



OPEN SPACE BOND CONSERVATION EASEMENT CRITERIA AND PROCESS

Presented by

Jill Carter

Open Space Bond Project Manager

County Management

Ariel Zijp

Farmland Preservation Manager

Ag and Land Resources Department



Agenda

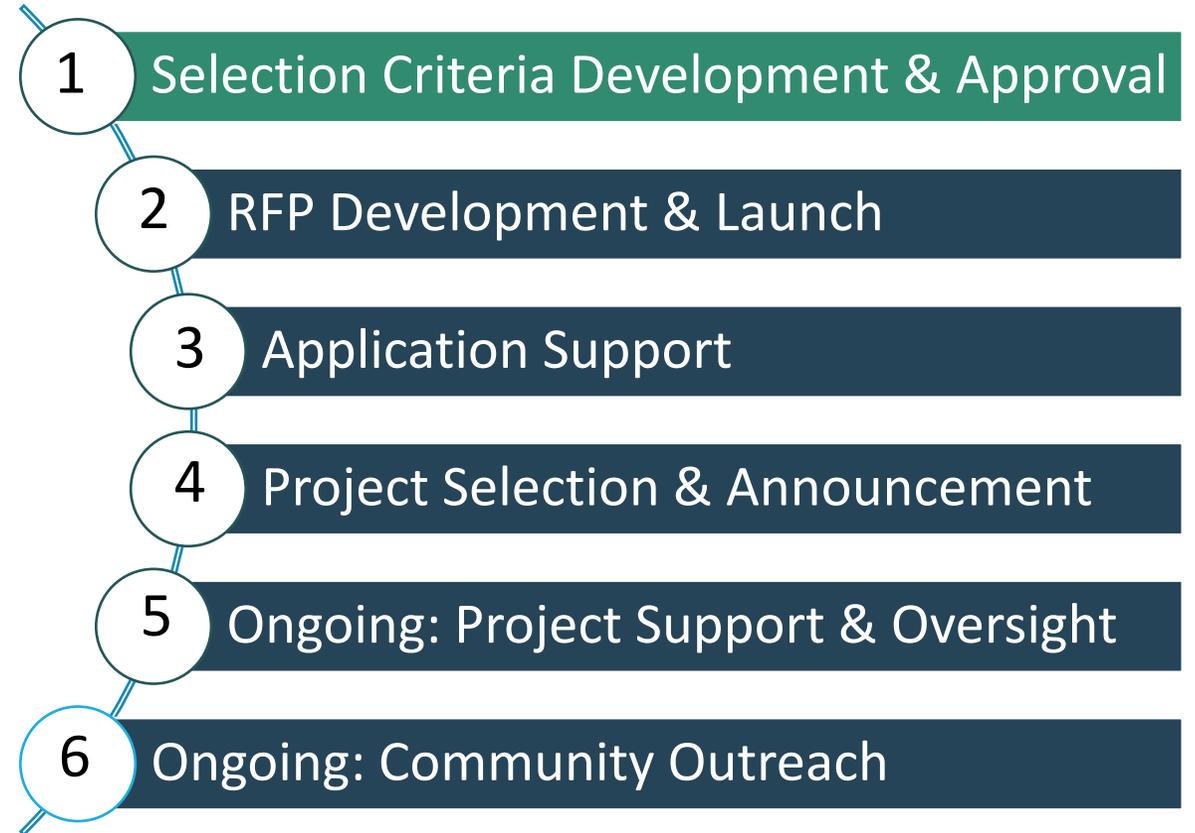
- 1) Open Space Bond Overview & Update
- 2) Conservation Project Evaluation System & Criteria



Open Space Bond Overview

\$30M Open Space Bond

- Land Conservation
- Greenways
- Passive Recreation Lands



Open Space Bond Update

Complete

- ✓ Selection of Advisory Boards & Oversight Committee
- ✓ Bond Project Manager Hired
- ✓ Public Input Page Launched

Next Steps

Conservation Easement

- First project selection expected Summer 2023

Passive Recreation

- Project application window open expected Fall 2023

Greenways

- Woodfin and Enka receiving funding for completion

All evaluation
criteria expected
to be complete by
end of June 2023



Community Outreach

- **Status:** [Public Input Page](#) live on March 1
 - Video: [Passive Recreation – Collier Cove](#)
 - Video: [Conservation Easements](#)
 - Profile: [Bond Manager Hired](#)
 - WLOS Article: [Story Maps](#)
- **Upcoming:** Public Input Surveys for Greenways & Passive Recreation
- **Ongoing:** Regular outreach and transparency regarding meetings, process updates

Overview Greenways Conservation Passive Recreation Lands FAQs Get Involved/Meetings Boards and Oversight News

Documents and Presentations

Open Space Bond: Greenways, Conservation, and Recreation

In November 2022, Buncombe County voters had the opportunity to vote on the Open Space Bond, a funding project that would increase conservation of lands, construction of greenways, and development of passive recreation lands. The bond passed with 68.8% voter approval. Over the past few months, County staff and community board members have discussed plans to utilize bond funds, gather public input, and provide transparency in the process.

