

SAVING WHAT MATTERS MOST:

Ensuring Clean Water, Thriving Habitats, Farmland, and Connected Communities



- CATAWBA -
LANDS CONSERVANCY
LAND | WATER | FARMS | NATURE



CAROLINA
THREAD TRAIL®

We envision a future where clean rivers flow freely, families explore vibrant green trails, farms thrive and forests flourish with diverse wildlife. This future is within our reach, but it's not guaranteed.

North Carolina's Southern Piedmont is at a crossroads. Our communities are rapidly growing, and there is so much to protect. Nature and the outdoors are essential to our quality of life. The Catawba River provides drinking water for over 2 million people. The Charlotte region welcomes 110 new residents every day, and the pressure of development is felt every day. Since 2012, our region has lost over 50,000 acres of farmland, and natural open spaces are shrinking.

We must work to ensure progress doesn't come at the cost of the natural resources that sustain us. Our home is changing, and we must take action now to protect what we love most about this diverse region.

At Catawba Lands Conservancy, we know the land we save today shapes the world we'll live in tomorrow. Each acre we protect safeguards more than nature—it secures our shared way of life.

To address this, we have developed a Conservation Strategic Plan to guide our work. This plan prioritizes where our organization can have the greatest impact and make the most of limited funding and resources.

But we can't do it alone. Every step forward is driven by people like you, who share our vision for a region where nature and community can thrive. Now is the time to act. Our clean water, open spaces and resilient landscapes are at stake.

.....
**We are creating a legacy worth protecting.
Let's preserve the places we call home—before
they're gone.**
.....



ROOTED IN CONSERVATION, DRIVEN BY VISION

Catawba Lands Conservancy is a trusted leader in safeguarding the natural beauty that is the foundation of our community's health and vitality. With deep roots in the Greater Charlotte region, we are passionate about protecting the region that sustains our lives and connecting people to the wonders of nature.

Since 1991, our dedicated team of professionals has worked tirelessly to preserve 18,000 acres of cherished landscapes. From our full-time staff members to our interns to our volunteers and supporters, we have an engaged group of over 11,000 individuals who ask tough questions and develop creative solutions to protect our region.

Our team is united by a commitment to protecting our region's natural beauty and vital resources. From environmental science to project management experts to marketing and fundraising professionals, our staff combines deep knowledge with a collaborative approach. Together, we bring a thoughtful, multidisciplinary approach to conservation.

Whether protecting fragile ecosystems and ensuring clean water for future generations or creating outdoor havens like the Carolina Thread Trail, we are committed to a legacy of conservation that benefits all. With a bold vision for the future and a steadfast commitment to our mission, Catawba Lands Conservancy is leading the charge to ensure that our region remains a thriving, sustainable home for generations.



EXPLORE how our leadership shapes
conservation success

HOW WE WORK

Conservation is more than saving land; it's about creating lasting benefits for our community. Through innovative programs and partnerships, we work to protect the natural treasures of North Carolina's Southern Piedmont.



Our efforts focus on:

▮ **LAND PROTECTION:** Defending critical lands to safeguard water, supporting agriculture and preserving wildlife.

▮ **STEWARDSHIP:** Restoring and managing protected areas for long-term ecological health.

▮ **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Inspiring connections to nature through education and the Carolina Thread Trail.

▮ **COLLABORATION:** Partnering with landowners and advocates to achieve meaningful results.

Every acre conserved and trail built brings us closer to a resilient, sustainable future.

It is time to invest in that future.

Your generosity fuels this mission—preserving ecosystems, building community connections and protecting the places we call home for generations to come.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The future of our region depends on the choices we make today. The Southern Piedmont's lands, waters and natural spaces face growing pressures from rapid development and environmental challenges—but there's hope, and you're at the center of it.

Every acre we protect strengthens our community by safeguarding:

► **OPEN SPACES:** Balancing growth with places for nature and connection.

► **CLEAN WATER & AIR:** Healthy forests and streams sustain healthier communities.

► **RESILIENCE:** Protected lands help buffer against environmental changes.

► **POLLINATORS & WILDLIFE:** Saving habitats preserves life-sustaining ecosystems.

► **RECREATION:** Trails and greenways bring nature closer for all.

► **LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS:** Preserving farmland supports local farmers and food security.

The need is urgent, and the opportunity is real.

