

# Union County Land Preservation & Easement Program Update

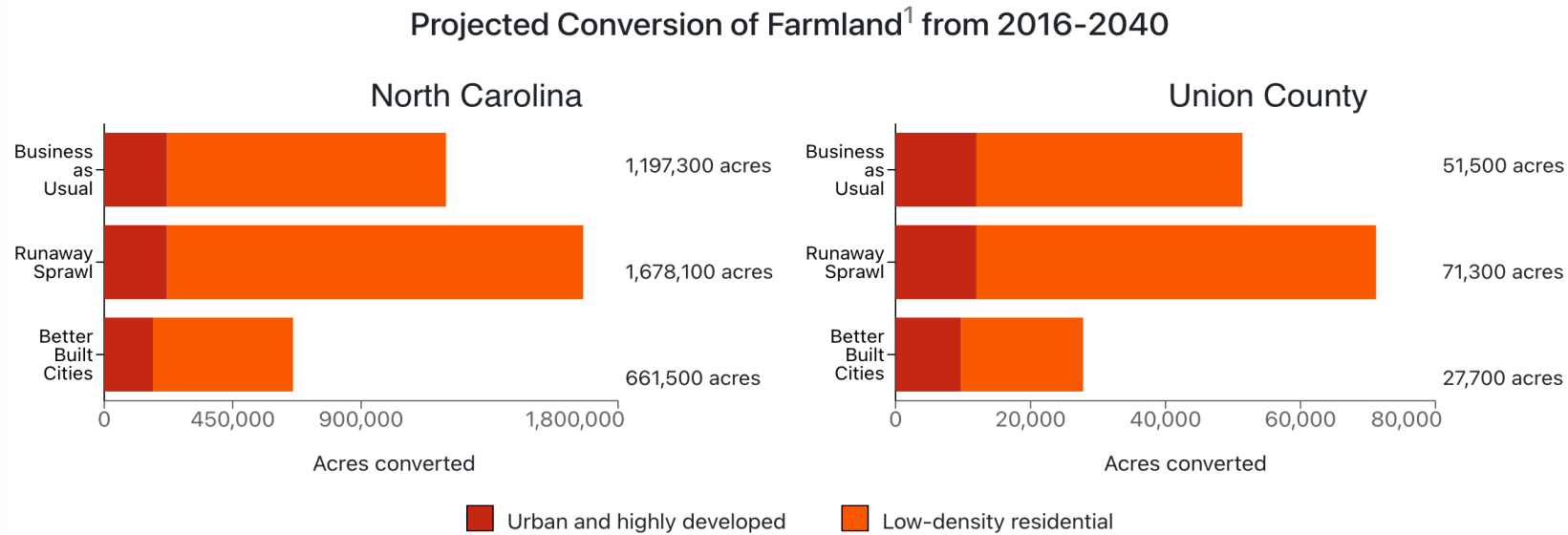
Soil & Water Conservation/ Agricultural Services



**UNIONCOUNTY**  
north carolina

# Farmland Loss in Union County

- North Carolina ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the United States for open space and land loss annually.<sup>2</sup>
- Union County ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in the United States for open space land loss on an annual basis.<sup>2</sup>



**Urban and highly developed (UHD)** land use includes commercial, industrial, and moderate-to-high density residential areas.

**Low-density residential (LDR)** land use includes scattered subdivisions and large-lot housing, which fragment the agricultural land base and limit production.

<sup>1</sup>Farmland includes cropland, pasture and woodland associated with farms.

