



**FOOTHILLS  
CONSERVANCY**  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

# 2023 Impact Report



4,627

Acres protected in 2023

70,529

Acres protected since 1995

### **Mission**

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.

### **Vision**

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina envisions a thriving region to live in and visit, with clean water, healthy forests, productive farmland, diverse wildlife, access to outdoor recreation, and communities that value conservation.

### **Our Service Area**

Foothills Conservancy serves eight counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell and Rutherford, in three major river basins: the Broad, Catawba, and Yadkin.





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**Ryan Sparks**, Stewardship Director  
**Shane Prisby**, Trails Program Director  
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**Michael Gaffney**, Conservation and GIS Specialist  
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# A Message from our Director

Protecting our region's natural and agricultural lands has never been more important. With your support, we are gaining ground!

For the last 28 years, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina has been working at a regional level to permanently conserve the lands we need and love, ensuring they will be there for today and tomorrow. From community parks and spaces to public trails, mountainous landscapes, forests and working family farms, we have been partnering with willing landowners who wish to permanently protect their land for future generations.



In doing so, we are helping to address some of society's greatest challenges by protecting essential habitats for plants and animals, ensuring our water runs clean and clear and that our air is healthy to breathe, providing access to natural areas where every person can use green space for their general well-being, preserving healthy soils for local agriculture and reducing the impacts of climate change.

The year 2023 was a monumental one for FCNC, with the public opening of our Oak Hill Community Park and Forest near Morganton. Oak Hill Park might just exemplify every aspect of the community-centered benefits we gain from land conservation. It's a place where everyone can enjoy a connection with nature through the public trail system, which will expand in the upcoming years. The forest protection and management practices we have implemented are making our region more resilient to climate change impacts by absorbing and holding carbon and providing safe havens for plants and animals. We're developing a community agriculture program to foster and safeguard more land that grows our local food. And a stream restoration project on Canoe Creek that we'll begin next year will rehabilitate a natural floodplain to help reduce downstream flooding and protect water quality.

The projects and programs featured in this report amplify these community-centered benefits from land conservation. FCNC continues its important work by expanding a network of unbroken conservation



land in remote areas of the South Mountains, linking preserve lands at the headwaters of the Henry Fork River, conserving the source of the Johns River, connecting people to nature through Wilderness Gateway State Trail projects throughout our region, protecting family farms and engaging youth and adults in environmental education and volunteer land stewardship.

Local actions can have a global impact when people come together to support conservation. We can all have better lives, stronger communities and a healthier planet when we work together to keep our open spaces open.

Together, let's keep gaining ground!



**Andrew Kota**  
Executive Director



### Conservation Excellence

One thing that unites us as a nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the natural spaces they love. Since 1995, Foothills Conservancy of NC has been doing just that for the people of Western North Carolina.

In August of 2022, FCNC renewed our national land trust accreditation for a third, 5-year term – proving once again that we are committed to conservation excellence. During this process, we provided extensive documentation to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and were subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation.

Our land trust is stronger than ever for having gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process, and our strength means special places and valuable tracts of land will be protected forever.

Accredited land trusts steward over 20 million acres – the size of Denali, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Everglades and Yosemite National Parks combined. The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction that stands for excellence, trust and permanence.

FCNC has been part of this network of over 450 accredited land trusts since 2010. These groups are united by their strong ethical practices. Accredited land trusts inspire confidence and respect among their peers and in their communities, and our community-centered conservation work protects lands and waters that benefit everyone, in perpetuity.



## Financial Summary

(as of December 31, 2022)

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash & Equivalents	\$ 5,716,524	\$ 5,671,405
Receivables	42,590	18,090
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,759,114</b>	<b>\$ 5,689,495</b>
<b>Long-term Assets</b>		
Conservation Property & Equipment	\$ 21,133,226	\$ 18,519,130
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 26,892,340</b>	<b>\$ 24,208,625</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>		
Current Liabilities	\$ 253,485	\$ 19,376
Total Net Assets	26,638,855	24,189,249
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 26,892,340</b>	<b>\$ 24,208,625</b>

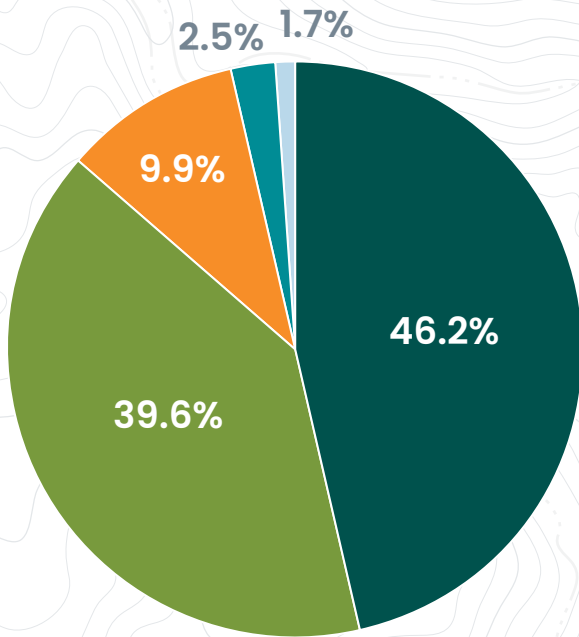
## Endowment & Reserve Funds

(as of December 31, 2022)

	<b>Restricted</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Board Designated</b>	<b>Total</b>
Endowments*	\$ 1,166,704	\$ -	\$ 2,168,545	\$ 3,335,249
Preserve Management Fund	-	117,837	-	117,837
Land Acquisition Fund	381,666	728,013	353,602	1,463,281
General Operations Reserve	-	941,764	-	941,764
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,548,370</b>	<b>\$ 1,787,614</b>	<b>\$ 2,522,147</b>	<b>\$ 5,858,131</b>

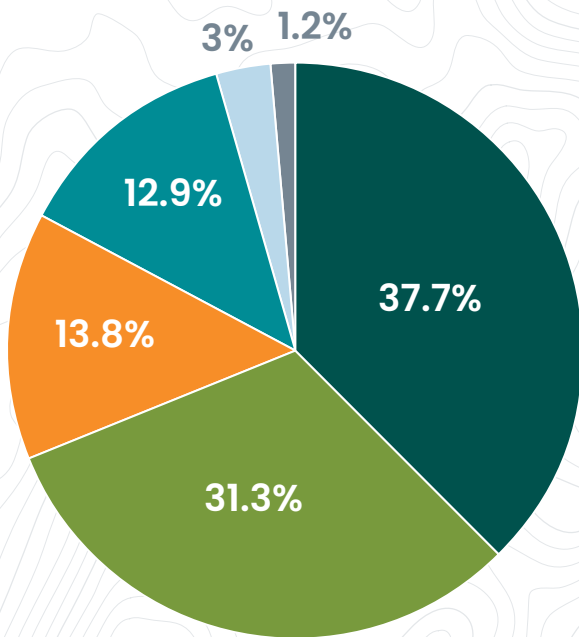
\*Foundation for the Carolinas; Community Foundation of WNC;  
Community Foundation of Burke County





### Fiscal Year 2022 Sources of Funds

	2022	2021
Private grants & contributions (cash & noncash)	\$ 3,862,935	\$ 6,507,942
Government grants	3,309,330	193,326
Proceeds from sale of land	828,280	15,000
Investment income	143,672	400,161
Other	212,760	148,693
<b>Total Source of Funds</b>	<b>\$ 8,356,977</b>	<b>\$ 7,265,122</b>



### Fiscal Year 2022 Use of Funds

	2022	2021
Conservation easement purchases & stewardship	\$ 2,446,952	\$ 834,319
Purchase of conservation land & equipment	2,028,480	1,244,534
Program expenses	892,918	(12,296)
Below book land sales	839,830	328,791
Management & Administrative	196,035	152,113
Purchase of investments	81,048	93,510
<b>Total Use of Funds</b>	<b>\$ 6,485,263</b>	<b>\$ 2,640,971</b>



# Our Footprint

## 2023 Featured Conservation Projects

### 1. Johns River Headwaters

**326 Acres**

Pending purchase by FCNC on the Blue Ridge escarpment, in both the Blowing Rock and Globe communities of Caldwell County to preserve an iconic viewshed of the magnificent mountainous panorama, and protect the source of the Johns River, a major tributary of the Catawba River.

### 2. Thunderhole Conservation Easement

**10 Acres**

Pending purchase of a conservation easement to be held by FCNC on a private parcel of land surrounded by Pisgah National Forest in Caldwell County, with high biodiversity, significant cultural resources, and containing the confluence of Thunderhole Creek and the Johns River.

### 3. Jaschob Wilderness Gateway State Trail

**6 Acres**

Purchase of land in Valdese by FCNC for a greenway trail project and the Wilderness Gateway State Trail. The land on Micol Creek is across US 70 from the Town of Valdese's Children's Park. Partnership project with Friends of Valdese Recreation and the Town of Valdese.

