RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, since 2001, the federal Roadless Area Conservation Rule ("Roadless Rule"), promulgated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has protected nearly 45 million acres of America's wildest public lands from roadbuilding and development; and

WHEREAS, over 150,000 acres of the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest's 1 million+ acres, including more than 2,650 acres within Buncombe County, have been designated as roadless areas; and

WHEREAS, Western North Carolina's roadless areas provide irreplaceable benefits, including clean drinking water to local and downstream communities, crystal clear trout streams, support for local economies that depend on outdoor recreation and tourism dollars, iconic hiking trails, and habitat for wildlife; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina's roadless areas contain headwaters for several important watersheds, contributing to the drinking water for millions of North Carolinians, including the Mills River that supplies Asheville and Buncombe County; and

WHEREAS, recreational activities such as backcountry hunting and angling generate more than $2.5 billion in annual revenue statewide, including $1.38 billion from trout fishing in Western North Carolina alone, supporting thousands of jobs, with North Carolina's roadless areas playing an important role in sustaining these opportunities; and

WHEREAS, in Western North Carolina, in particular, the Nantahala-Pisgah's notable climbing routes, whitewater paddling runs, and mountain bike trails bring $83.3 million in visitor spending and $31.7 million in resident spending to the region every year, supporting over 1,000 full-time jobs.

WHEREAS, North Carolina's roadless areas, are a haven for wildlife such as black bear, deer, wild turkey, grouse, and hundreds of bird species, as well as dozens of endangered and threatened species and several sensitive species such as the eastern hellbender and the brook trout; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Forest Service data show that most wildfires start within 50 yards of a road, and the Roadless Rule thus provides a critical safeguard against wildfire; and

WHEREAS, the Roadless Rule allows road construction and reconstruction in roadless areas when needed to protect public health and safety in cases of an imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event; and

WHEREAS, the Roadless Rule allows the U.S. Forest Service to reduce wildfire fuel hazards through restoration projects in roadless areas; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service has managed roadless areas in the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest responsibly and efficiently, to the benefit of all North Carolinians, and especially citizens of Buncombe County; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service now proposes to rescind the Roadless Rule, placing approximately 2,657 acres of roadless areas in Buncombe County at risk.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners, that the members of this body recognize and celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and acknowledge the importance of the rule's continued application in Western North Carolina.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body commend the U.S. Forest Service for its effective management of roadless areas in North Carolina, particularly within Buncombe County's Craggy Mountains, pursuant to the Roadless Rule.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board is authorized and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the U.S. Forest Service, the public, and the press.

Adopted this 21st day of April, 2026.

ATTEST:

_____

Sarah Gross, Clerk to the Board

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE COUNTY OF BUNCOMBE

BY: _____

Amanda Edwards, Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM

_____

County Attorney