<sup>2</sup>American Farmland Trust



# Previous BOCC Action's Approved: November 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

- Approved staff to apply for a North Carolina Farmland Preservation Trust Fund grant
- Approved the Union County Soil & Water Conservation District to purchase and hold conservation easements for land preservation in Union County
- Adopted Budget Amendment #14 appropriating the County's General Fund unassigned fund balance in the amount of \$969,006 to be used for the purchase of conservation easements and associated transaction costs

# Staff Action Since Program Approval

- **December 2023-** Applied for a Program Development Grant through the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund program
- **April 2024-** Application Interview with NC ADFP staff
- **May 2024-** Applied for a Facilitation Grant through the Working Lands Trust and the Foundation of Soil and Water
- **June 2024-** Awarded a Facilitation Grant through the Working Lands Trust and the Foundation of Soil and Water
- **July 2024-** Provided the template from WLT for Union County's Land Preservation and Easement Program
- **August 2024-** Awarded \$15,000 from NC ADFP for the Program Development Grant

# Staff Action Continued

- Developed a proposed Land Preservation and Easement Program Ordinance with Union County Legal Department
- Worked with the Soil and Water Board of Supervisor and the Agriculture Advisory Board to set priorities and develop a ranking criteria for future easements
- Currently working with the Rural Land Committee to set future priority areas for ranking criteria
- Engaged landowners interested in potential conservation easements