We can preserve this region's irreplaceable lands and create a lasting legacy of hope and sustainability for the future. It is time to help our region thrive.

Photos courtesy of Nancy Pierce



FIND OUT why protecting
land secures our future

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This Strategic Conservation Plan demonstrates our commitment to protecting our vital natural resources. The extensive data analysis revealed 17 **Conservation Resource Areas**—places with the greatest potential to enhance water quality, habitat preservation, farmland protection and outdoor recreation.



This plan, shaped by community input and data-driven insights, provides a clear roadmap for focusing on projects that deliver the most significant impact.

UNCOVER the science behind
our conservation plan

We took these steps to build our plan:

COMMUNITY INPUT: In 2022, we surveyed our supporters, who prioritized conserving rare habitats, wetlands and actively farmed lands. This feedback reaffirmed our focus areas.

GIS MAPPING AND DATA ANALYSIS: Using advanced GIS tools and data from trusted sources like the US EPA and NC Natural Heritage Program, we assessed conservation values across our region through the lens of our four areas:



WATER QUALITY:
Wetlands, watersheds and stream buffers.



FARMLAND:
Productive soil and active farming areas.



HABITAT:
Rare ecosystems and intact forests.



PUBLIC ACCESS:
Trails, parks and recreation spaces.

IDENTIFYING ZONES: By combining data layers, we pinpointed Conservation Resource Areas with overlapping benefits.

Thank you to Duke Energy for their support in the development of this plan.





FOCUS AREA: HABITAT

Protecting habitat is at the heart of our Conservation Strategic Plan. By conserving vital habitats like forests and wetlands, we safeguard biodiversity, improve water quality and support pollinators crucial for our food systems. These natural areas also act as buffers to reduce flood risks.

► **GOAL:** Expand conservation areas that protect vital habitats, enhance wildlife corridors and create space for rare species and ecosystems.

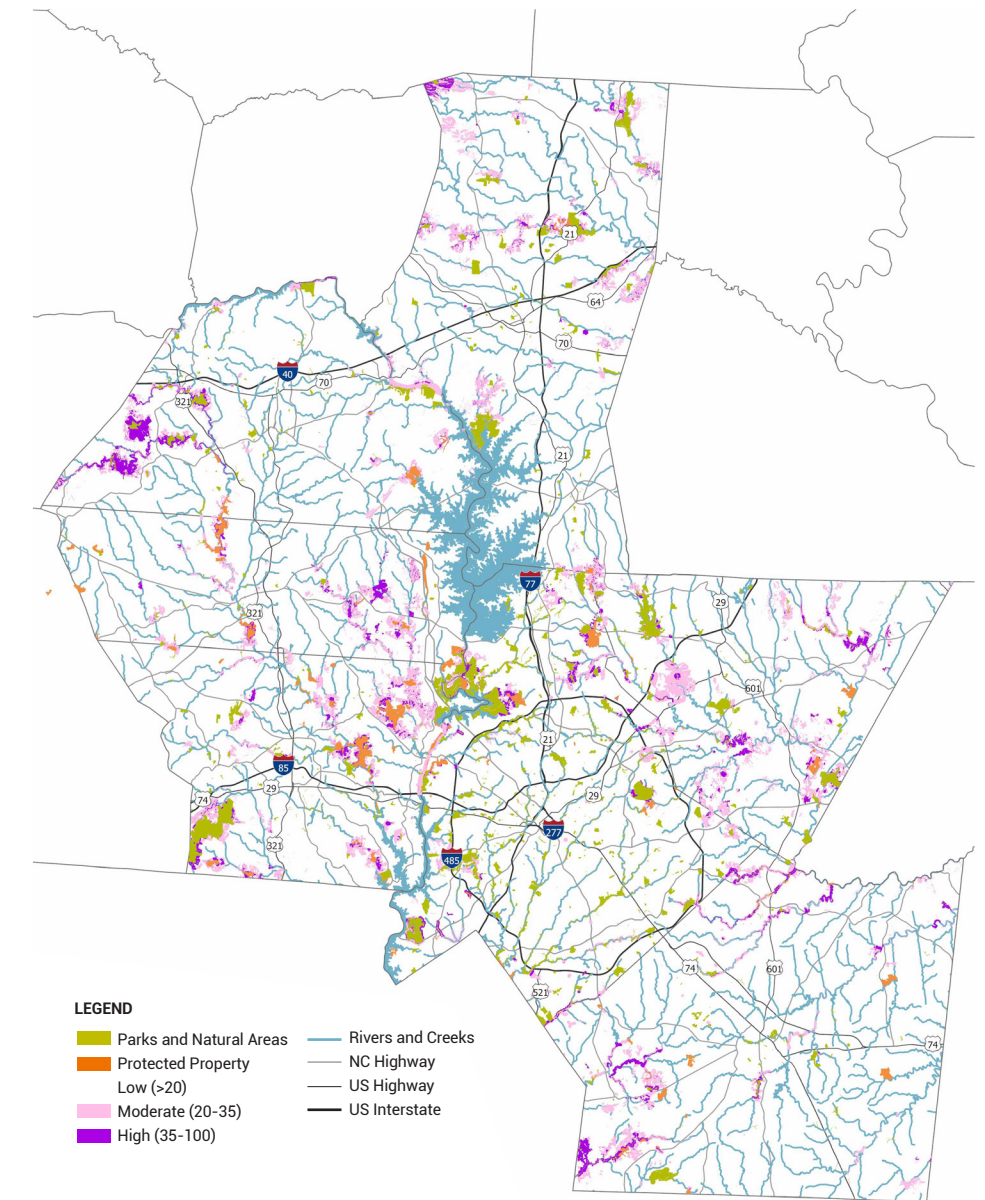
► **PRIORITIES:** To ensure long-term ecological health, focus on safeguarding unique habitats and imperiled species, preserving high-quality natural areas and expanding existing protected properties.

