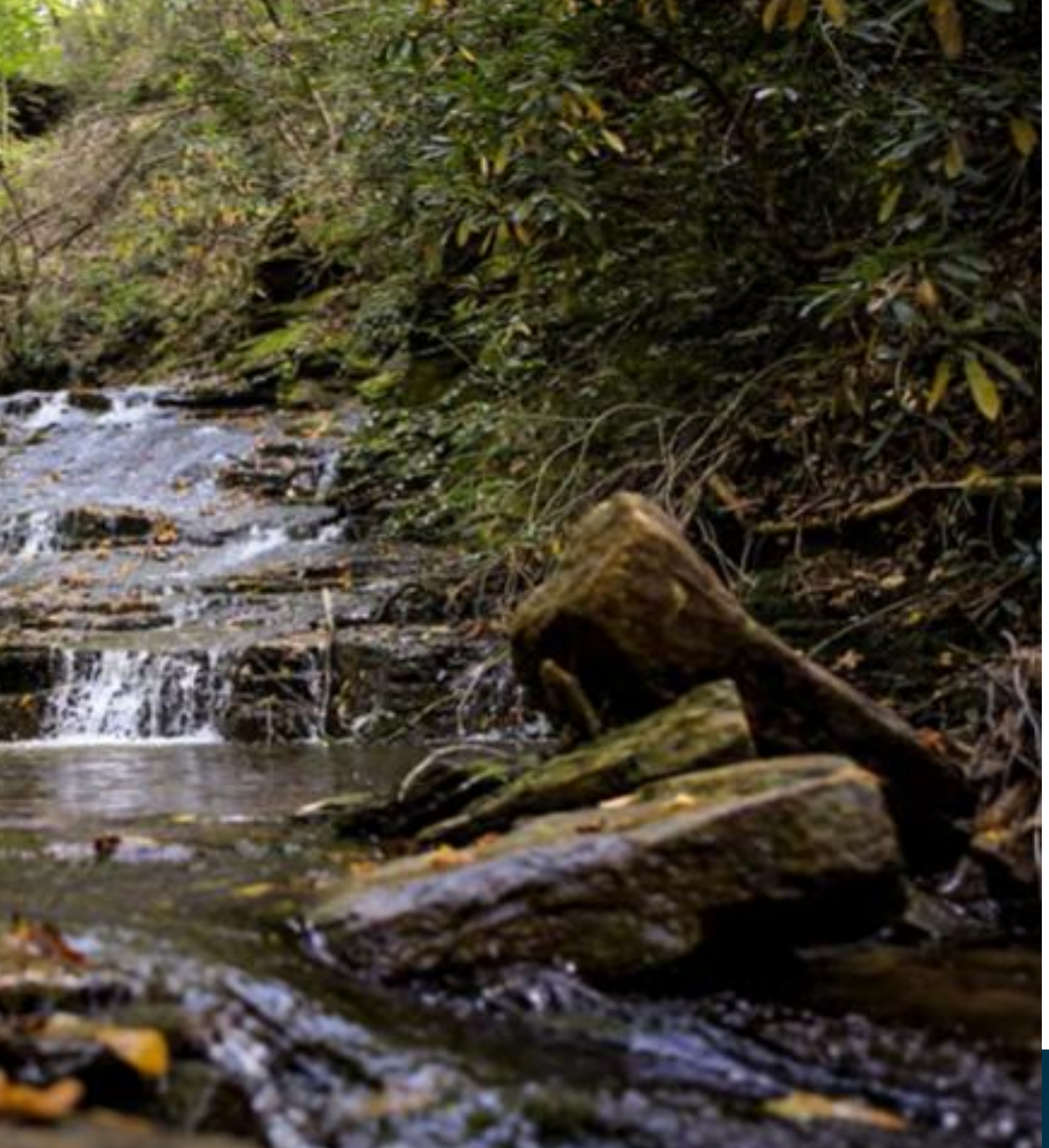
Buncombe request = 31% of project budget
69% leveraged match*

*$129,058 donated easement value & $29,000 funding from the NC Agricultural Development and Preservation Trust Fund (secured), and $45,942 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (secured)