### 4. Pinnacle Mountains West

**1,460 Acres**

Bargain purchase by FCNC to protect two significant natural areas and to further the development of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail in the South Mountains of Rutherford County.

### 5. Beam Farm

**292 Acres**

Pending purchase of an agricultural conservation easement to preserve open space and protect prime farmland soil, a significant natural area, and Dills Creek in Cleveland County.

### 6. Wilkes Tri-County

**1,125 Acres**

Joint purchase of forested land in the Brushy Mountains by FCNC and Blue Ridge Conservancy. This project represents FCNC's first major acquisition in this part of our service region, which is an important conservation focus area for biodiversity.

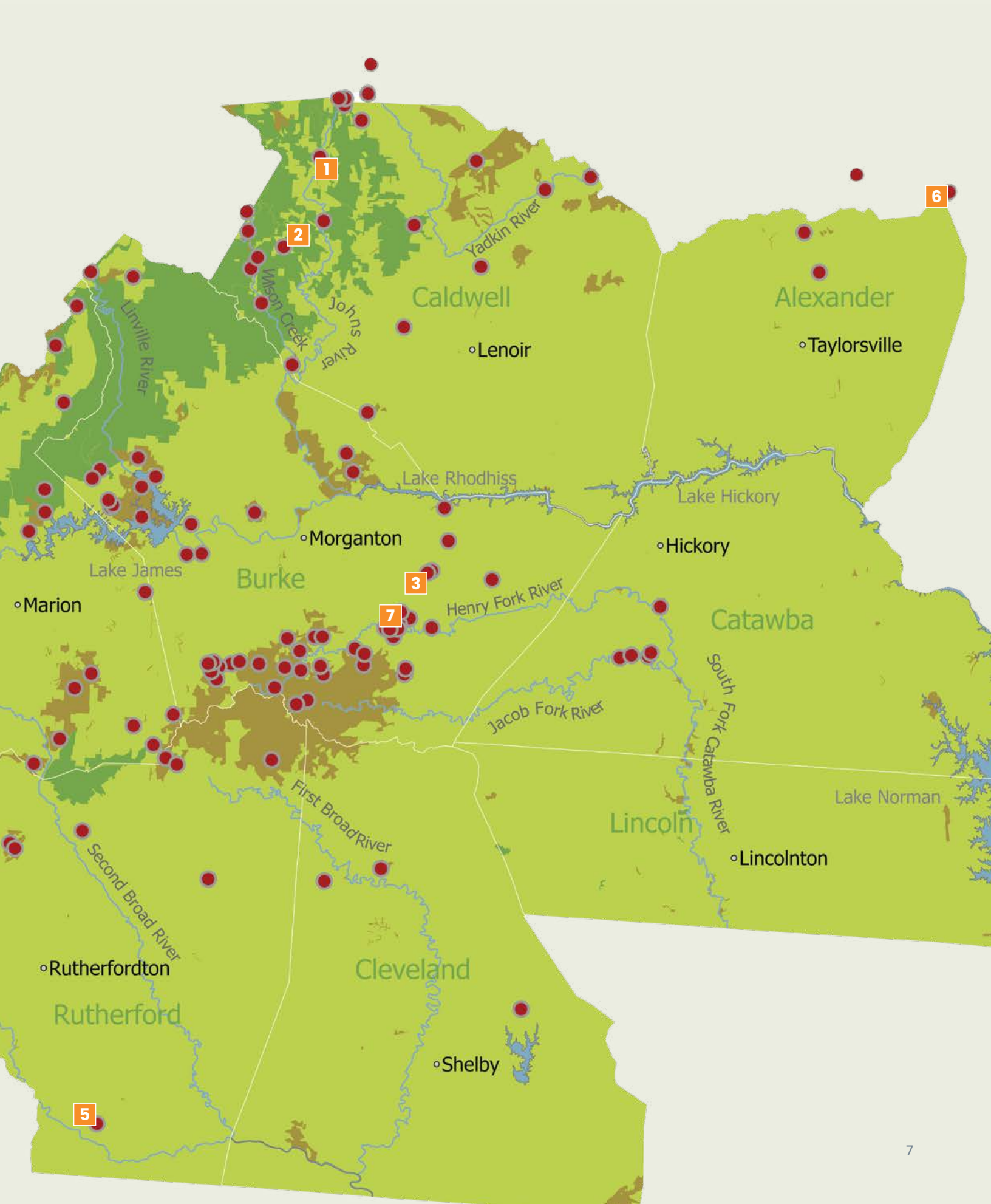
### 7. Prospect Ridge

**443 Acres**

Fee simple purchase by FCNC to link the conservancy's preserve lands in the headwaters of the Henry Fork River, and for the development of a Wilderness Gateway State Trail segment in southern Burke County.

- Conservancy Projects
- Federal Conservation Land
- State Conservation Land
- Featured Projects







# Johns River Headwaters in Blowing Rock, NC

## Protecting an Iconic Viewshed and the Birthplace of a River

### 326 Acres

The Town of Blowing Rock, NC, is situated on the Eastern Continental Divide and is a unique place that holds the headwaters of three major rivers: the Yadkin River, the New River and the Johns River.

Near the eastern side of Blowing Rock, a small mountain spring marks the headwaters of the Yadkin River, which flows down the Blue Ridge Mountains, through Happy Valley and the Patterson community in Caldwell County, then on to Wilkesboro and Winston-Salem, before becoming the Pee-Dee River and emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. This headwater area of the Yadkin River is served and protected by Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina.

Another significant stream that begins in Blowing Rock is the origin of the New River, one of the oldest rivers in North America. The New River flows north through Virginia and merges with the Gauley River to become the Kanawha River in West Virginia, before entering the Ohio River, which in turn feeds the Mississippi River before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico.

On the southern side of Blowing Rock, amidst the plunging mountainous terrain, is the source of the Johns River, a major tributary of the Catawba River, which becomes the Wateree River on its way to the Atlantic Ocean at Charleston, SC.

Throughout 2023, Foothills Conservancy prepared for an early 2024 acquisition to permanently protect a 326-acre tract of land in Blowing Rock, positioned directly on the Blue Ridge Escarpment, which contains the source of the Johns River. This extremely significant parcel of land is a major part of the iconic, expansive mountainous view seen from The Blowing Rock attraction, the oldest travel attraction in North Carolina, as well as from various places along the heavily-traveled US 321 corridor and other locations within the town limits of Blowing Rock.

The purchase was made possible by state grants from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Grant program, foundation grants from the Glass Foundation and the Wilson Family Foundation, contributions from conservation philanthropists Fred and Alice Stanback, and Brad and Shelli Stanback, as well as generous donations and support from 97 individuals and local businesses in the Blowing Rock community and other grant funders.

Millions of people receive clean drinking water from the Catawba River, and the Johns River is its longest headwater tributary. The now-protected land also harbors a number of significant natural communities and threatened plant and animal species documented by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.

Everything that happens to the land in Blowing Rock impacts these three vastly important river basins and the people who depend on the rivers downstream. Development around Blowing Rock has the potential to threaten these watersheds and could jeopardize drinking water for millions of people. Therefore, the purchase and protection of this tract of land and others like it by Foothills Conservancy is crucial for the ongoing protection of these important river basins and the mountain communities where they originate.



**Thanks to this grant funding, and combined with considerable support from the following generous donors, Foothills Conservancy was able to acquire and permanently protect the 326-acre Johns River Headwaters land.**

**Substantial grant funding from:**

North Carolina Land and Water Fund  
 North Carolina Department of Justice  
 Environment Enhancement  
 Grant program  
 Fred & Alice Stanback  
 Brad & Shelli Stanback  
 Glass Foundation  
 Wilson Family Foundation

**Donors:**

The Blowing Rock  
 Andrew Veach  
 Jay Mebane  
 Jane Veach  
 Janel & Dave Cox  
 David Hofmann  
 James Cain  
 Amy & Doug Hoogervorst  
 Peg & Steve Thornburg  
 Lil & A.L. McAulay  
 Janet & Avery Cleland  
 Letitia & Keith Stoneman  
 Howell Family  
 Jane Spiegel & Michael Beltramo  
 Douglas Pegram  
 Betsy Reamer Webster & Anna  
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 Molly Dewey