A view of a farm conservation project in Buncombe County.

At the heart of the Open Space Bond are goals to preserve the natural beauty of Buncombe County, increase the quality of life for its residents, and improve access to recreational activities in the area. Over the next seven years these goals will be met through cooperation between landowners, staff from Ag and Land Resources and the Recreation departments, community boards, and the Board of Commissioners.

Project Selection

For each area of the Open Space Bond, criteria are developed for evaluating project proposals. Criteria allow relevant boards and commissions to equitably assess project merits. Once the bonds passed, work began to develop criteria for both greenways and passive recreation lands. Both the [Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Advisory Board](#) and a joint subcommittee of the Land Conservation Advisory Board and the Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Advisory Board (called the [Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee](#)) will work with the community to develop criteria over the coming months. Conservation projects will rely on existing criteria already in use in Buncombe County. Stay tuned for both in person and virtual events these boards will host to gather public feedback. Interested community members can also attend board meetings and offer public comment. Check out the Boards and Oversight tab of this page for more information.

Sign up to receive updates about the Open Space Bond.

Email

PLANNING Board of Commissioner's Review Final Passive Recreation and Greenway Criteria

PLANNING Boards and Commissions review Public Input and Draft Criteria

COMPLETION Bond Oversight Committee Members Selected Feb. 21, 2023

COMPLETION Open Space Bond Passes Nov. 8, 2022



Advisory Boards for Land Conservation

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



Evaluation System

Two Tiered Evaluation:

1. Rank land using criteria
2. Determine funding source and amount the project is eligible for
 - Grant Funds, General Fund, Bond Funds,
 - Easement purchase and/or transaction costs

