

CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Chatham County Board of Commissioners

February 17, 2025

OVERVIEW



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Natural Resources

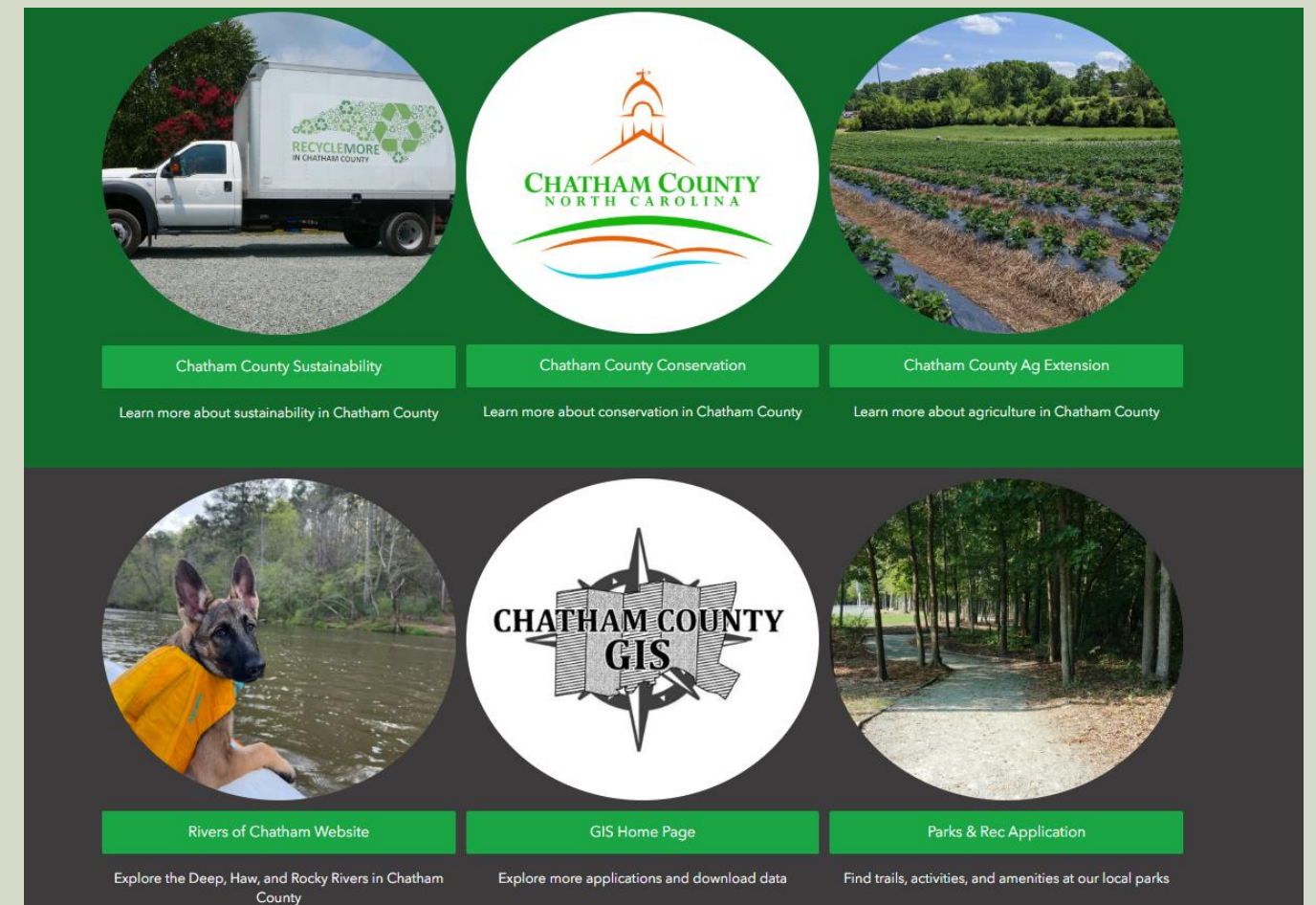
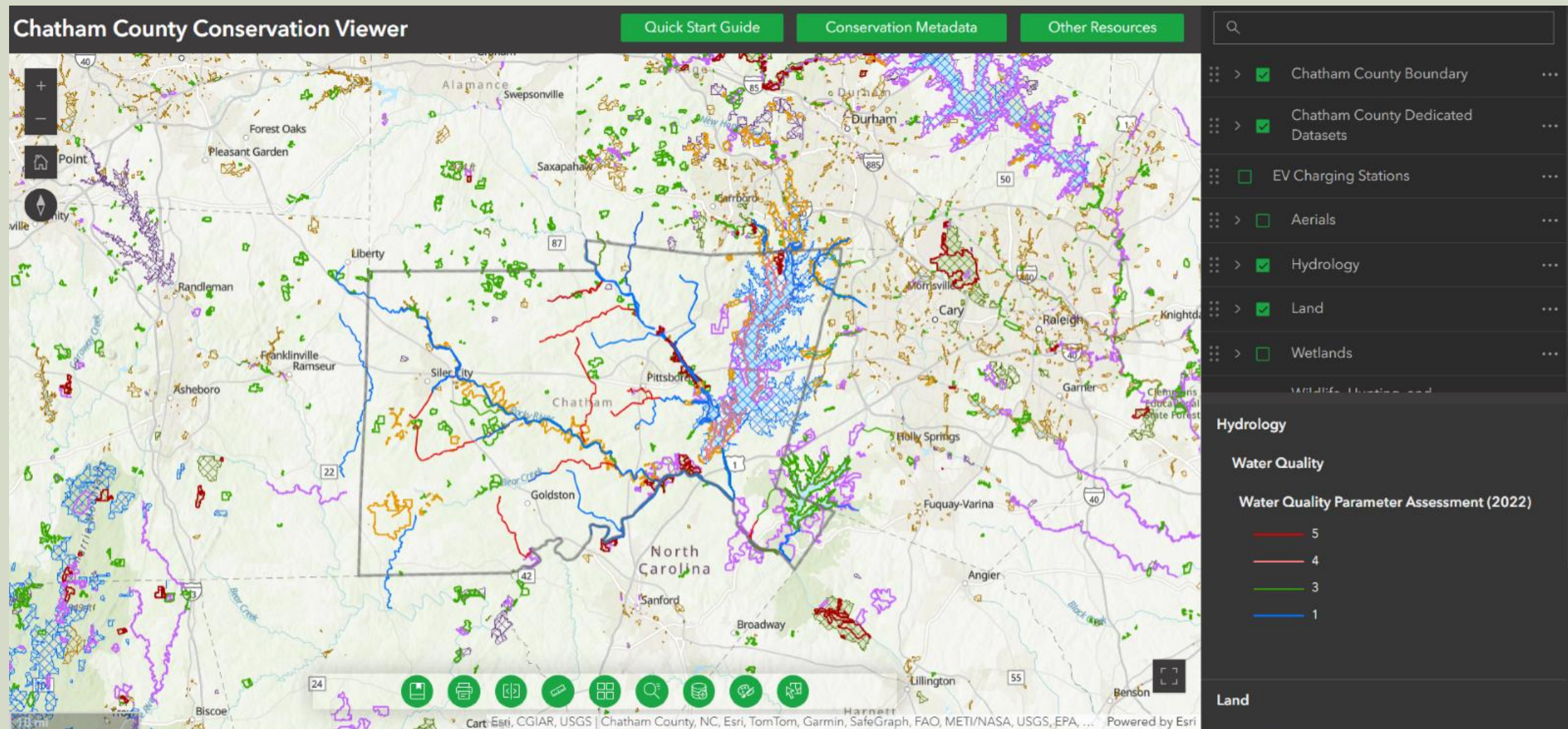
05