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 Marcia Reamer  
 Lillian & Dan Meacham  
 Judy & Jim Allison  
 Laura & Warren Bingham  
 Amanda & Robert Anders  
 David Meacham  
 Christy & Patrick Luquire  
 Amanda & Robert Anders  
 Lee Harper & Wayne Vason  
 Ellen & John Freeze  
 Albert Yount  
 Debbie & Sadler Barnhardt  
 Brent Moore & Tim Gupton  
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 Mary & James Coleman  
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 Pam & Leigh Dunston  
 Claudia & Andy Heath  
 Melinda & William Wilson  
 Gideon Ridge Inn  
 Dinny Harper Addison  
 & Jimmy Addison  
 Betty & Richard Howe  
 Sandy Burkes- Campbell  
 & Barry Campbell  
 Betsy & George Wilcox  
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 Michele Moritz  
 Nancy Quillen  
 Mark S. Fowler  
 Carrington Tutwiler  
 Katie & Matthew Lindsay  
 Blue Ridge Conservancy  
 Ann & Rocco DiSanto  
 John Mebane, Jr.  
 Alice Zawadski Land  
 Conservation Fund  
 Catawba Wateree Water  
 Management Group



# 2023 Ruby Award – Conservationists of the Year

## Recognizing Judy Allison, Dinny Harper Addison, and Lee Harper Vason

Named for the late biologist, educator, and founding Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina board member, Ruby Pharr, the Ruby Pharr Conservationist of the Year Award (Ruby Award) is FCNC's highest honor for conservation volunteer service. This year, we are honored to announce Judy Allison, Lee Harper Vason, and Dinny Harper Addison as the 2023 Ruby Award recipients for their efforts and partnership in raising \$250,000 in the Blowing Rock community for FCNC's purchase and permanent protection of the 326-acre tract of undeveloped forest land adjoining The Blowing Rock attraction, which holds the source of the Johns River.

Judy, Dinny, and Lee have been devoted to conservation in the Blowing Rock community for most of their lives. When they heard that FCNC was \$250,000 away from meeting the fundraising goal to buy the property and protect it with a conservation easement, they organized their friends in the Blowing Rock community, assembled a host committee, and held a reception that would ultimately secure the remaining funds to close the conservation deal on the property.

**"Foothills did a lot of work to find the \$3.5 million in funding sources, and we helped take this project to the finish line and close the fundraising gap," said Judy.**



2023 Ruby Award

Once Judy got involved, Dinny and Lee quickly joined the effort and things started moving very quickly to organize and execute a reception at The Blowing Rock attraction, which directly overlooks the land itself, to raise both community awareness and project funding.

"FCNC had hoped the Blowing Rock community would become engaged and supportive, but we really never imagined that such a beautifully orchestrated reception was in the cards," said Andrew Kota, FCNC Executive Director "and, The Blowing Rock attraction was the absolute perfect location because the immediate view from every overlook at that attraction is the project land."

**"This project and our involvement was very synergistic. The whole was greater than the sum of its parts. It's so important to the life and the future of Blowing Rock to save the headwaters of the Johns River, the unique communities within the forest, and the viewshed," said Dinny.**



**Judy Allison**



**Lee Harper Vason**



**Dinny Harper Addison**

Judy, Dinny, and Lee believe it's absolutely essential to get these at-risk lands into the hands of conservancies such as FCNC to protect the character of Blowing Rock.

**"Projects like this are a great opportunity to educate the community because we found that many people assumed the property was already part of the Pisgah National Forest and didn't know that it was privately held, which means that it could be developed."** reflected Lee.

Judy, Dinny, and Lee's contributions are ensuring that people understand the fragility of the Blowing Rock area and the surrounding landscape. "This land is precious and once it's gone, you can't get it back. You've got the headwaters of three major rivers within a few hundred feet of each other. Everything that happens at Blowing Rock impacts those watersheds below us. We all need to make land and water conservation the highest priority. It's our responsibility to preserve and protect it for future generations," said Judy.

"Judy, Lee, and Dinny have gone above and beyond to help us raise awareness and funds to permanently protect this iconic tract of land," Kota reflected. "The generous people who donated to the cause because of Judy, Dinny, and Lee are truly leaving a legacy. We are proud to honor them with our highest award to show our gratitude for their partnership. This watershed and the precious headwaters are protected in perpetuity because of their interest, hard work and partnership," he added.





# Thunderhole Creek

## Conservation Easement

### 10 Acres

In 2023, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina worked with a private landowner in the Globe area of Caldwell County to protect their property in perpetuity, by purchasing the development rights and placing a conservation easement on the property that is held and stewarded by FCNC.


Although relatively small in size compared to many of the conservation transactions by FCNC, this nine-acre property holds extraordinary conservation value. It occupies the confluence of Thunderhole Creek and the Johns River, and is bordered by Pisgah National Forest.

Located just three miles south of FCNC's Johns River Headwaters project in Blowing Rock, NC, the nine-acre project scores exceptionally well in the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's biodiversity model (9 out of 10 along Thunderhole Creek), protects several rare species and is near the Mills Knob Natural Area.

The landowner, who is a committed conservationist, wanted nothing more than to see this property protected in perpetuity.

If you have land or property and want to explore the option of a conservation easement, please reach out to us and we can help you navigate this decision. Contact Tom Kenney, Land Protection Director ([tkenney@foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:tkenney@foothillsconservancy.org)) or Michael Gaffney, Conservation & GIS Specialist ([mgaffney@foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:mgaffney@foothillsconservancy.org)), or give us a call at 828-437-9930.





"This 10-acre conservation easement protects the confluence of the Johns River and Thunderhole Creek, a site of extraordinary beauty and equally exceptional biodiversity. We are thrilled to protect such a special place."

**Michael Gaffney**  
GIS and Conservation Specialist



# Duke Energy conveys conservation easements to FCNC

## Protecting the Catawba River

### 130 Acres

In March of 2023, Duke Energy transferred three conservation easements totaling 130 acres of permanent stream buffer protection along the Catawba River and its tributaries below the dams at Lake James in Burke County to Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina. These properties will help protect water quality in the upper section of the Catawba River Basin, and are additions to FCNC's vast portfolio of permanently protected lands around Lake James.

The easement transfers prompted the conveyance of over 1,200 acres of surrounding property adjacent to the Catawba River to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission for public recreation and compatible permanent conservation.

The history of this noteworthy conservation endeavor dates back to the early 2000s.

Most hydropower dams in the United States need to be licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Duke Energy's license for its 13 hydropower facilities on 11 reservoirs along 225 miles of the Catawba-Wateree River Basin was due to expire in 2006. The original license was issued in 1958, and much had changed in the Basin since then.

Through a collaborative process and years of active negotiation among Duke Energy and multiple state agencies, federal agencies, local governments, nonprofits and citizens, a settlement agreement, also known as the Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement (CRA), was forged.

The CRA was signed by 70 parties in 2006, including FCNC, and it represents a landmark document providing the region's vision for conservation initiatives needed to protect the Catawba River and lake system for a 50-year planning horizon. The CRA features initiatives to manage water supply during drought and to protect aquatic species and habitat, to enhance water quality and to provide for more public recreational opportunities and land for recreational use.

The Lake James section of the CRA included the establishment of conservation easements along approximately 29 miles of land adjoining the Johns River, Catawba River and Linville River, and the conveyance of property around the Catawba River to a state agency for public ownership and recreation, and watershed protection. This is the basis of the conservation initiative achieved 17 years later in 2023.

**"Duke Energy appreciates the efforts of Foothills Conservancy toward conservation and protection of lands in Western North Carolina,"** said Tami Styer, Project Manager for Duke Energy's Catawba-Wateree Hydro Project. **"We know that these conservation easements will be well cared for, and we are proud to be partnering with this organization to protect our water resources for generations to come,"** she added.

The conservation easements were fully funded by Duke Energy. On the surrounding lands, which are now under the ownership of N.C. WRC, a co-location section of the Fonta Flora State Trail and Overmountain Victory State and National Historic Trail will be developed in the upcoming years.

# Prospect Ridge

## Land acquisition connects Smiths Cliffs Henry Fork River Preserves

The 442-acre Prospect Ridge property was added to Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina's Smiths Cliffs Henry Fork River Preserve this year, connecting six previous FCNC acquisitions and significantly growing this preserve. The addition of this property creates an unbroken conservation corridor in the headwaters of the Henry Fork River and further buffers the highly significant Smiths Cliffs Natural Area, which contains many rocky outcrops with rare and unique species documented by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. This preserve is also a planned segment of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail, and FCNC will design and construct several miles of public trails through the land in the upcoming years using funding from the State of North Carolina's Complete the Trails fund.

Foothills Conservancy Preserves are designated conservation areas that are considered special and unique. Some of our preserves are not intended for public access in an effort to protect the biodiversity of the area, preserve the natural lands and conserve important watersheds. We actively steward some of these properties while others remain relatively untouched. Ultimately, the goal is to permanently protect these lands under FCNC long-term ownership.

### FCNC Preserves:

- South Mountains Headwaters Preserve - 1885 acres
- Catawba Headwaters Preserve - 1917 acres
- Riverbend Preserve - 235 acres
- Smiths Cliffs Henry Fork River Preserve - 419 acres
- Johns River Headwaters Preserve - 326 acres
- Oak Hill Community Park & Forest - 652 acres





# Wilderness Gateway State Trail

## Progress Update on the 170-mile trail system

The Wilderness Gateway State Trail (WGST) is a planned, 170-mile trail system that will link over 55,000 acres of adjoining conservation lands in the South Mountains across Catawba, Burke, McDowell and Rutherford counties. These trails are primarily located in rural areas that have not previously benefited from trail-based outdoor recreation tourism.