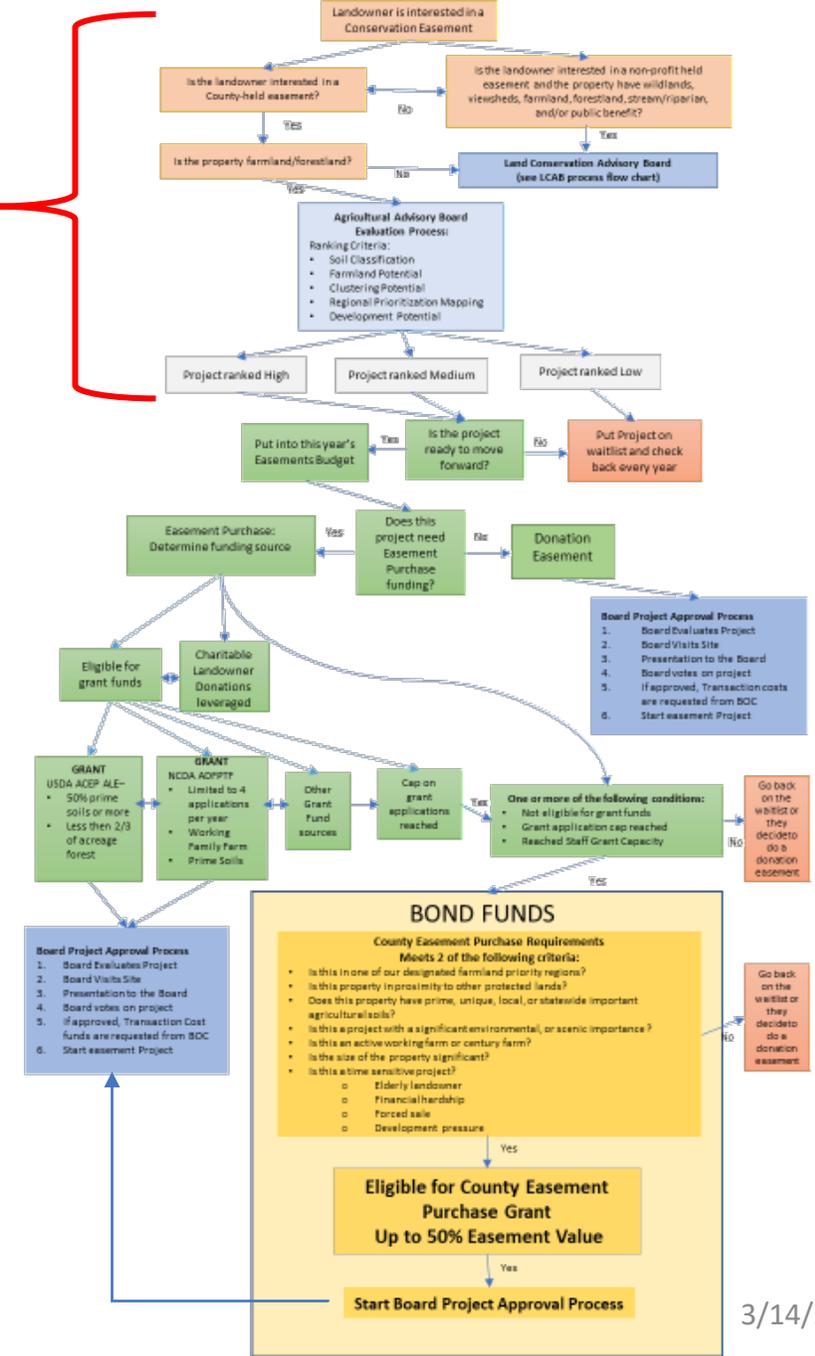


Flow Chart for Conservation Easement Funding

Ranking criteria

Funding source and amount

How Ag Advisory Board Easement Projects are Funded:



AAB Project Evaluation Ranking System

A. Land Evaluation (35%)

1. Farmland Soils Assessment (50 pts)
 - Prime Soils
 - Unique Soils
 - Local and Statewide Important Soils
2. Forestland Soils Assessment (50 pts)
 - High Index Soils
 - Medium Index Soils
 - Low Index Soils

Ranking points total is a weighted sum

B. Site Assessment (65%)

1. Clustering Potential (100 pts)
 - Tract Size (50 pts)
 - Contiguous Land Preservation (40 pts)
 - Proximity to Ag Preservation District (10 pts)
2. Farmland Potential (100 pts)
 - Priority Ranking Score (30 pts)
 - % of Tract in Ag (20 pts)
 - Land Stewardship (30 pts)
 - Historic/Scenic/Env Qualities (15 pts)
 - Century Family Farm (5 pts)
3. Development Pressure(100 pts)
 - Proximity to Public Water/Sewer (50 pts)
 - Proximity to Planned Development (30 pts)
 - Ag Threat and Viability Map Score (20 pts)



AAB Easement Purchase Criteria

BOND FUNDS

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
 - Development pressure

Yes

**Eligible for County Easement
Purchase Grant
Up to 50% Easement Value**

Yes

Start AAB Project Approval Process

AAB Board Project Approval Process

1. Board evaluates project
2. Board visits site
3. Presentation to the board by staff and landowners
4. Board votes on the project
5. If approved, transaction costs are request from BOC
6. Start easement project



LCAB Project Evaluation Ranking System

A. Land Trust Partner Evaluation – (meets criteria or does not)

- Applicants Organization Track Record
- Long-term Protection of County's Investment
- Evidence of Collaboration Among Conservation Organizations
- Previous Project Completion
- Value of Project
- Integrity of Easement

B. Conservation Value of the Project – 100 points

- Scenic Viewshed Protection - 10 pts
- Natural Areas Protection/Biological Values – 10 pts
- Water Quality Protection/Restoration – 10 pts
- Farmland Preservation – 10 pts
- Public Benefit – 10 pts
- Historic/Cultural Resource Protection – 10 pts
- Funding Leverage – 15 pts
- Value Added to the Project – 15 pts



LCAB Easement Purchase Criteria

BOND FUNDS

County Easement Purchase Requirements Must meet at least 2 of the following conditions:

- Is this in an LCAB priority region?
- Is this a project with significant environmental and/or scenic importance
- Are there significant recreational opportunities, water quality or open space benefits of the project?
- Is this a time sensitive project?
 - Elderly landowner
 - Financial hardship
 - Forced sale
 - Development pressure

Yes

Eligible for County Easement
Purchase Grant
25- 50% Easement Value

Yes

Start LCAB Project Approval Process

LCAB Board Project Approval Process

1. Board evaluates project
2. Board visits site
3. Presentation to the board by staff and landowners
4. Board votes on the project
5. If approved, transaction costs are request from BOC
6. Start easement project





Questions?