Ongoing Collaboration

LAND

Conservation Viewer Application

- Chatham County Conservation Viewer is updated and publicly available with more tools and data.



LAND

LiDAR Data

- Chatham County GIS Department has created an internal working group.

RTP Grant for Trail Funding

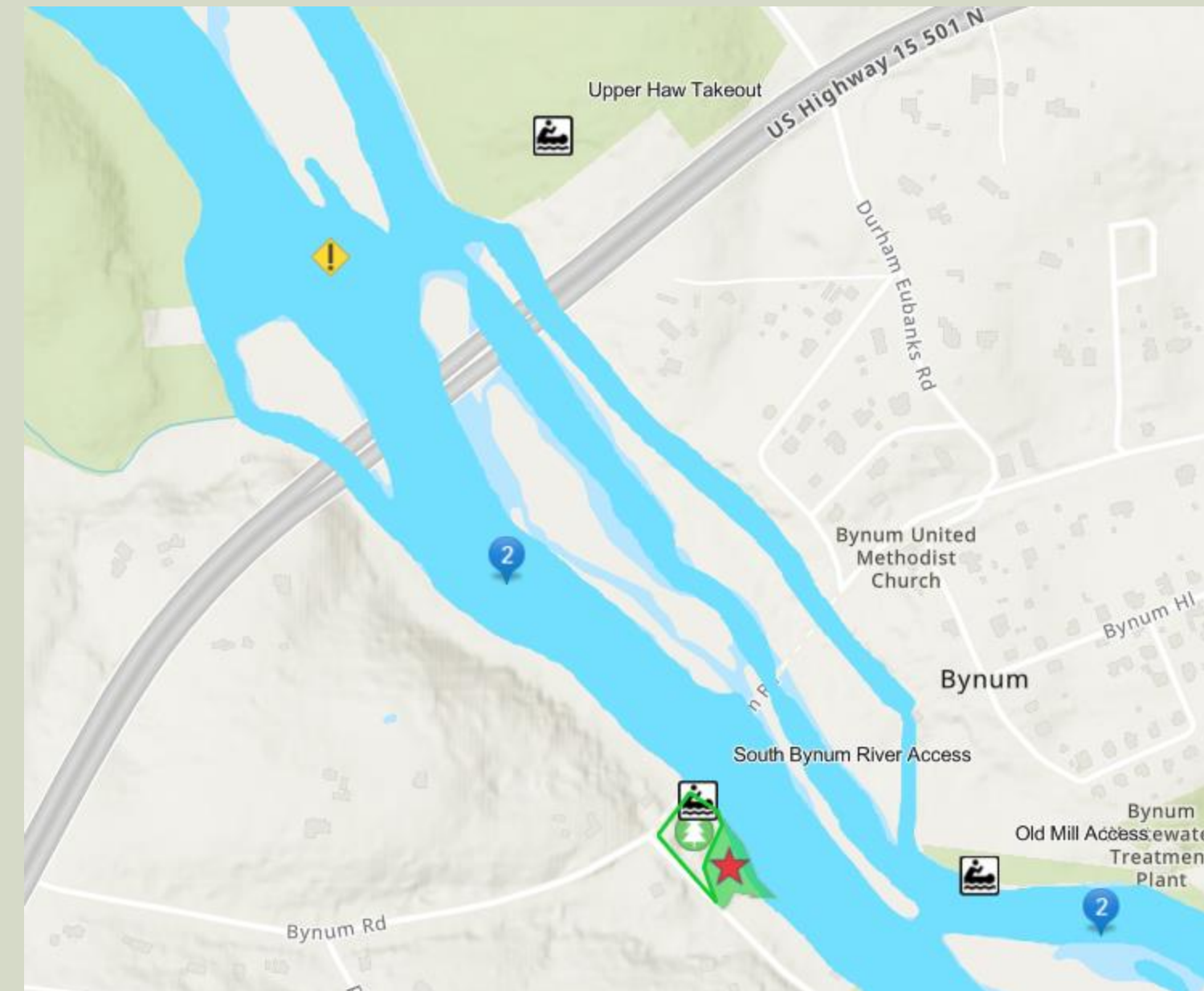
- Received grant focused on natural surface trails and paddle access.

Haw River Trail Steering Committee

- The HRTSC is continuing their work on developing the Haw River Trail.

Johnson Heirs Bynum River Access

- Chatham County Parks & Rec purchased property adding .7 acres to our public land.



LAND

Farmland Preservation Updates

- 2024 Farmland Protection Plan officially adopted.
- Received three applications to preserve approximately 375 acres of working farmland.
- Partnering with Triangle Land Conservancy to submit a grant for a permanent farmland conservation easement on 221 acres.
- Transaction assistance for a 70-acre farmland conservation easement donation.
- Received a grant award of \$295,443 to match funding for conservation easement acquisition.

LAND

Farmland Preservation Outreach

- Farmland Preservation Coordinator Andrew Waters presented to 30 people at the Chatham County Agribusiness Council and is scheduled to speak at the Chatham County Agricultural Impact Summit.
- First Annual Chatham Farms Forever Day Event on December 5th with 75 landowners registered and approximately 55 in attendance.
- Partnering with Land Loss Prevention Group to provide a two-part farmland transition workshop later this year.
- Received a \$7,375 grant to support outreach and publicity for the newly updated Farmland Protection Plan.



Chatham Farms Forever Day
Registration



CHATHAM FARMS FOREVER DAY

FARMLAND PRESERVATION WORKSHOP -- FREE!

