



Blue Ridge National Heritage Area PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET

Initiative Title:	Farm Land Preservation and Young Farmer Support Initiative
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Project Narrative:	<p>In Henderson County there are over 44,500 acres of land presently in farm use. The majority of the 44,500 acres is in the production of livestock and field crops. Close to 25,000 acres devoted to livestock and 20,000 acres is used as cropland.</p> <p>Unfortunately, farm Land in Henderson County is being turned into development or industrial sites at an alarming rate of almost 1,000 acres per year. Due to the value of this land at development prices, young farmers are not able to purchase this land and keep it in agricultural production. This initiative would allow for development rights to be purchased from existing farmers and the land place into a farmland conservation trust. The land could then be sold to younger farmers at a farmland value, allowing them to continue to farm it.</p> <p>In 1976 there were 328 commercial orchards in Henderson County, a total of 9,078 acres in orchard. In 2002 the numbers have dropped to 117 orchards totaling 5,538 acres. This is a combined loss of 3,540 orchard acres over a 26 year period. North Carolina is number five in loss of farm land in the country. From 1992-1997 the state lost 168 thousand acres of prime farm land in North Carolina.</p> <p>The Henderson County Strategic Plan, approved February, 2005, contained two strategic goals related to this initiative: 1) "Expand access for agricultural enterprises to economic development and tourism promotion programs and support services;" and 2) Reduce Farmland Loss." Specific action steps included that relate specifically to this initiative are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore ways to make economic development incentives more readily available to agriculture-related businesses 2. Ensure that County-funded economic development programs and projects support farmland protection 3. Provide maximum benefits under Present Use Valuation Taxation program 4. Promote and expand voluntary agricultural districts to minimize land use conflicts and to protect farmers' rights to farm
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Goal:	The goal of this initiative is to preserve Henderson County's farmland and increase the opportunities for young local farmers to continue farming.	
Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:

Henderson County - (new employee- Farmland Preservation Coordinator) Working with FSA, NCCES and others	\$60,000	On-going
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Action Items:	Resources Required:	Who's Responsible:
Hire coordinator Establish land purchase protocols Acquire funding Make land purchase Coordinate with landowners wishing to sell land to insure that young farmers have the opportunity to make these purchases	\$52,000.00 salary and fringes	Coordinator
Office and supplies expense	\$8,000	

Performance Measures:	An increase in the number of young farmers able to access farmland at a reasonable price. A considerable decrease in the number of acres of farmland being loss each year
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Status:	Under discussion
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