► **STRATEGY:** Pursue lands designated by the state as Significant Natural Areas and locations with imperiled species populations and opportunities to expand existing conservation areas.

By prioritizing habitat, we protect the interconnected systems that sustain life and enhance our region's resilience. This will protect unique landscapes and strengthen our region's natural heritage.



LEARN how our partnership
protects rare species





FOCUS AREA: FARM LAND

By preserving working farms, we ensure a sustainable future for agriculture and economic opportunities for emerging and low-resource farmers while protecting the landscapes that sustain our communities. Beyond food production, farmland can help protect clean water, supports biodiversity and creates buffers between urban growth and natural habitats.

► **GOAL:** Preserve farmland to support local agricultural economies and create opportunities for emerging, historically underrepresented, or low-resource farmers.

► **PRIORITIES:** Protect active farmland to strengthen agricultural communities while preserving high-quality soils critical for sustainable food production. Expand protected agricultural properties to create a more resilient local food system.

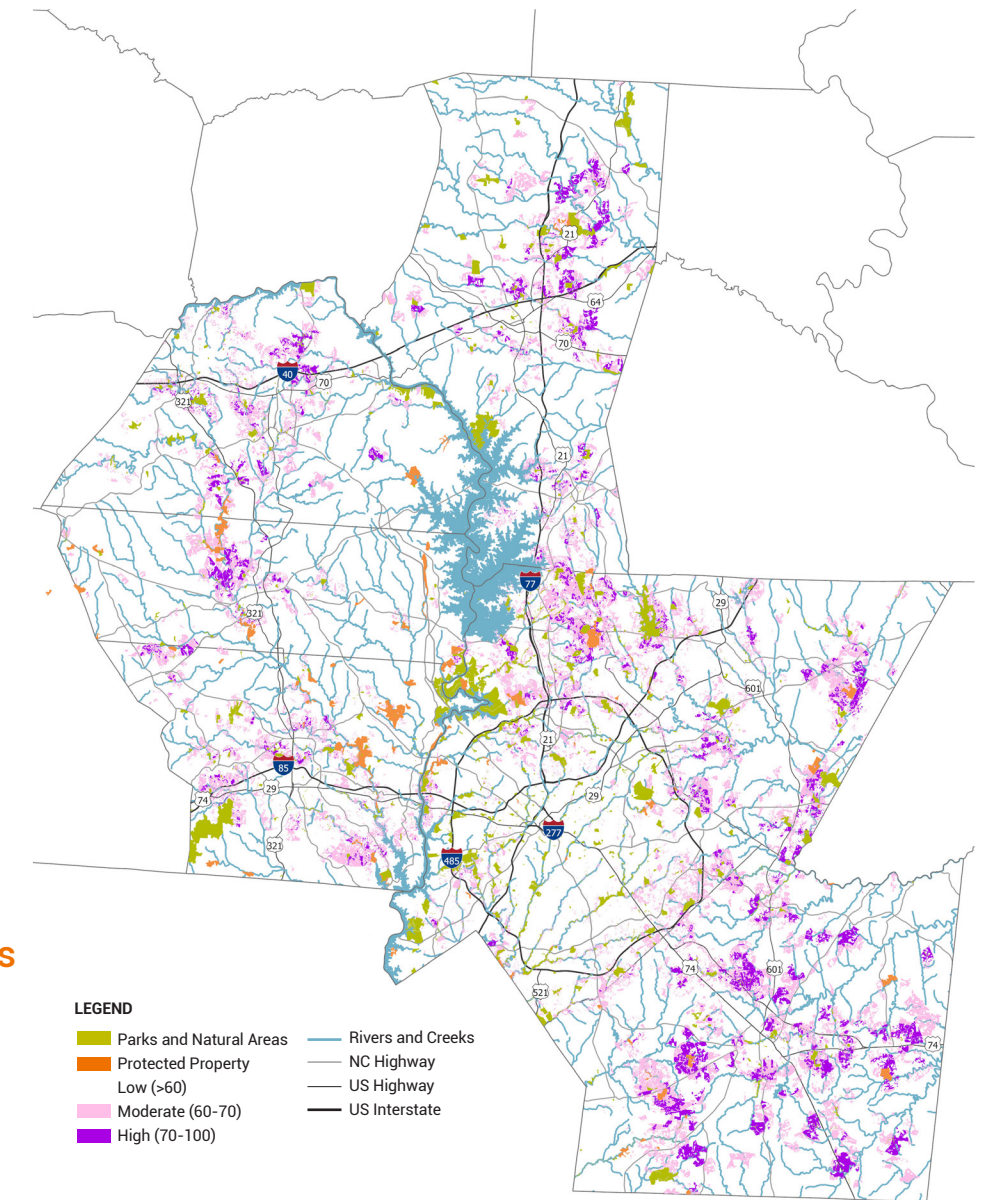
► **STRATEGY:** Engage farm owners in Voluntary Agricultural Districts with conservation plans and pursue properties with strong potential for agricultural preservation grants. Build partnerships with nonprofits and government agencies to advance farmland protection.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Pierce

Conservation ensures that valuable farmlands can remain productive and protected for generations to come. We can strengthen our local farms, preserve our rural landscapes and create lasting opportunities for farmers and communities alike.



SEE how a family farm is thriving through conservation





FOCUS AREA: WATER QUALITY

Streams, rivers and wetlands sustain wildlife and ecosystems and provide drinking water for our communities. We protect land along waterways to ensure that future generations can rely on these resources, while also safeguarding aquatic habitats and reducing the impacts of flooding and erosion.

► **GOAL:** Protect buffers - the open space between development and water - long creeks, streams, rivers, lakes and other water bodies to enhance surface and drinking water quality across the region.

