

# Linking Lands and Communities in the Land-of-Sky Region

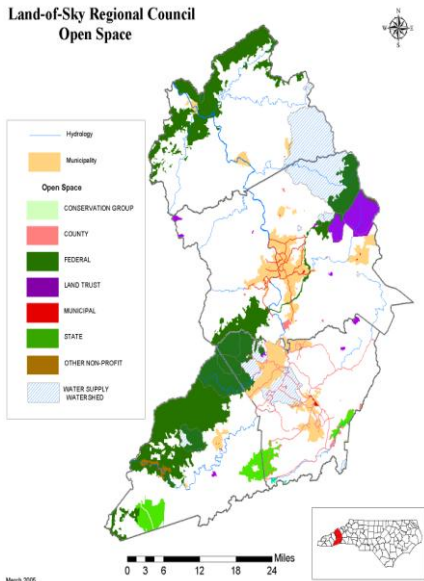
## Creating a Regional Conservation and Development Network

### The Regional Conservation and Development Network is

is an interconnected network of areas valuable for their ecological systems and services including farmlands, forests, water resources, wildlife habitat, recreation areas – and areas most suited for future growth and development.

## PROJECT INFORMATION

Land-of-Sky Regional Council  
Open Space



In response to unprecedented development in Western North Carolina, Land-of-Sky Regional Council is working with local and regional interests to design a regional framework for conservation and development that will strategically guide future growth for Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania counties while respecting the integrity of the region's ecosystems.

The Linking Lands and Communities project is creating a forum for practitioners, citizens, local governments and organizations to build a common understanding of the region's ecological systems and services and build relationships across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. By using a collaborative approach, this effort will help to link urban and rural communities and protect the area's rich natural and cultural heritage.

### The Conservation and Development Network Will...

- **Identify our area's green infrastructure** - valuable ecological systems, farms and forests, recreation lands
- **Identify areas most suited for future growth and development.**
- **Illustrate the importance of interconnectivity in our conservation efforts and development patterns** in order to maintain ecological values and functions necessary for healthy sustainable communities.
- **Serve as a resource for decision-makers and developers** to balance economic and environmental needs of our communities.

### Why a Regional Network?

- **Healthy ecosystems produce services** for our communities, like clean drinking water, carbon storage, flood storage, local food supplies, and other goods and services
- **Natural systems don't pay attention to jurisdictional boundaries** – they must be protected, managed, and restored at the larger landscape level. This can only be accomplished by communities throughout the region working together.
- **By incorporating the needs and benefits of healthy natural systems into existing planning processes** at the municipal and county levels, **our communities are better prepared** to make land use decisions that sustain human communities and natural systems for the long term.

### Elements of the Conservation & Development Network



### Water Resources



### Farmland



### Recreation Lands



### Wildlife Habitat



### Privately Managed Forests



### Cultural Resources

## Funding for Linking Lands and Communities Project Provided by:

The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area,  
Federal Highway Administration, RENCI at UNC Asheville

### Project Partners

AdvantageWest  
Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau  
Blue Ridge Forever  
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
Buncombe County  
Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Commission  
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy  
City of Asheville  
Henderson County Planning Department  
Heritage Directions, LLC  
Land-of-Sky Regional Council  
Madison County  
Madison County Parks & Recreation  
Mountain Council for Accountable Development  
National Environmental Modeling & Analysis Center  
Natural Resources Conservation Assistance  
NC Cooperative Extension Service  
NC Department of Agriculture  
NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
NC Division of Community Assistance  
Open Space Institute  
RENCI at UNC Asheville  
RiverLink  
Self Help Credit Union/Self Help Ventures Fund  
Smith Mill Creek Permaculture School  
Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition (SAFC)  
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Sustainability Strategies, LLC  
Transylvania County Planning & Economic  
Development Department  
U.S.D.A. Forest Service Southern Research Station  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
UNC-Asheville  
Warren Wilson College  
Western North Carolina Alliance  
WNC Green Building Council

### What is our Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is our community's life support system - an interconnected network of land and water that is managed for its natural resource values and for associated benefits for people.

A green infrastructure network connects ecosystems and landscapes, including:

- Conserved natural areas, such as wetlands, woodlands, waterways, and wildlife habitat
- Working lands, including farms and private forests
- Publicly managed lands, including national and state parks, nature preserves, wildlife corridors, and wilderness areas
- Recreation areas, including hiking and biking trails, parks, and blueways
- Cultural sites and resources, including historical sites, community gathering places, and interpretative trails

An *ecological assessment* being conducted as a part of the Linking Lands and Communities project will determine:

- Where our green infrastructure is;
- How it functions and what services it provides; and
- What condition it is in.

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### Project Timeline

**Summer 2008** – Formation of Leadership Group and Science Team

**Fall 08/Winter 09** – Conduct ecological assessment of the region's natural systems

**Summer/Fall 09** – Hold Green Infrastructure Network Design Charrette

**Winter 09** – Hold Network Implementation Workshop

**Winter/Spring 10** – Complete Regional Network and Plan

*Community input will be solicited throughout the project.*

**For more information or to get involved, please contact:**

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