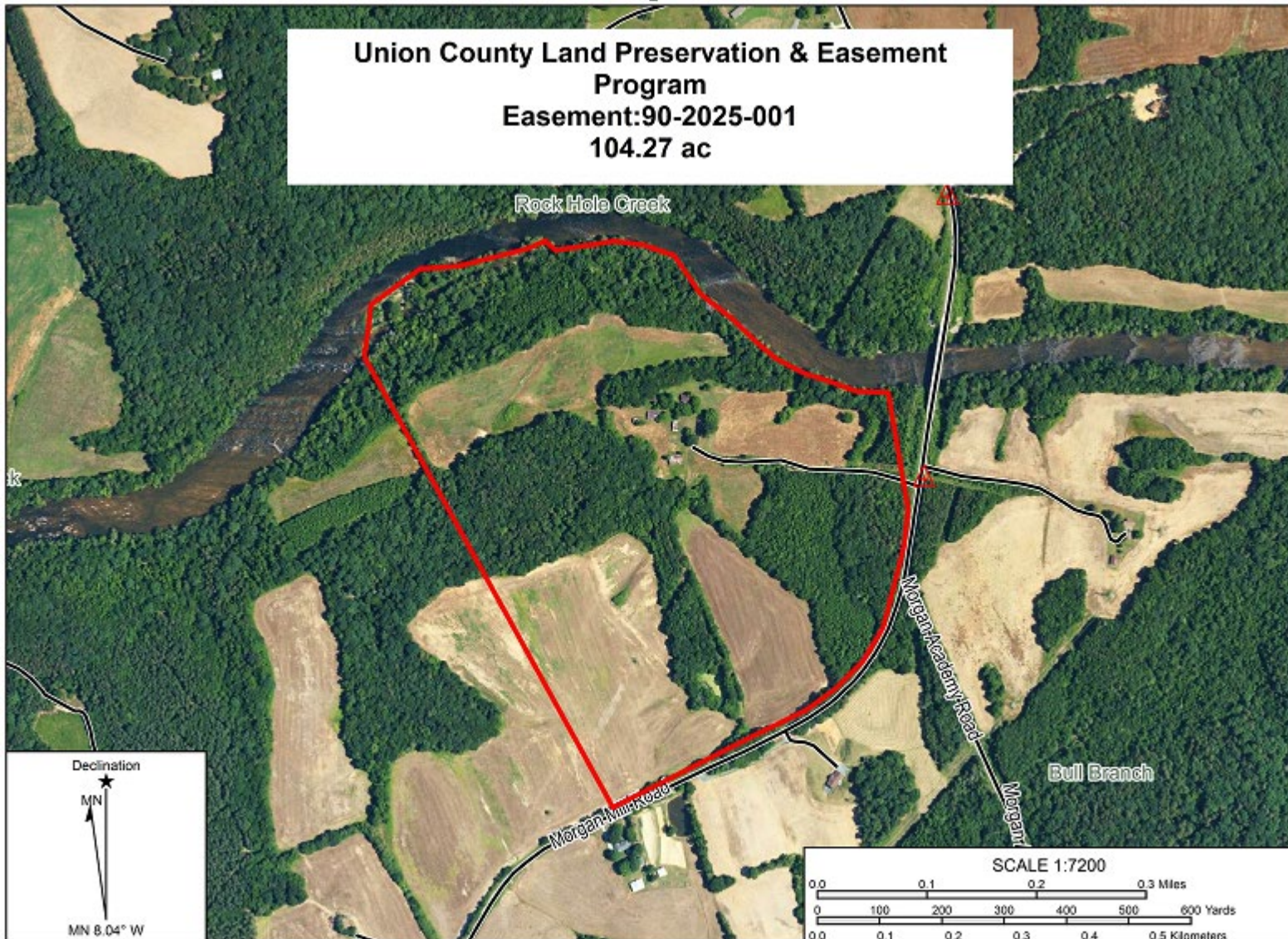
# Easement 90-2025-001

- 104 acre farm off Hwy 200 (Morgan Mill Road)
- 48 acres in crop production and 51 acres of forestland
- 36.5 acres have soils of statewide importance with 26.4 acres being prime farmland
- 3,100 feet of river frontage, historic mill site on the property, it is a Century Farm, and it is in the Voluntary Agricultural District.

County	2025 Estimated FMV of Land	Present-Use Value of Land	Total Conservation Easement Value	75% Conservation Easement Payout Perpetual Easement	25% Donation Value
Union	\$ 1,015,000.00	\$ 52,900.00	\$ 962,100.00	\$ 721,575.00	\$ 240,525.00

Easement cost does not include transactional cost (Survey, BDR, Environmental assessment, legal)

**Union County Land Preservation & Easement  
Program  
Easement:90-2025-001  
104.27 ac**



Name: STANFIELD SE, NC  
Date: 01/23/25  
Scale: 1 inch = 600 ft.