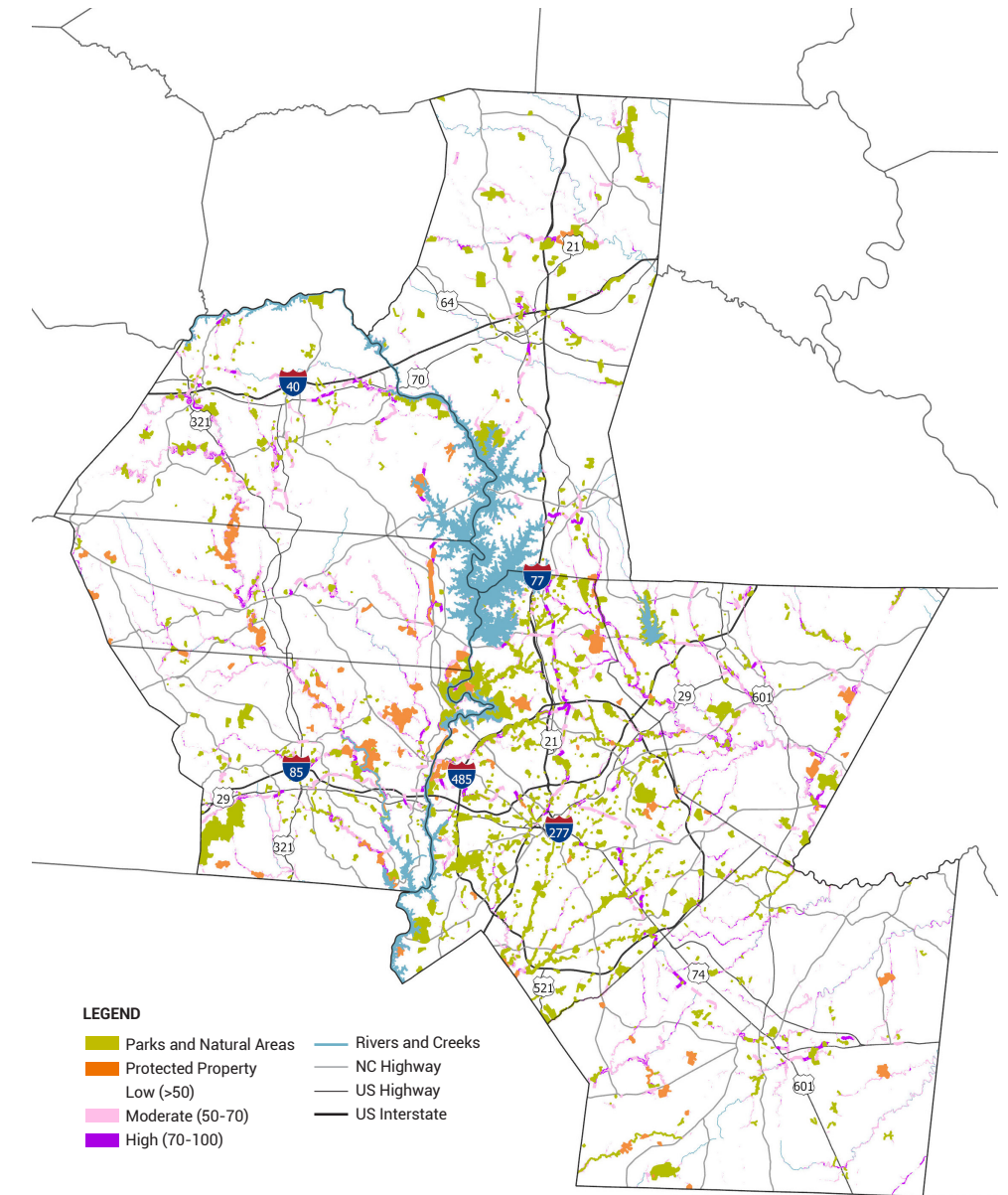
► **PRIORITIES:** Expand protected properties to safeguard water resources, focusing on conserving wetlands, vegetated buffers and floodplains critical for filtering pollutants and reducing flood risks.

► **STRATEGY:** Pursue properties featuring wetlands and vegetated riparian buffers; tracts that directly impact drinking water or contain streams; and properties with strong potential for water quality and habitat preservation grants.

Clean water is the lifeblood of our communities. Safeguarding these invaluable resources will make a lasting impact on our region's future.



READ how protecting a family's legacy
is protecting our water





FOCUS AREA: PUBLIC ACCESS

Trails foster a deep connection to nature, promoting physical and mental well-being, outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles. By conserving land for public access, we create opportunities for the Carolina Thread Trail and other recreational amenities for communities to explore, relax and recharge while also protecting valuable ecosystems.

► **GOAL:** Conserve land that facilitates connections to the Carolina Thread Trail and support the expansion of parks and nature preserves for public use.

► **PRIORITIES:** Acquire land along planned trail routes and close gaps in existing routes. Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities through strategic land conservation in partnership with community organizations.