On January 19, 2023, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina acquired six valuable acres for permanent conservation in Valdese. This property, across from Valdese Children's Park on E. Main Street, will eventually be transferred to the Town of Valdese for expansion of the Children's Park and for future development of the WGST.

*"Projects like this support healthy lifestyles for local citizens and economic development through tourism in Valdese, all in association with the Wilderness Gateway State Trail, for which Foothills Conservancy is the lead organization," said Tom Kenney, Land Protection Director. "Preserving this property also helps protect water quality in the area, as this land adjoins Micol Creek, a direct tributary stream of Lake Rhodhiss in the Catawba River Basin," he added.*

This project is one of several ongoing conservation and trail development efforts underway for the WGST by Foothills Conservancy.

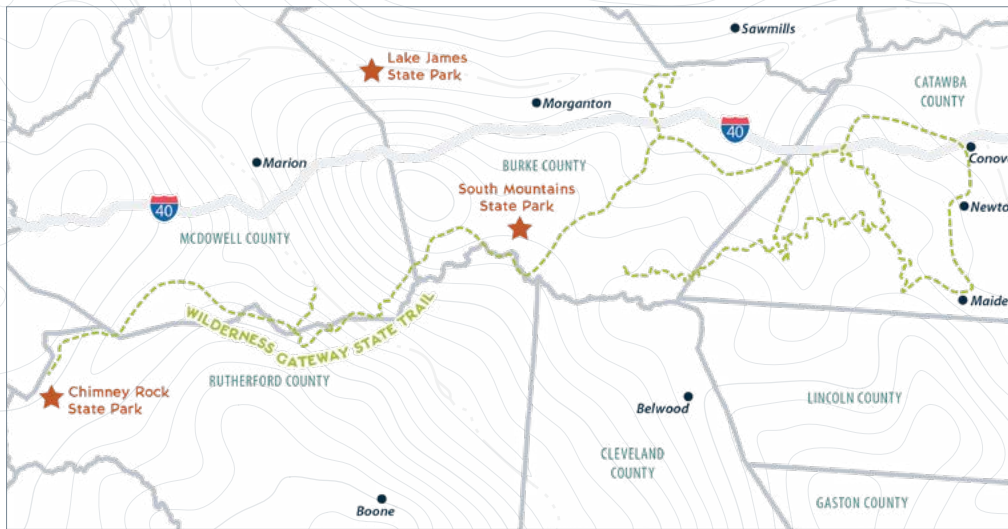
Throughout 2023, FCNC Trails Program Director, Shane Prisby, has been actively developing partnerships in Catawba County with local government staff, the Carolina Thread Trail and other stakeholders to advance trail planning and connectivity between the WGST and other local trail systems there. On a 300+ acre parcel of land on the Henry Fork River in Catawba County that FCNC transferred to N.C. State Parks in 2022, Shane will design a multi-use public trail corridor in the coming years in consultation with North Carolina State Trails staff, and work with partners to develop connections with local trails in the area.

In the western section of the South Mountains range, the Pinnacle Mountains span the border between Rutherford and McDowell counties and feature a collection of rugged and uniquely shaped peaks. FCNC preserved the 960-acre Pinnacle Mountains East property in 2022, and secured the 1,460-acre Pinnacle Mountains West property in 2023. Within this 2,500-acre area, Shane has been working diligently to lay out over nine miles of the WGST trail corridor.

The new trail will climb its way up to the nexus point of the Pinnacle Mountains, Windy Gap. The goal is to create a new experience for users who wish to challenge themselves and experience the unique beauty of the South Mountains by venturing deep into this peaceful yet formidable landscape.

Three sources of grants, the McDowell County and Rutherford County tourism and development authorities and the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, have provided the funding for FCNC staff to design and lay out the trail in this area, underwrite various permits required before trail construction can begin, and complete an archeological survey for a 10-mile section of the WGST called Wolfpen Loop, located on Bobs Creek State





- - - Planned Trail
- ★ State Park
- County Line
- City

Natural Area and Box Creek Wilderness Area in McDowell County. This important local funding allows FCNC to direct state funding to trail building, which is contracted to professional trail construction companies.

The Wolfpen Loop project is an approximately 10-mile loop trail that is part of the WGST and is located on Bobs Creek State Natural Area and Box Creek Wilderness Area in McDowell County.

The Trillium Fund, Walnut Fund, John and Janet Garrett Charitable Fund and an anonymous fund provided co-investment for the grant from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina.

“A sustainable trail is a trail that, as a result of good design or rehabilitation, is able to endure its designed usage and is resistant to the degradation of normal environmental factors, with only minimal effort required to maintain it.”  
 (Dundas, 2007, West Virginia Trails Conference)

As a trail designer, I strive to create trails that protect the environment, meet user needs and expectations, and require minimal maintenance. Legacy trail systems generally feature steep, unsustainable grades that are heavily eroded. Modern trail design has evolved to focus on integrating the trail into the landscape with minimal impact. The projects we are developing at Foothills Conservancy are multi-generational. They deserve and require the time it takes to read the landscape and listen to what it can support sustainably for years to come.

Shane Prisby, FCNC Trails Program Director



# Pinnacle Mountains West

## Expanding the South Mountains and Wilderness Gateway Conservation Corridor

**1,460 Acres**

The Pinnacle Mountains West conservation acquisition of 1,460 acres in McDowell and Rutherford counties is a crucial component in the conservation strategy of Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and its partners to permanently conserve lands between the South Mountains and Blue Ridge Mountains, and to develop the Wilderness Gateway State Trail as a long-distance, public trail system.

This acquisition was funded by the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, the Baker Hughes Foundation, the Blumenthal Foundation and the McClure Fund, and permanent conservation has been achieved by a conservation easement held by the State of North Carolina.

The land adjoins 960 acres that FCNC purchased in 2022, using an N.C. Land and Water Fund grant, and it connects to a state and federal assemblage of conservation lands to the east, including Box Creek Wilderness, which is protected by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservation easement, and state-owned public lands in Bobs Creek State Natural Area and South Mountains Game Land. Pinnacle Mountains West connects this impressive conservation assemblage westerly toward Hickorynut Mountain, another large assemblage of private conservation land. Preliminary work has also begun on acquiring an adjoining 1,686 acres to the south, aptly named Pinnacles Mountains South. This next acquisition project is fully funded by the N.C. Land and Water Fund.



In addition to its valuable location along the Wilderness Gateway State Trail corridor, FCNC's acquisition of Pinnacle Mountains West protects extensive surface waters in the headwaters of the Broad River Basin, along with two highly-ranked N.C. Natural Areas: Mike Mountain--Pinnacle Mountain, rated "Exceptional" by the N.C. Natural Heritage Program (NHP), and Morgan Mountain--Ledbetter Mountain, rated "Very High" by NHP. The undeveloped, forested tract of land, along with its natural ecosystems and habitats, protects multiple rare species and natural communities.

The Pinnacle Mountains are a remote, small and remote chain within the greater South Mountains range, about 12 miles east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. These "Pinnacles" are home to diverse ecosystems of plants and animals found in both the mountain and piedmont regions of North Carolina. Conserving this property allows us to help protect this precious biodiversity across the majority of this massif. Located just west of Bobs Creek State Natural Area, this area will host a memorable section of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail.



# New Age of Forestry

By Ryan Sparks, Stewardship Director

Every day in our forests there is a silent struggle between tree species for available resources like sunlight, water, and space to grow. The effects of these interspecific encounters aren't immediate, so a person has to sit back, be patient, and observe, sometimes for several generations, to understand the outcomes.

Over the last century or so, our magnificent oaks, hickories, Southern yellow pines, and other slow-growing, fire-tolerant tree species have been suppressed by opportunistic, water-loving (mesophytic) species like maple, yellow poplar, beech, and blackgum, among others. This change in the dominant canopy tree species over time has been dubbed, "mesophication," by scientists, and this process has resulted in declining forest biodiversity and species richness, as well as less available water in our watersheds.

Multiple factors have combined to create the current "mesophication" crisis, and most experts agree it is a combination of long-term suppression of natural fire in our forests, a history of exploitative timber management practices, the increased presence of non-native invasive plants and pests, and a changing climate.