Location: 035.163874° N, 080.401151° W  
Caption: <<Type caption here.>>

# Easement 90-2025-002

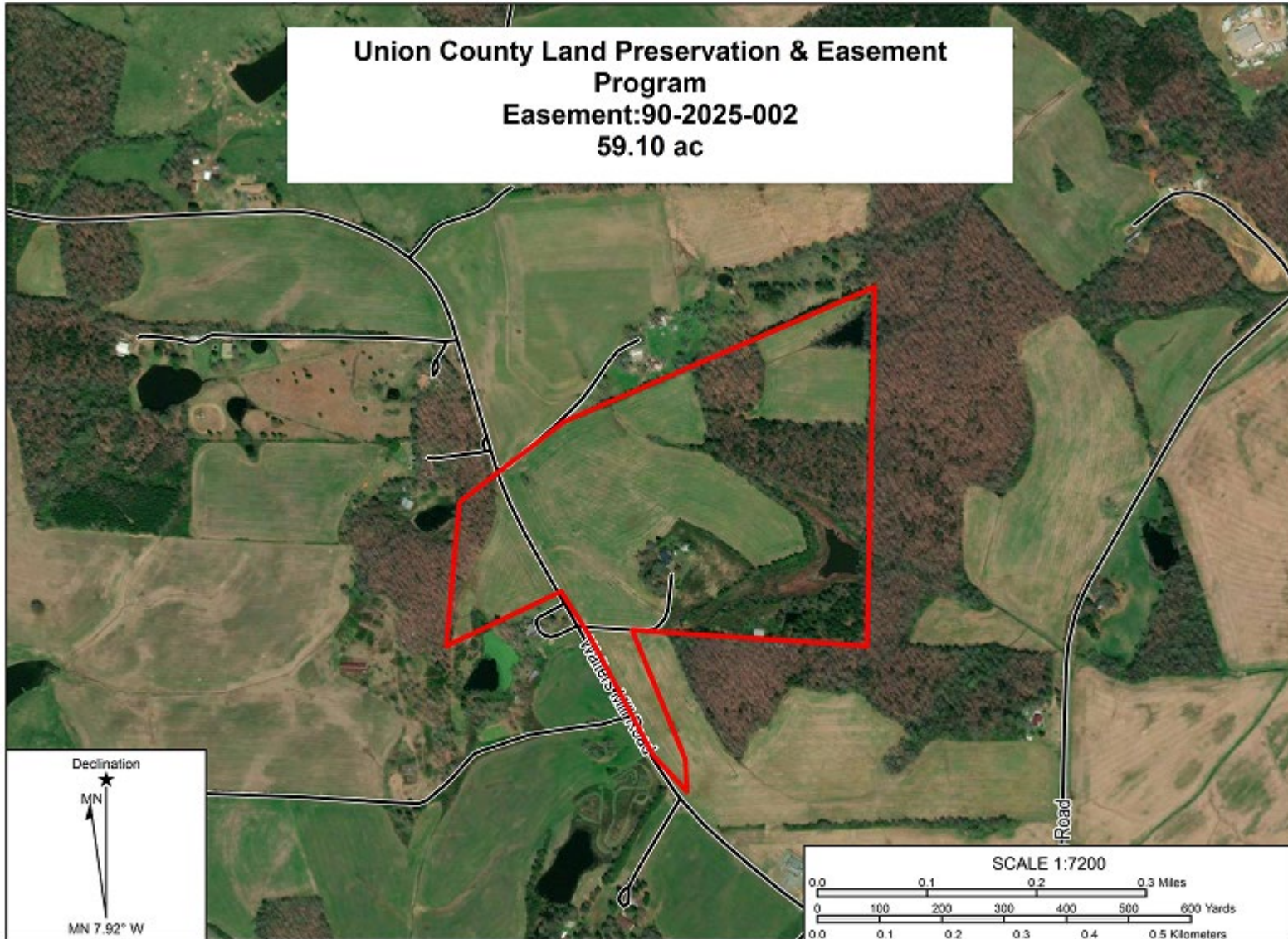
- 59 acre farm off Walters Mill Road
- 35 acres in crop production and 20 acres of forestland
- 25 acres have soils of statewide importance
- 3 acres of ponds on the property
- 100% Donation

County	Estimated FMV of Land	NCDOR Median Sales Ratio Value as of January 1, 2024	Adjusted Appraised Value of Land	Present-Use Value of Land	Total Donated Conservation Easement Value
Union	\$ 405,800.00	66.97%	\$ 605,942.96	\$ 54,100.00	\$ 551,842.96

Easement cost does not include transactional cost (Survey, BDR, Environmental assessment, legal)



**Union County Land Preservation & Easement  
Program  
Easement:90-2025-002  
59.10 ac**



Name: Satellite Image  
Date: 01/23/25  
Scale: 1 inch = 600 ft.

Location: 034.842908° N, 080.516063° W  
Caption: <<Type caption here.>>

# Other Opportunities

- Funding Opportunities
  - Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Program (ADFP) through the NC Department of Agriculture
  - Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) through the Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Easement Partners
  - Catawba Lands Trust
  - Working Lands Trust
  - 3 Rivers Land Trust

# BOCC Action's Requested

- Adopt the Union County land preservation & easement ordinance as attached.
- Approve the allocation of funds from BUDGET 10115410-5630-11115 for the purchase of Easement 90-2025-001 for the amount of \$721,575.00.
- Accept Easement 90-2025-001 into the Union County Land Preservation & Easement Program.
- Accept the donation of Easement 90-2025-002 into the Union County Land Preservation & Easement Program.
- Adopt Budget Amendment 22 appropriating the County's General Fund unassigned fund balance in the amount of \$885,991.90 to be used for the purchase of conservation easements and associated transaction costs.