

Agriculture Assessment Map

Which Lands are Valuable for Farming and Forestry?

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



Value for Farming and Forestry



Note that 1 = Least Valuable

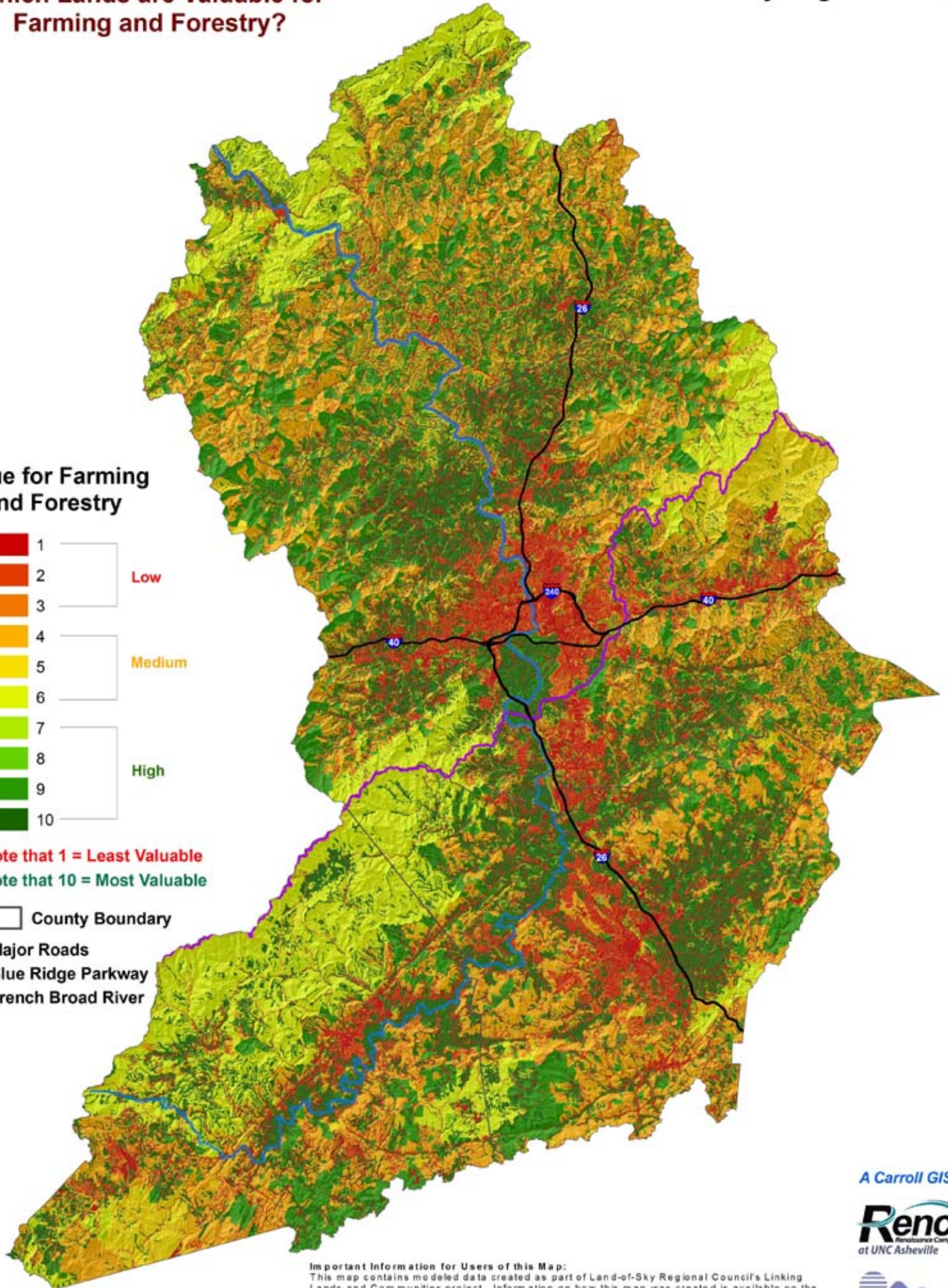
Note that 10 = Most Valuable

County Boundary

Major Roads

Blue Ridge Parkway

French Broad River



Important Information for Users of this Map:

This map contains modeled data created as part of Land-of-Sky Regional Council's Linking Lands and Communities project. Information on how this map was created is available on the project website. To access this information, visit www.linkinglands.org and click on "Resource Assessments" in the left-hand menu. The web page for each assessment explains how the assessment model was created, and includes links to a fact sheet, conceptual model, data sources & definitions, ranking scheme and input data layers. LOSRC, Renci and A Carroll GIS consider all of this information to be an integral part of this map, and essential to understanding what this map represents and how to interpret it properly.

