

## NC FarmLink

June 25, 2019

Mr. Andrew Kota  
Executive Director  
Foothills Conservancy of NC  
204 Avery Avenue  
Morganton NC 28680

RE: Proposed Oak Hill Community Park and Forest

Dear Andrew,

I had a great visit to the Oak Hill Tract with your stewardship director Ryan Sparks. Thank you for inviting me down to tour the property. I was impressed by the diversity on the property that includes intact forest, headwaters, recreational trail opportunities, historic sites, scenic views, easy public access, and prime agricultural soils.

I am especially interested in the concentration of prime agricultural soils on the property. According to my estimates, approximately 10% (66 acres) of the property consists of USDA Nationally Significant Prime and NC Statewide Important soils including Colvard Sandy Loam, Banister Loam, and Unison Fine Sandy Loam. Preserving these soils for agricultural use as part of the Oak Hill project will serve as a unique example of a land trust taking action to preserve a property that represents a wide array of North Carolina's vital natural resources. As the state of NC population nears 10.5 million, adding a net of 334 people a day, we can continue to expect increased pressure to convert farmland to residential and commercial use. The American Farmland Trust has shown that farmland is land that is the most likely to be developed because it is usually relatively flat, does not have trees on it, and is usually near existing infrastructure. National Resource Inventory data indicates a loss of 336,300 acres of prime farmland from 2012 to 2015 in NC, equivalent to 3,363 acres for each of our 100 counties.

Access to land is the number one barrier for entry to farming and is also the number one reason that young farmers quit farming. NC FarmLink's mission is to connect farmers to land. We help create land opportunities for farmers and give landowners a place to attract and secure an appropriate farmer. The agricultural fields of the Oak Hill Tract are perfectly suited to support multiple agricultural enterprises that will benefit the community. We are excited about the opportunity to work with the Foothills Conservancy to help them determine how best to use the farmland on this tract for the benefit of their community.

Sincerely,



William Hamilton  
Co-Director