Native hardwood forests such as oak-hickory communities, which are prevalent in our region but were more abundant in the past, are highly desirable for several reasons, including providing high quality food and cover for wildlife, commercial timber products, recreation experiences, and aesthetics. One tool we can use to combat "mesophication" and promote natural regeneration of oaks and hickories over less desirable species, like yellow poplar and red maple, is to promote timber harvest methods that create gaps in the canopy without completely

removing the entire forest canopy (i.e. clear-cutting). When an oak-hickory forest in our Southern Appalachian region is clear-cut and the entire canopy is removed, the slow growing young oaks and hickories are quickly outcompeted by mesophytic species that can thrive and grow quickly with vast amounts of water, sun and soil resources that become available. If left to natural devices, it will take multiple generations and a long period of time for oaks and hickories to dominate the site again.

If we instead create small canopy gaps (1/2 acre or so) and leave some of the surrounding mature trees in place, the mesophytic species grow at a slower rate due to the shaded conditions. This gives oaks and hickories a competitive advantage to become established. A strategy that involves creating small gaps instead of widespread canopy removal is meant to mimic the types of disturbance that occur naturally in our forests, such as wind, ice and snow storms, hurricanes and small-scale fires. This, in turn, triggers a more natural compositional change in forest structure.

If we also introduce prescribed fire into these sites, then fire tolerant oaks and hickories can easily outcompete fire intolerant yellow poplars and red maples which cannot survive routine (every 3-5 years) burning. Through improved management and returning fire to our forests, land managers can help foster longevity of oak-hickory forests across the landscape, and all the benefits they provide.





# Oak Hill Community Park and Forest – Open to the Public

**Five years in the making, a reflection from Andrew Kota**

**652 Acres**

Opening a public park is a momentous occasion for our land trust, and it required the support, backing and faith from hundreds of individuals, foundations and funders in our community and beyond, as well as hard work and dedication by FCNC's staff and board.

FCNC's vision is for this land to be a welcome place for all community members to enjoy, and a showcase and demonstration area for conservation, environmental education, forestry best practices, community agriculture and public outdoor recreation for generations to come. The park will also become an integral part of FCNC's Our Big Backyard environmental education program, and we plan to continue to host local school groups in the months and years ahead.

We're hopeful Oak Hill Park will also contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors who want to enjoy yet another natural gem in Burke County.

## **A Much-Abbreviated History:**

In 2015, the 652-acre tract that was to become Oak Hill Community Park & Forest was part of a much larger package of land that was sold by Crescent Resources to a land speculation firm. Shortly after, real estate signs were placed on the edges of the property along 126 and 181, and the land started to be divided and sold. Not long after that, logging trucks were exiting the property regularly with loads of high quality hardwood timber, and it was noticeable from Watermill Road that a clearcut had taken place on the highest point of the property.

Our staff convened one day during that time to discuss whether we had the ability to protect this property, and what the outcome for it could or would be. We were not 100% in agreement on several things, such as: 1) if and how we could raise the funds to make the purchase, 2) if the land's conservation values were "significant" enough to meet our internal criteria, and qualify for state grant funding, and 3) if we took a pathway of opening the land to the public, would we have the support of the community, and the organizational capacity to do that.

Over the next few months, our staff convened for many internal meetings, conversations and actions, arriving at a place where everyone was on the same page with excitement building around this opportunity. Our board of directors was equally excited and supportive.

From that point on, we never looked back. And that positive support from the community has continued to this day.

We are excited to celebrate the new public park IN our community, FOR our community, because of the support from the people, foundations, grant programs and funders who got behind our land trust's effort to permanently protect this 652-acre property and develop the park infrastructure at Oak Hill Community Park & Forest.

We look forward to celebrating more milestones for this park with our community as additional programs, trails and infrastructure are developed!





5

years in the making

1,001

volunteer hours

28,959

tons of gravel for infrastructure

3,736

trees planted

7

miles of trail constructed

15

additional miles of trail planned





# National Wild & Scenic River Wilson Creek

## Expanding Pisgah National Forest along Wilson Creek

### 332 Acres

To fishing enthusiasts, Wilson Creek is a coveted, tranquil place to spend a day catching rainbow, brown and brook trout. To families, residents and visitors of the region, it's a place for soaking up the sunshine, picnicking or taking a refreshing dip on a warm summer day. To conservationists, though, Wilson Creek is known for more than just its popularity among those who love being outdoors. This land is also environmentally significant for its natural and cultural resource values.

This year, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina transferred 332 acres within the corridor of the National Wild and Scenic River Wilson Creek in Caldwell County to the United States Forest Service. This tract of land, which was donated to FCNC by conservationist Tim Sweeney in 2021, fills in a missing segment of protected public lands along the river, bordered on three sides by Pisgah National Forest and adjoining the popular Wilson Creek Day Use Area.

The land transfer to federal ownership occurred on October 11, 2023, and forever ensures this section of the highly significant watershed is protected and accessible for public recreation opportunities.

**"Foothills Conservancy and its public and private partners began conserving land and water in the Wilson Creek watershed**

**back in 2006,"** said Andrew Kota, FCNC Executive Director. **"Since that time, our land trust has helped protect 1,275 acres along nine miles of the river for watershed and habitat protection, public access and public use,"** he added.

A grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded much of the transaction due diligence required by FCNC's national land trust accreditation requirements and the U.S. Forest Service's federal land transaction specifications; items such as boundary surveying and monumenting, environmental site assessments, appraisals, title examination and insurance and other closing costs.

The property includes 2.3 miles of Wilson Creek along a segment of the river that is designated for recreation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. For many years, this section has been highly popular with river recreationists for its fishing, swimming and whitewater boating sites. The section of Wilson Creek that runs through this property not only supports access to downstream whitewater rafting, canoeing and kayaking with challenging Class II-V rapids, it also boasts beautiful, cascading waterfalls and contains the trailhead for the six-mile Wilson Creek Trail, which connects to other popular trails in the area.

**"Essentially, all the water that comes down from Grandfather Mountain funnels through Wilson Creek,"** said Nicholas Larson, District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service's Grandfather Ranger District. **"And the water quality along Wilson Creek is incredibly valuable, not only for the phenomenal trout fisheries and the recreational value that clean water provides — but also for the**





biota here, the rare species occurring just in this section of river.”

The parcel of land now in the U.S. Forest Service’s ownership contains aquatic habitat for the brook floater, an at-risk, endangered species of freshwater river mussel. It is also home to the significantly rare Edmund’s snaketail dragonfly and the seagreen darter freshwater fish. Sightings of several vulnerable and significantly rare animal and plant species have also been recorded and documented, both on the property and within a one-mile radius.

“The lands that we currently administer here for the national forest are a two-mile section just below where we’re standing right now,” Larson explained, standing just

above the riverbank on the newly acquired property. “That area, though, is a gorge — it’s really quite limited, access-wise. This property will allow us to facilitate people coming into the woods, providing easy access to the water without the danger of rapids, and just, quite frankly, the ability to park vehicles so that folks can get out into the forest and into the river.”

An additional advantage of the improved access to the national forest and river is that emergency management services will be able to conduct quicker, more direct rescue efforts in the area, especially in times of heavy recreational use, when other access points may become overcrowded with visitors.





FCNC is currently working with Lee's One Fortune Farm (pictured above), among other local agriculture leaders to develop a community agriculture program for Oak Hill Community Park Forest. The program will boost the amount and availability of healthy produce in our region, educate local communities about the importance of local food and farms, and uplift new and beginning farmers by providing access to farmland to hone their craft and grow their markets.

# Farmland Preservation in the Foothills

By Michael Gaffney, GIS and Conservation Specialist

Due to intense population growth and poor land use strategies, North Carolina's farm lands are being converted rapidly into urban development and suburban sprawl. According to the American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" report, North Carolina stands to lose nearly 1.2 million acres of farmland by 2040 under the business-as-usual scenario. This is the second highest amount of agricultural land lost by a state in the entire country.

At Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, we believe it is vitally important to preserve our region's farmland for both economic and environmental reasons. We work with land owners to conserve significant farmland so our state can continue to produce food and fiber, and to show that farmland preservation is important to our citizens near and far, and goes beyond just the interests of those personally working the land .

Projects like the 291-acre Beam Farm in Rutherford County provide significant habitat for native species, protect drinking water and, contain fertile farmland soils that sustain a variety of crops and secure our food supply, as well as preserve the local agricultural economy in Rutherford County.



# Wilkes Tri County Forest

## A Land Trust Partnership in the Brushy Mountains

### 1125 Acres

In April of this year, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and Blue Ridge Conservancy completed the permanent protection of a 1,125-acre property that spans Wilkes, Alexander and Iredell counties and is our first major conservation project in the Brushy Mountains.

This property is located in the eastern Brushy Mountains and was purchased jointly by Foothills Conservancy and Blue Ridge Conservancy from private conservationist Tim Sweeney, who donated a significant portion of the land value after holding it for several years with permanent conservation in mind as the ultimate goal.

“This project is noteworthy because of the large amount of protected natural land in a single transaction and special because of the partnership Foothills Conservancy and Blue Ridge Conservancy forged to complete the project,” – Andrew Kota, Executive Director of Foothills Conservancy of NC.