Land Conservation Advisory Board
Project Budgets

Owner	Size	Region	EP Funding Request (Bond)	Transaction Costs Request (224)
Duck Branch	62	Broad River	$155,000	$21,000
The Light Center - Nature Preserve	112	Broad River	$282,000	
The Light Center – Farm	36.5	Broad River	$46,000	Previously funded
Total			**$483,000**	**$21,000**



Request for Board Action:

Approve funding for 5 Conservation Easements

- $121,400 from Special Projects
- $483,000 from Open Space Bond

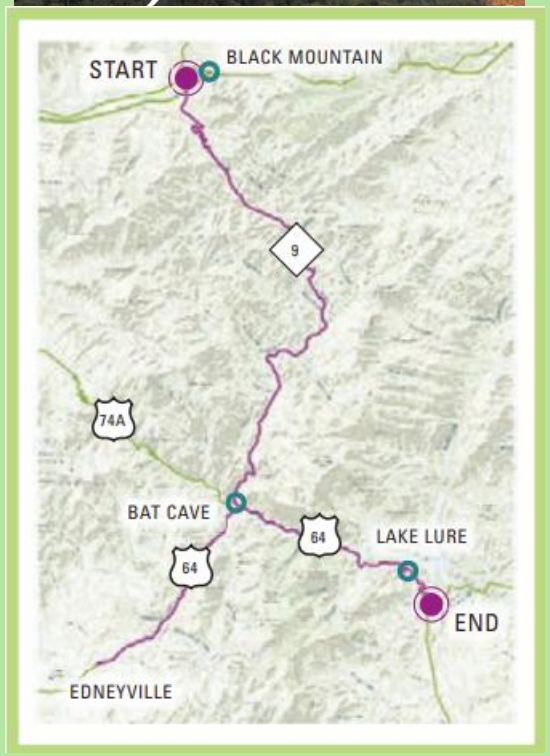
Appendix

Supplemental Conservation Easement Project Information

Scenic Viewshed Protection Along the Black Mountain Rag Scenic Byway

The Project will preserve the scenic, view of forestland along approximately 6,000’ along the west side of the Black Mountain Rag Scenic Byway. The scenic byway includes all of Highway 9 between Black Mountain and Bat Cave.









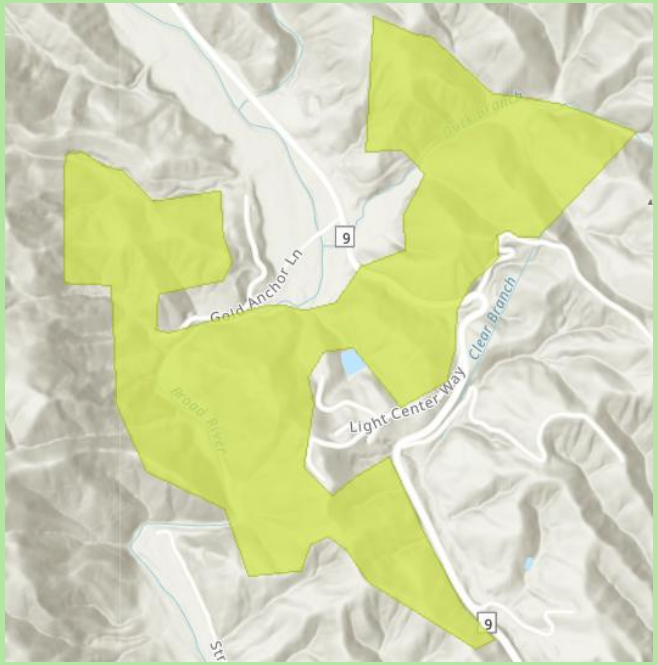
Natural Areas Protection



Small Spreading Pogonia, rare in NC



Crevice Salamander, the Hickory Nut Gorge population is listed as “imperiled” by the NC Natural Heritage Program.