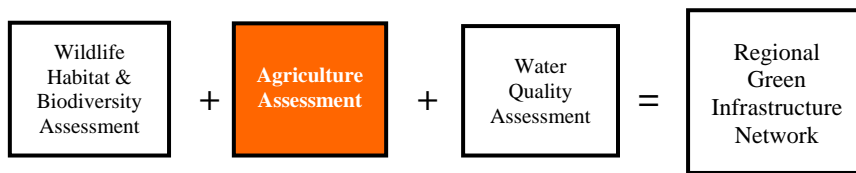
A Carroll GIS

Renci
The National Center for
Geospatial Computing Institute
at UNC Asheville



Land-of-Sky Regional Council
Waynesville • Hendersonville • Madisonville • Thompsons Creek • NC

Map Date: June 5th, 2010



Agriculture Assessment Summary

The Agricultural Assessment is one of three assessments conducted as a part of the Linking Lands and Communities Project. This assessment was developed by a working group of partners from across the four-county region, with the primary goal of identifying lands most valuable for agricultural uses in the region – namely farming and forestry. The work group placed significant emphasis on economic viability of farms and forests, recognizing that income-producing potential for the landowner is the single most important determinant of whether lands will stay in farm or forest use.

The final assessment was primarily based on four key components:

1. The presence of an existing farm or forest operation (which was determined to be the best indicator of economic viability)
2. Land cover, including vegetation type and extent of existing development
3. Agronomic Soils (the most productive soils for agriculture)
4. Land management factors, including land restrictions and proximity to publicly managed lands

Data for the Agriculture Map

The 2001 National Land Cover Dataset was used to determine if land was forested, planted in crops or developed. The four land cover categories used in this assessment include: Impervious Surfaces (highly developed areas that contain over 80 percent impervious surfaces); Developed Lands (impervious surfaces account for 20-79 percent of the total cover); Cropland (primarily grassland, herbaceous, pasture/hay, and cultivated crops); and Forested Lands (lands with deciduous, evergreen or mixed forests, and shrub/scrub).

The highest ranked lands (value of 10) were those with the best soils for agriculture, covered with Cropland or Forested Lands. Most Suitable Agronomic Soils were derived from the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Soils dataset. They include a combination of Prime Farmland and farmland with state or local significance. Lands enrolled in the Present Use Value program received the next highest rank (9). These lands are used for active production of farm, forestry or horticulture products. They are valued for tax purposes at their agricultural value, rather than market value. County tax offices provided these data.

Map Legend

	1 – Impervious Surface
	2 – Developed Land
	3 – Lands adjacent to protected Lands (within 1,000 meters)
	4 – Forested Lands (public and private combined)
	5 – Protected Lands (NOT including National and State Forest Lands)
	6 – National and State Forest Lands
	7 – Most Suitable Agronomic Soils
	8 -Cropland
	9 – Lands in Present Use Value Program
	10 – Cropland or Forested Lands with Most Suitable Agronomic Soils
	Open Water (not ranked)

Protected Lands include National Park Service parcels, North Carolina State Park properties and lands with conservation easements. National Forest Lands are lands managed by the US Forest Service. State Forest Lands are managed by the NC Division of Forestry. Lands adjacent to Protected Lands are ranked relatively low (3) because they may not be ideal for agriculture and could have negative impacts on the protected lands.

The Agriculture Assessment was created by staff from Land-of-Sky Regional Council; NC Division of Forest Resources; Buncombe County Soil, Water and Conservation District; Buncombe, Henderson and Madison County Extension Offices; Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy; NCSU Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center; USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station; Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project; UNCA and Warren Wilson Economics Departments; RENCI at UNC Asheville; Mountain Valleys Resource Conservation and Development Council; The Biltmore Company; and agricultural land preservation consultants.