The opportunity to permanently conserve over 1,000 acres in western North Carolina does not happen often and we are proud to have successfully partnered with Blue Ridge Conservancy on this project. The effort was a unique collaboration of land trusts working together toward a common goal. Moving forward, the organizations will work together to steward the property for environmental protection, and seek other conservation opportunities in the Brushy Mountains.





# Our Big Backyard 2023

## Inspiring Conservation through Community Engagement

Our Big Backyard (OBB) is a free environmental education program administered by Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina's community engagement staff member Brittany Watkins, and engages youth and adults in land conservation through outdoor adventures and nature based activities. OBB is offered at many local festivals and public events in the region, and schools and community groups can also request field trip experiences on Foothills Conservancy preserve lands, where students learn more about conservation practices and land management through guided hikes, volunteer projects, interactive presentations, and related crafts.

OBB activities are drawn from a program guidebook developed by FCNC staff, which can be found on our website. Activities are catered to different age groups and interests. Each OBB participant receives an 'Adventure Bag' that supplies them with materials like binoculars, a compass, a magnifying glass and a nature journal to encourage independent outdoor exploration.

### Partners

North Carolina School of Science and Math, McDowell High School, Western Piedmont Community College, Freedom High School, Valmead Elementary School, Morganton Day School, City of Hickory Parks & Recreation, New Dimensions Elementary School





# Volunteer Stats for 2023

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina volunteers engage in a variety of land stewardship activities and tasks including: trail maintenance, tree plantings, litter pick-ups, invasive plant removal, stream bank stabilization, property boundary marking, building structures and more! Every volunteer helps us foster communities that value natural areas in Western North Carolina by educating and engaging the public in local conservation projects.



## Cumulative Volunteer Stats since 2019:

**810**

# of volunteers

**2,963**

Hours volunteered

**\$88,741.85**

Value of volunteers

**2,347**

Trees planted

**28,959**

Pounds of trash removed

**16.75**

Miles of Trail Improved

**7**

Beaver Dam Analogs installed

**300+**

Our Big Backyard Participants in 2023



# Friends, Fellowship, and Fun(draising)

## Flavors of the Foothills and Sweet Lucy's Affair

Our signature celebration and fundraising dinner, Flavors of the Foothills, presented this year by the Chip and Debi Hills Foundation, was a sold-out event at Fonta Flora Brewery's Whippoorwill Farm, with 250 spirited FCNC supporters in attendance. The event was unique in its feature of 13 chefs from across our region, organized by Chef Daniel Wheeler, who prepared signature, small-portion dishes for the enjoyment of our guests!

**"This event is a fantastic display of the intersection between agriculture and community. It's important that, as chefs and culinary professionals, we are aware of where our food comes from and are accountable for the environmental impact,"** said Chef Daniel Wheeler, Executive Chef for Flavors of the Foothills. **"We're proud to support Foothills Conservancy, who is helping promote sustainable farming techniques and farmland preservation – so this is a real win-win."**

**"Flavors of the Foothills is as much of a 'friendraiser' as it is a fundraiser for our land trust,"** said Andrew Kota, FCNC Executive Director. **"The event generates critical funds to support Foothills Conservancy of NC's mission to conserve the unique character of irreplaceable landscapes in our Western NC region, and also provides a welcoming platform for supporters to**

**join a community-centered conservation movement that directly impacts the quality of life for present and future generations."**

September ushered in the 11th annual Sweet Lucy's Affair, which has become our most successful fundraiser to date. The event's Leadership Circle, composed of participants who make special contributions to support Foothills Conservancy's conservation work, is the force behind this casually elegant event – a dedicated group that plans, organizes and executes the entire evening.

Sweet Lucy's raises awareness for Foothills Conservancy and the 12,000+ acres of land at Lake James that our land trust has been a key partner in protecting, most of which is available for public enjoyment.

The event and its success would not have been possible without the leadership of Ann Costello, who orchestrates the team of volunteers and generous Leadership Circle hosts. Ann has been instrumental in making the event a cornerstone of our annual fundraising. To date, Sweet Lucy's Affair has raised over \$650,000 for Foothills Conservancy since 2012, helping us protect over 12,000 acres in the Lake James area, and tens of thousands of acres in our eight-county service area.

These two events highlight so much that our region has to offer from delicious food to beautiful venues, while raising money for an organization that is working tirelessly to protect its natural spaces. We're overwhelmed with gratitude for the generosity of our supporters. Thank you for helping us make a lasting impact!





# Who's Who?

## New FCNC Staff and Board Members

### Katherine Ehrlichman

Marketing and Development Director

Katherine joined Foothills Conservancy in June 2023. She is a digital marketing professional with over ten years of online marketing experience, and has been working in the outdoor industry since she was a teenager. Katherine graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Management with a concentration in Business Administration from UNC Asheville. As a native of Asheville, NC, she values the time that she spends outdoors in the mountains of Western North Carolina. She enjoys riding her bike, venturing out on multi-day bikepacking trips and whitewater rafting.

### Annette Henson

Finance and Office Manager

Annette returned to Foothills Conservancy in March of 2023, after a stint with the organization early in its history. A graduate of Appalachian State University with a degree in accounting, Annette brings over 20 years of experience in a successful accounting, administrative and financial recordkeeping career that has spanned the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. As a proud Burke County native who lives on her family farm in the Oak Hill community, Annette is passionate about conserving the beautiful Blue Ridge mountains and surrounding foothills that she grew up in.

## New Board Members

### Jeff Behmer

Jeff is an experienced businessman, with nearly 30 years of executive experience in the furniture industry. As a lifelong resident of Western NC, he is passionate about protecting the cultural and natural resources of the area.

### Jen Caldwell-Billstrom

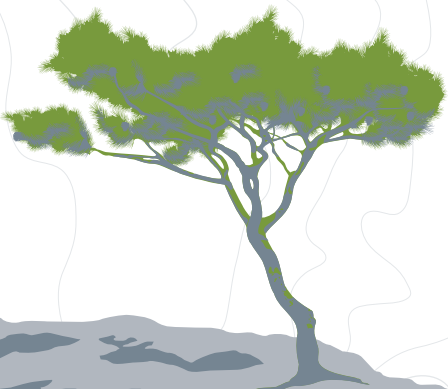
Jen is an experienced finance professional and project manager. She brings a wealth of volunteer and public service experience to Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina.

### Sallie Craig

Sallie rejoins Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina's board of directors after a one-year hiatus. Sallie is a retired CPA who currently lives in Shelby, NC. She enjoyed a career of more than 30 years as founder and co-owner of Craig, Barry and Poston, P.A.

### Jerry Stensland

Jerry is an experienced park management professional, passionate outdoor enthusiast and advocate and is currently a project manager at Foothills Regional Commission.



## Stewardship Interns

Each summer, we all look forward to introducing a few young professionals who are passionate about Western North Carolina to our conservation work. They tend to bring a spirited energy, and a willingness to learn and explore that is refreshing and inspiring. This year's Stewardship Interns, Emme Clark and Sarah Wilson, were no exception.

They spent about 12 weeks assisting Stewardship Director, Ryan Sparks, with everything from annual monitoring and reporting for more than 40 conservation properties, to treating weeds and invasive species, planting trees, and clearing roads and trails. A lot of our stewardship work, especially in the summer, involves long, hot days spent in the backwoods all over FCNC's mountain and foothills region. It requires commitment, teamwork, perseverance, and courage. Emme and Sarah excelled in all these areas, and more. If you, or someone you know, is a current college student or recent college graduate with a background or interest in conservation, send an email to our stewardship director, Ryan Sparks ([Rsparks@foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:Rsparks@foothillsconservancy.org)), to express your interest in our 2024 summer stewardship internships.

### Emme Clark

Currently studying Natural Resources and Economics at North Carolina State University

### Sarah Wilson

Currently studying Environmental Resource Management at Virginia Tech University

### NCSSM Mentorship

Sophie Miller and Michelle Tan, two students from the North Carolina School of Science and Math, mentored by FCNC Community Engagement Manager, Brittany Watkins, are researching, designing and implementing a native landscaping project to transform the property around Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina's headquarters on Avery Avenue in Morganton into a certified wildlife habitat under the guidelines of the National Wildlife Federation. This mentorship is part of Foothills Conservancy's nature-based educational program, Our Big Backyard.





# Guardians of the Land

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina recognizes landowners for their generous donations or bargain sales of land or conservation easements to achieve permanent protection for the places they cherish. These gifts allow future generations to enjoy the beauty of these irreplaceable landscapes forever.

We are pleased to recognize the following as our newest Guardians of the Land.