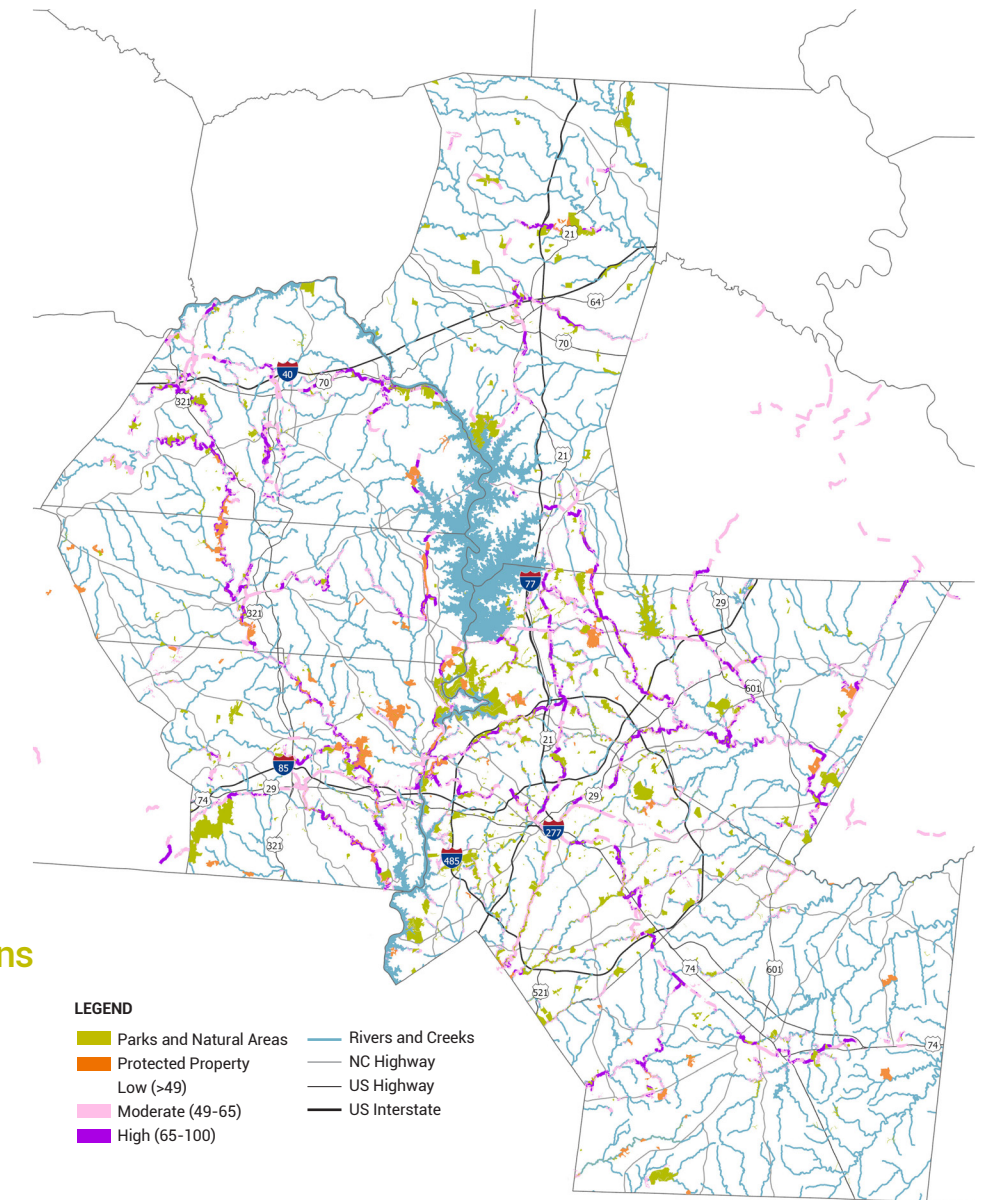
► **STRATEGY:** Focus on properties that extend or connect existing trails, especially in priority Carolina Thread Trail corridors. Pursue land acquisition that supports the expansion of parks and recreational spaces for the public.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Pierce

Our work today ensures that future generations can enjoy these natural spaces and their benefits. We are creating a legacy of public access to the outdoors, fostering stronger, healthier communities and preserving the beauty of our region for years to come.