 **Thursday, December 5**
8:00 am - 3:00 pm

About Our Event

You're invited to Chatham County's daylong workshop on farmland preservation, farmland estate and transition planning, and conservation management. EVENT is FREE! Registration required.

REGISTER NOW!

Event Highlights

Farmland Preservation

Learn about conservation easements and farmland preservation grant programs

Farm Transition Planning

The Dos and Don'ts of farmland estate and business transition planning.

Conservation Management & Cost Share Opportunities

Free Lunch

Food and refreshments provided free with registration.

CONTACT US
andrew.waters@chathamcountync.org
(919) 545-8447

WEBSITE
<https://bit.ly/chathamfarms4ever>

WATERSHED PROTECTION

Chatham County Creek Week – March 15-22, 2025

- Activities and workshops focused on Chatham County's waterways and the importance of protecting them.

Chatham County is Growing

- 2024 Residential Lot Permits: 140
- 2024 Land Disturbance Permits: 174
- 2024 Riparian Buffer Reviews: 117

Celebrate Creek Week 2025!

Enjoy aquatic themed
activities and
workshops March 15
to March 22nd, 2025



WATERSHED PROTECTION

Well and Septic Repair and Sampling Pilot

- EH is piloting a program to sample well and septic systems and fund the subsequent repairs.

Early program work is focused on education and staff are seeking grant funding to expand the program.

Upcoming Backyard Conservation Program

- Volunteer training program to empower individuals to contribute to local conservation efforts and mitigate climate change impacts from their own backyards. Courses will include habitat restoration, water-wise gardening, and organic practices.

CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY

Waste Reduction & Recycling Enthusiast Program (WREP)

- Educational training program graduated its first class of 9 volunteers. Cohort 2 is expected to begin August 2025.

Food Waste Collection Pilot Program

- EQ received grant funding to purchase equipment and signage for a pilot program to establish food waste bins at collection centers.

Sustainable County Merchandise

- The GIS department has established Hempsmith Clothing, a local sustainable clothing company, as a vendor for purchasing branded clothing and merchandise.



CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY

Multimodal Transportation Study – Phase 1 RFP Released

- Phase 1 is a public engagement study to identify multimodal transportation perceptions and needs through in-person and virtual outreach. Phase 2 will use the results to focus on long-term planning and implementation.

Green House Gas Inventory

- An updated GHG Inventory for the County is expected to be finalized in April 2025.

Planning for Extreme Heat

- A coalition from EH, Public Health, EQ, and Cooperative Extension is representing Chatham County at the NC Planning for Extreme Heat Cohort, a new program from NCORR and the State Climate Office.

CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY

County Buildings Energy Audit

- EQ, Facilities, and CPRC collaborated on a federal grant application to conduct an energy audit in county buildings and fund the recommended fixes.

Planning for Climate Resilience

- Planning staff have begun reviewing climate resiliency resources specific to Chatham, interviewing related departments to summarize existing work, and will be collaborating with Pittsboro on their Climate Action Plan.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Heritage Program Inventory

- Surveys will be finished in the spring and final report by June 30th. So far, 110 parcels have been surveyed totaling approximately 7,576 acres! 53 new natural communities described, and 13 known natural communities updated.

Wildlife Crossings

- Draft plan updated during public comment period and the final approved plan now available to be accessed via the DCHC MPO website.

Master Naturalist Program

- NC Cooperative Extension in Chatham and Durham counties completed the first Certified Master Naturalist class with a graduate class of 45 participants.

Sustainable Farming Grant

- Cooperative Extension received a three-year research grant for designing eco-friendly farming systems.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Landfill Management

- Environmental Quality and GIS worked together to collect drone imagery of Bidens wildflowers in bloom at landfill to assess success of wildflower seeding and identify next steps.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Pollinator Landscaping

- Pollinator Garden Tours
- Workshop and native plant sale
 - Approximately 185 people attended 5 hour workshop from 26 counties and 2 other states.
 - 4 Chatham nurseries and an additional 200 people attended sale afterwards.



ONGOING COLLABORATION

The Conservation Working Group meets in-person on the fourth Monday of every month. CWG members discuss progress on existing projects, collaborate on ideas for new projects, and connect our work with outside organizations.

Central Pines Regional Council Grant Assistance Program

- CWG departments are using the program for regional collab., honing project ideas, and application writing for environmental grants.

Conservation Dashboard and Implementation Plan – Progress Update

QUESTIONS?