## Tim Sweeney

Long-time partner of Foothills Conservancy of NC, conservationist Tim Sweeney sold multiple properties to the Conservancy, each at a bargain sale price for permanent conservation, including:

- **Pinnacle Mountains West** - 1,460 acres in the South Mountains of Rutherford County to continue a conservation corridor linking the South Mountains to the Blue Ridge Mountains that conserves headwaters of the Broad and Catawba rivers, preserves unbroken forested landscapes that host multiple unique habitats and species, and will hold a future segment of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail.
- **Prospect Ridge** - 442 acres in the headwaters of the Henry Fork River in Burke County that connects FCNC's Smiths Cliffs / Henry River Preserve lands, and will be a location of a segment of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail.
- **Tri-County Forests** - 1,125 acres in the Brushy Mountains of Alexander, Iredell and Wilkes counties that FCNC acquired in partnership with Blue Ridge Conservancy to protect watershed lands of the Yadkin River Basin, and significant natural resources of the Tri-County Forest Natural Heritage Area.

## Michael Cudlipp

In 2023, Michael Cudlipp donated 6 acres of land along the Blue Ridge Escarpment in Blowing Rock, NC, Caldwell County, to Foothills Conservancy of NC to protect the headwaters of the Johns River, secure permanent protection of an iconic viewshed of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and add to the Conservancy's adjoining preserve lands, the Johns River Headwaters project and Cherry Tree Hollow.

## Globe Land Company, LLC

The shareholders of Globe Land Company sold 326 acres in the Blowing Rock and Globe communities of Caldwell County to Foothills Conservancy of NC at a bargain sale price. The highly significant property contains the headwaters of the Johns River and protects the magnificent viewshed from The Blowing Rock attraction.

## Gregory Tant

Conservationist landowner, Gregory Tant, sold a bargain sale conservation easement to Foothills Conservancy on his 10-acre parcel of land adjoining the Pisgah National Forest in The Globe area of Caldwell County, forever protecting the confluence of Thunderhole Creek and the Johns River.



# Leaving a Legacy on the Land

## Donor Spotlight: Matthew and Katie Lindsay, Morganton, NC

Matthew and Katie live on their 6-acre homestead farm located in Morganton, NC. They have chosen to leave a legacy of natural land conservation by including Foothills Conservancy in their will. Their planned giving is an example of how anyone can contribute to our mission to protect the beauty of our region in perpetuity by becoming a part of FCNC's Pinnacle Society.

"We've always been drawn to wild places and spending time outdoors. We really like what Foothills is doing to save important lands from being developed and I love to think that we can help preserve some of those wild spaces. We grew up exploring the wild spaces around our homes near Charlotte, and later watched those go through heavy development. If you don't preserve it now, it's not something you can undo."

The area that we live [in Morganton] is largely undeveloped and we hope to ensure that our children and all future generations will have the same ability to explore in the way that we did growing up.



**PINNACLE SOCIETY**  
FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY OF NORTH CAROLINA



"We believe there's a common misconception that you have to have a ton of money to give a significant donation that would make a difference. It's simply not true. We know that our contribution to Foothills will be put to good use and is a great way for us to help ensure that this important work continues in this very special part of the world."

"This area is a very special part of the world. We've traveled and seen some of the most beautiful places in the world. Anytime we travel and come home, as soon as we arrive back in the foothills of the Blue Ridge, it still takes our breath away."

For more information on planned giving and becoming a member of the Pinnacle Society, contact Katherine Ehrlichman, Marketing and Development Director at 828.437.9930 or [kehrlichman@Foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:kehrlichman@Foothillsconservancy.org).



# Our Generous 2022 Donors

## Friend \$1-\$99

Rose & David Abbott  
Zoe Abraham  
Sheila Adams  
Beth & Mike Allen  
Marcia Copeland & Archie Andrews  
Barbara & Ellis Aycock  
William Baird  
Marion Baker  
Susan & David Balke  
Grayson Barnette  
Betty & Ronald Barrett  
Susan Berley  
Scott Berson  
Fred Blackley  
Caroline Bowers Lindsay  
Cynthia Britt  
Ethan Burns  
John Caldwell  
David Caldwell  
Denise Cannon  
Ryan Carlson  
Mike Carpenter  
Susan Casar  
Bo Cash  
Don Claus  
Hope Clayton  
Kelly Coffey  
John Connelly  
Aaron & Lisa Cook  
Joy & Neal Cook  
Summer Debnam  
Margaret Demarco  
Katie Duckett  
Carmen & Jerry Fadem  
Joshua Faw  
Brett Fisher  
Michael Fitzsimmons  
Mary Ann Flood  
Mary & David Fortin  
Jill Gaumer  
Leslie & Wayne Giese  
Dennis Gilfillan  
Grace Glenn  
Matt Goddard

Laura Gratton  
Laurie Gregory  
David Higgins  
Bruce Hills  
Linda & Bill Hodge  
Patty & Roy Hollifield  
Michael Horney  
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Laura-Julian Jurosko  
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Ed Keiser  
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Mary Kirksey  
Chris Klein  
Ned Kreidel  
Christy Kunkle  
Joe Lancaster  
Carol Lancaster  
Lisa Liberati  
Justin Liborio  
Katie & Matthew Lindsay  
Bob Lowry  
Summer Manns  
Amanda Matheny  
Terry & Ronald McCollum  
Shirley & Walter McDowell  
Jacob McGwhey  
Andrew McKenzie  
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William Myers  
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Johnny Robertson  
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Becky & Jeff Smith  
Jeff Smith  
Susan & Rodney Stalheim  
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Robert Thompson  
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Harris Wagner  
Abigail Walker  
Ken Wark  
Randy Warren  
Dylan Weidner  
Karen Wheeler  
Julie White  
Emily Whiteley  
Barry Wilson  
Jenna Winfield  
Eric Woodard  
Ron Wyant  
Dean Yobbi

## Protector \$100-\$249

Donna & John Ahlrich  
Aletha & Nicholas Aldridge  
Audra & Mark Alexander  
Mary Ann Antley  
Michael Aussendorf  
Jamie Aussendorf  
Helen Austin  
Susie Avett  
Laura Aycock  
Neva & David Bartholomew  
Dawn & Joel Battiste  
Erica & Kevin Baxter  
Annette Beam  
Amy & Todd Bell  
Libba & Ben Belton  
Janice & James Berry  
Rod Birdsong  
Denise Bishop  
Barbara Blackburn  
Jayne & Spencer Borden  
Mark Buff  
Burke County Composite Mountain  
Bike Team  
Frances Burke-Urr  
Mark Burton

Faye & Danny Buxton  
 Jenifer & Andy Byers  
 Cindy & Stuart Byers  
 Jeanne & Burwell Byers  
 Vivian & Ted Carothers  
 Almon & Ann Carr  
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 Christopher Clapp  
 Kate Clouse  
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 Kathryn & Keith Elmore  
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 Joyce & Richard Jaeger  
 Jesse James  
 Miriam & Tom Jones  
 Avery Jones  
 Patrick Kenney  
 Mary & L.H. Kirksey  
 Shannon & Andrew Kota  
 Patricia & Robert Kota  
 Sydney Lampley

Chuck Lampley  
 Delce Dyer & Murray Leef  
 Margaret & Johnsey Leef  
 Dominic Lepore  
 Dawn & Mark Lundblad  
 Jameson Macfarland  
 Zachary Marston  
 Debbie & Jack Mason  
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 John Ed McFadden  
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 Diane McWilliams  
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 Dorian Palmer  
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 Ed Phillips  
 Tim Plaut  
 Caroline Poteat  
 Rhonda Pruett  
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 Elizabeth & Donald Rader  
 Molly Reddy  
 Diana Richards  
 Karen Ricker  
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 Alex Sisk  
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 Louise Slater  
 Eli Smith  
 Lamar Smitherman  
 Sue & Fred Soule  
 Jacqueline Steele  
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 Marshall Taylor  
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 Beth Whitaker  
 Susan, Jeff, & Brooks Wienke  
 Hamilton Williams  
 Becky & Donnie Williams  
 Victoria & Lawrence Williamson  
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 Lynn & Tim Allen  
 Garnett Andes  
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 Tim Armstrong  
 Patricia Arnavas  
 Nancy & Tim Arnavas  
 Tricia Childress & Pierre Bader  
 Sylvia & Julian Bajorek  
 Barbra Beier  
 Katie & Jeff Belflower



Sandy & Howard Belfor  
Linda Kincaid & Jim Belote  
Belote Realty  
Susie Berry  
Paige & Jonathan Bivens  
Bonnie Black  
Nell & Tim Bovender  
Edwin Bridges  
Cheryl & Ron Brooker  
Janet Blanchard & Charlie Brown  
Tia & Christopher Brown  
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Jacob Cioffoletti  
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Pam Craven  
Jim Faria  
Becky & Forrest Ferrell  
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Scott Gillen  
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Janice & Jim Gravely  
Connie & Johnny Greene  
Margaret & Peter Hampson  
Anna Hayward  
Betty & Rance Henderson  
Ann Henderson  
Irene & Russ Hennessy  
Hillman Beer LLC  
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Jessica & David Howells  
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Christopher Johnson  
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Mechelle & Gary Lindenberg  
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Carrie Morrow  
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Leslie Pedernales  
Colleen & Darryl Penner  
Matthew Perry  
Janice & Steve Pierce  
Sandy & Bill Puette  
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Connie & Frank Reed  
Lynda Renegar  
Tamara & Joe Rice  
Rachel & Craig Richards  
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Marsha Riddle  
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Bethany & Jeff Wheeler  
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Cathy & Tom Byers  
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Equinox Environmental  
Dorothy Ervin  
Sara & Robert Erwin, Jr.  
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Pete Gilbert  
Jim Goldsmith  
Neil Goodman  
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Marc Guerra  
Sue & Steve Gurley  
Diane & Doug Hartjes  
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Elizabeth & Brian Phillips  
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William & Regina Reid  
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Stacy & Charles Thomson  
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 Ellen & Rountree Collett  
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 Fonta Flora Brewery  
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 Lisa & Andy Wersel  
 Debbie & Ron Whisenant  
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Virginia & Jeremy Purbrick  
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Wall Lumber  
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Anne & Carl Ryden  
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Alice & Fred Stanback  
Tim Sweeney  
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### 2022 in Honor of...