DISCOVER how trails transform
lives and communities



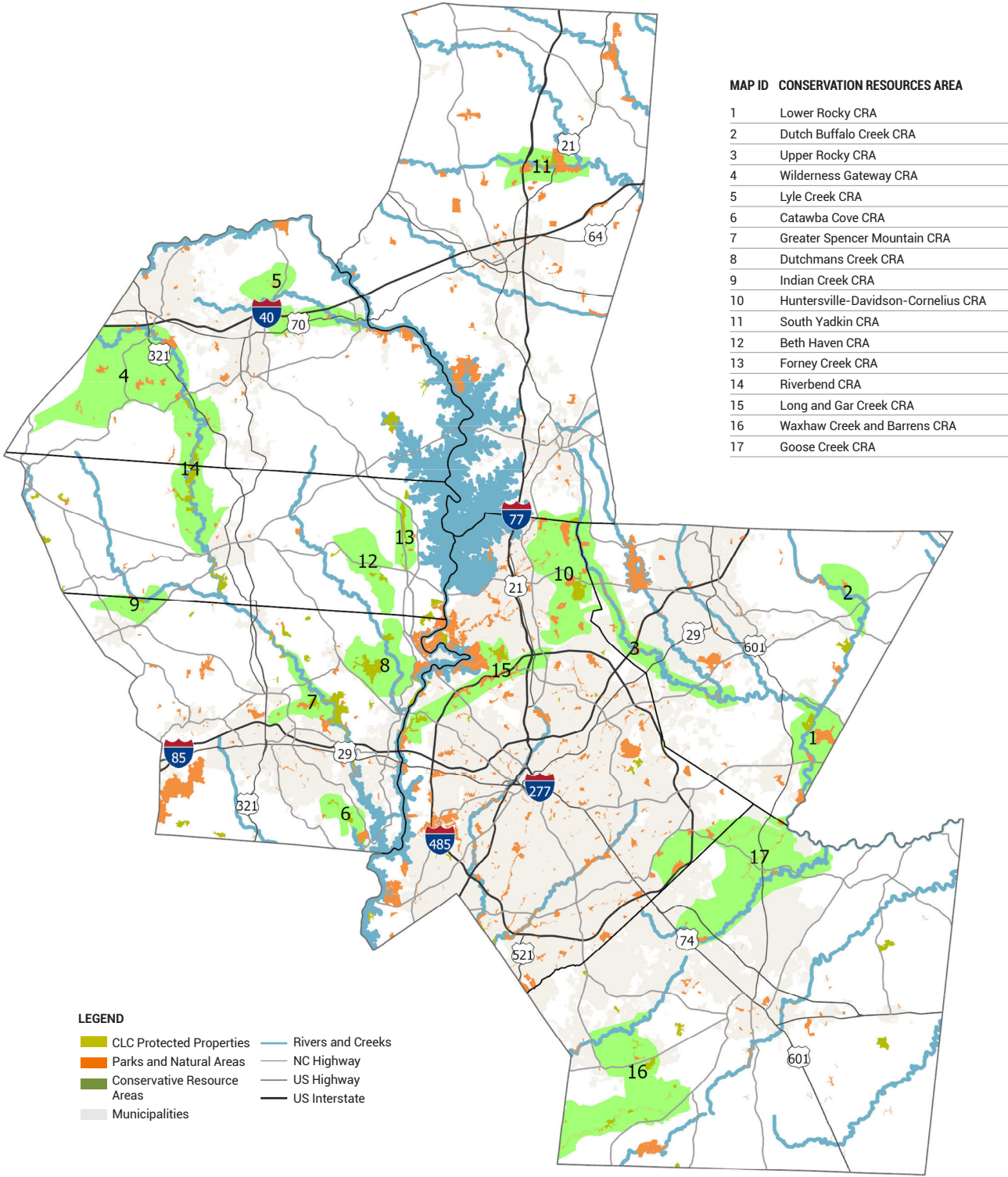
CONSERVATION MAP

Catawba Lands Conservancy's Conservation Strategic Plan 2025-2030 was adopted by the Board of Directors on December 10, 2024. Conservation efforts will continue to rely on willing landowners, with staff conducting direct outreach and building relationships in key Conservation Resource Areas through events, partnerships and trust-building efforts. The Plan will guide project evaluation.

We have the path to our thriving future. Will you join us?



Photos courtesy of Nancy Pierce



WE CAN'T STOP NOW

The natural treasures of Southern Piedmont are at a crossroads. Our forests, waterways, farmland and open spaces face unprecedented pressure from rapid growth and development. Without immediate action, the natural spaces, native plants and wildlife that define our region—and the benefits they provide—could be lost forever.

We've accomplished so much together, but there is still critical work to do. Conservation Resource Areas—lands vital to our community's health, resilience and future—are at risk. By investing in Catawba Lands Conservancy today, you ensure these lands are preserved for future generations.

Your investment strengthens our ability to protect clean water, safeguard wildlife habitats, create recreational spaces and preserve farmland. Every dollar you give has a real, tangible impact—securing the natural resources that make the Southern Piedmont a thriving, beautiful place to call home.

The need is urgent. With your help, the solution is within reach. Invest in Catawba Lands Conservancy today and join us in saving the lands that sustain us all. Let's protect what matters most.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Pierce