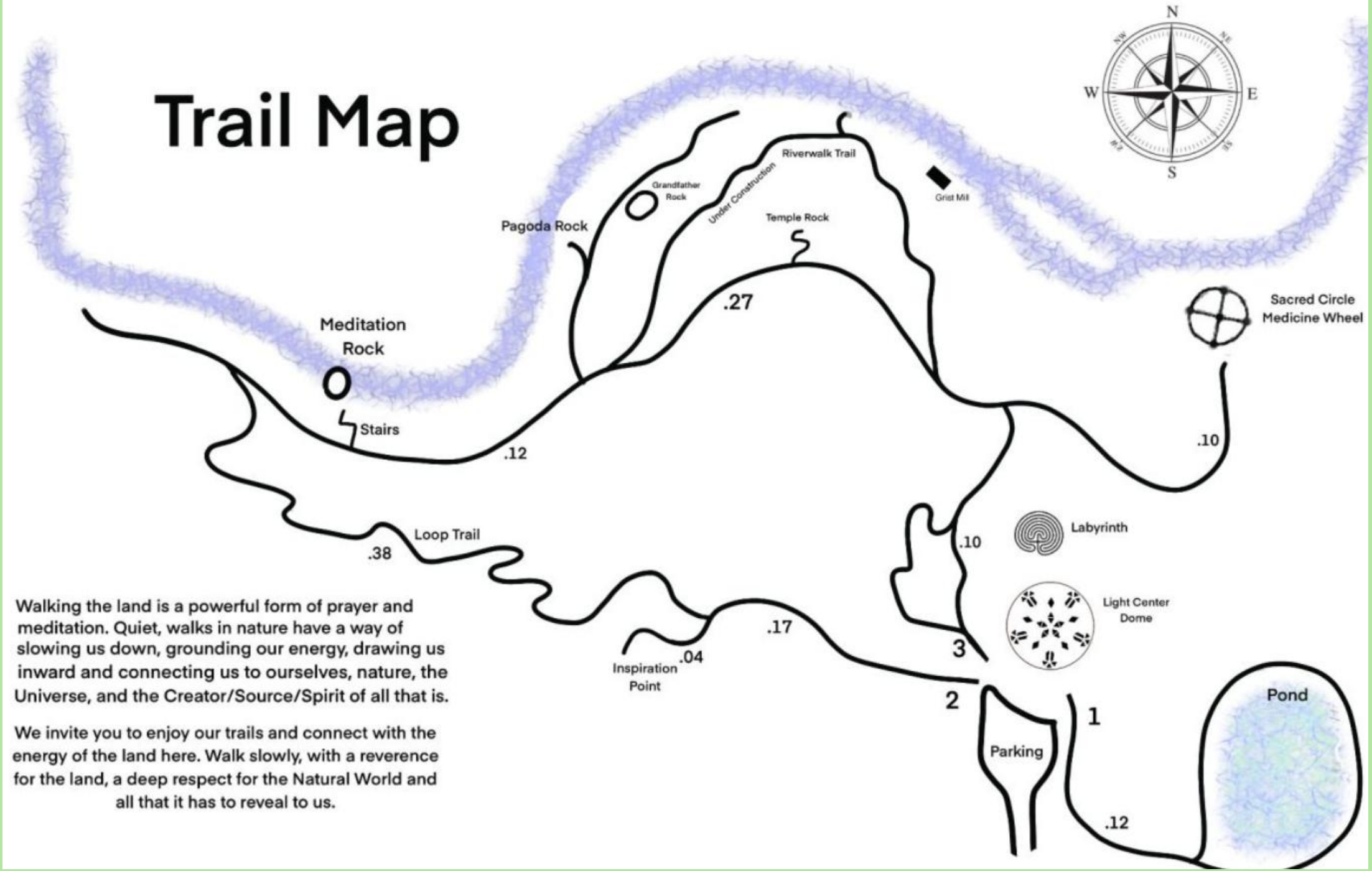
NC Natural Heritage Program recently designated the “Light Center Natural Area” which also Includes the Duck Branch Project



Ginseng, vulnerable to extirpation in NC

PUBLIC ACCESS

Trail Map



Walking the land is a powerful form of prayer and meditation. Quiet, walks in nature have a way of slowing us down, grounding our energy, drawing us inward and connecting us to ourselves, nature, the Universe, and the Creator/Source/Spirit of all that is.

We invite you to enjoy our trails and connect with the energy of the land here. Walk slowly, with a reverence for the land, a deep respect for the Natural World and all that it has to reveal to us.