...Leslee Alexander  
Laurie Gregory

...Evelyn & Michael Barnhardt  
Tyler Barnhardt

...Alex Barnhardt, Sr.  
Nancy & Rountree Collett

...Michael Bikes  
Wayne Giese

...Denise Bishop  
Matthew Perry  
Laura-Julian Jurosko  
Sheila Adams  
Judy Stewart  
Edwin Bridges

...Denise & Gary Bishop  
Rhonda Pruet

...Lynn Black  
Bonnie Black

...Bookwalter Binge  
David Billstrom

...Keith Bowers  
Caroline Bowers Lindsay

...Burke County Law Enforcement  
Christie Leonard

...Anne Costello  
James Houle

...Louise Palmer & Hal Davis, III  
Deborah H. Davis

...Sam & Barbra Erwin  
Julian Bajorek

...Sammie Friday  
John B. Tutwiler

...Thomas Foster  
Marshall Foster

...Aaron Grossman  
Glenn Grossmam  
Ed Keiser

...Jordan Harrison Gwynn  
Karen Curtis-Gwynn

...Kelly Treiber & Greg Hoff  
Helen Austin

...Randall Isenhour  
Terry Taylor

...Susu & George Johnson  
Edward W. Phifer, III

...Dave Keiser  
Amanda Keiser

...Meg Nealon & Brad Lail  
Katherine Newton

...Nikki & Phil Malatin  
Jill Gaumer

...Nancy & Bill McCullough  
Ronald McCollum

...Pete Morton  
Kassie Morton

...Christine Phelps  
Michael Aussendorf

...T & T Phelps  
Jamie Aussendorf

...Roben & Ed Plyner  
Deborah H. Davis

...Susan & Bob Powers  
Susie Avett

...Susan Powers  
Ann Miller

...Virginia & Jeremy Purbrick  
Bryan Jones

...Mary Waltz  
Cheryl Waltz

...Brittany Watkins  
Cindy Watkins

...Martha & Chip Whitfield  
Marilyn Perlman

...Allen Vannoppen, Jr.  
Allen VanNoppen

## 2022 in Memory of...

...Bob Benner

Bo Cash

...Drew Bowers

Summer Manns

...Joan Dickison

Julie Dickison

...Beatrice L. Dula

Michael Thomas

...Dr. Ray Hyer

Michael Thomas

...Jane Jones

Michael Thomas

...Jeanne Dyer Juraschek

Delce Dyer

...Margaret Lamere

Jay Lyons

...Steve Melton

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...Ruby Pharr

Scott Harbison

...Terri Philbrick

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Cheryl Keener

...Clay Richardson

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...Margaret Sitts

Jim Sitts

...Jean Smith

Quaker Meadows Garden Club

...Suzanne Spain

Martin W. Waugh

...Robert & Celia Stenson

Robert Stevenson

...Kelly Ward

Pam & Bobby Pecquet

## Fundraising Partners

### Local Grants

Burke County

### State Grants

NC Wildlife Resources Commission

State of NC Appropriation

State of NC Department of Agriculture  
& Consumer Services

State of NC Department of Natural  
and Cultural Resources

### Private & Foundation Grants

408z Brightly US

Alice & Charles Carey Endowment  
Fund

American Farmland Trust

Anne & Alex Bernhardt Foundation

Beatrice Cobb Trust

Bernhardt Furniture Foundation

Blumenthal Foundation

Camp Lake James Stewardship Fund

Cannon Foundation

Catawba-Wateree Water

Management Group

Community Foundation of Burke  
County

Conservation Trust for NC

Dogwood Health Trust

Duke Energy Foundation

Harris & Frances Block Foundation

Huffman-Cornwell Foundation

Mull Foundation

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

Piedmont Natural Gas

Rostan Family Foundation

TSH Charitable Foundation

Village Foundation of Blowing Rock



## Horizon Society

The Horizon Society honors supporters who contribute \$1,000 or more throughout the year in support of Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and our mission.

We are grateful for these conservation leaders who make the preservation of land and water in the Blue Ridge and foothills a priority with their philanthropic giving.



## Pinnacle Society

The Pinnacle Society honors supporters who have:

- Included Foothills Conservancy in their estate plan or will (and have notified the Conservancy of this decision).
- Added Foothills Conservancy as a recipient of an annuity or retirement plan distribution outside of their will.
- Have passed away and left a gift to Foothills Conservancy in their will.

In 2023, the following supporters have chosen to leave a lasting legacy by supporting Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina:

Karen Baker  
Mae Parker Boles  
Cynthia Britt  
David & Martha Cameron  
David Clark  
Robert Ford Dale  
Roby Braswell & Julie Dickison  
Tom & Sandra Foster  
Greg & Paula Hoogerland  
Mark & Sandy Hudson  
Matthew & Katie Lindsay  
Elizabeth Michelis  
Nick & Lynn Nicholas  
Jason & Yanisa Phillips  
Michael "Squeak" & Connie Smith  
Richard & Catherine Turner  
Linda Yarboro

For more information on the power of planned giving, or to plan a gift and become a member of the Horizon Society or Pinnacle Society, contact Katherine Ehrlichman, Marketing and Development Director at 828.437.9930 or [kehrlichman@foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:kehrlichman@foothillsconservancy.org)



# Ways to Give to Foothills Conservancy of NC

At Foothills Conservancy of NC, we rely on the generous support of individuals like you to permanently protect land and water for the benefit of people and all living things. Your contribution plays a vital role in conserving the forests, rivers, and wildlife that make our region special. There are several meaningful ways you can support our mission:

## General Giving:

A one-time donation helps us continue our work in protecting and preserving the unique landscapes of the Foothills and Blue Ridge region. Your support directly contributes to the conservation efforts that ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

## Monthly Giving:

Join our Monthly Giving program and make a lasting impact. By making a regular contribution each month, you provide us with a reliable source of funding, enabling us to plan for long-term conservation projects and initiatives.

## Tribute and Honor Gifts:

Celebrate a loved one, mark a special occasion, or honor the memory of someone dear to you with a tribute gift. Your donation not only pays homage to the ones you love but also supports the protection of nature, creating a lasting legacy in their name.

## Employer Matching:

Many employers offer matching gift programs, doubling or even tripling the impact of your contribution. Ask your employer if they participate in such programs and make your donation go even further.

## Donor Advised Funds:

Support Foothills Conservancy of NC through your Donor Advised Fund. DAFs provide a convenient and tax-efficient way to manage your charitable giving while supporting the causes you care about.

## IRA Giving:

If you are 70½ years or older, you can make a tax-free gift from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) directly to Foothills Conservancy of NC. This qualified charitable distribution counts towards your Required Minimum Distribution and supports our conservation efforts.

## Gifts of Stock:

Donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds to Foothills Conservancy of NC and enjoy potential tax benefits. Your gift of stock helps us further our mission and conserve the natural beauty of our region.

## Planned Giving:

Consider leaving a legacy by including Foothills Conservancy of NC in your estate planning. Planned gifts, such as bequests, charitable remainder trusts, and life insurance policies, ensure that your commitment to conservation lives on, creating a lasting impact for future generations.

Your support matters. By choosing any of these ways to give, you become an essential part of our conservation efforts. Thank you for helping us preserve Western North Carolina's natural heritage, now and forever, and for the benefit of all. Together, we are making a difference.





**FOOTHILLS  
CONSERVANCY**  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

204 Avery Avenue, Morganton, NC 28655

Phone: 828.437.9930

[info@foothillsconservancy.org](mailto:info@foothillsconservancy.org)

[foothillsconservancy.org](http://foothillsconservancy.org)