Budget Amendment:
Open Space Bond Okoboji Farm Easement

Presented by
Jill Carter, Open Space Bond Manager
Ariel Zijp, Farmland Preservation Manager
Board of County Commissioners Meeting
June 4, 2024
Okoboji Farm Conservation Easement
OKOBOJI FARM - OPEN SPACE BOND ELIGIBILITY
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)
Okoboji Farm

/+ - 42 acres on Lower Brush Creek Rd

- 92% Prime Agricultural Soils
- Conservation Focus Area
- Viewshed protection in rural community
- Contiguous & Proximal to other properties under easement
- Active Working Farm – Hay & Beef Cattle
- Water Quality –
  - Cane Creek runs through property
  - Recent Stream restoration work with EWP
- Easement Held by Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation
Okoboji Farm – Proximity to Protected Lands
Okoboji Farm Funding

- **Transaction Costs** - $43,000
  Previously Funded from FY24 budget

- **Easement Acquisition** -
  - Applied for USDA Funding
  - **Open Space Bond** $511,500
  - Landowner Donation $511,500
Budget Amendment: Special Program Easement Funds
Warren Wilson College Conservation Easements

Presented by
Jess Laggis, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Board of County Commissioners Meeting
June 4, 2024
Warren Wilson College
Conservation Easement
Warren Wilson College
600 Acres of Farm and Forest in 4 Easements
Warren Wilson College

- 600 (+/-) acres in 4 easement projects in Swannanoa Region
- 69% Important farmland Soils
- Farmland AND Mountain Land Model Top Priorities
- 4 bargain-sale agricultural conservation easements
- Adjoins Multiple Protected Lands
- Beloved scenic views, campus tailgate market, farm general store, and farmer and forester education
- Public Hiking Trails & public access/recreation;
- Excellent land stewardship; specialty product or crop production,
- Historic and cultural value; educational and social opportunities;
- Held by Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Warren Wilson College Farm

- *Best College Reviews* rated at the top of their list of 20 college farms.

- The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources named WWC *Conservation Farm Family of the Year* in the Mountain Region.

- Recognized as a “River Friendly Farmer” by Buncombe County’s Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

- Received the national *Campus Sustainability Achievement Award* from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

- Selected by Sustainable North Carolina as recipient of the *N.C. Sustainability Award*, in the Environmental Stewardship category.
Leveraged Funding

- Estimated CE value = $7,800,000
  - Easement Acquisition purchase price = $5,322,619
    - Federal Grant - USDA ACEP = $2,903,238
    - State Grant - NCDA ADFP = $967,746
    - County - Open Space Bond = $483,889 (future Easement Purchase bond request)
    - Private funding = $967,746
  - Transaction Costs = $393,000
    - Private funding = $83,000
    - County Transaction Costs request = $310,000 = 3.7% of total project costs
      (approximately $77,500/easement)
Request for Board Action:

Approve the Budget Amendments Establishing Easements as Projects
Appendix
Over 4 miles of streams protected, not including over 25 acres of existing mitigation easements.
- 25 miles of hiking trails open to the public

- Trail system connects to Owen Park