

### 1.3 Study Area Description

In order to provide the full range of study alternatives and thorough analyses that are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the EIS study area boundary covers a large expanse of land. Specifically, the inclusion of land south of Fontana Lake is necessary to evaluate the existing roadway network, the area's transportation needs, and potential access options across Fontana Lake. The inclusion of rural communities such as Lauada, Almond, and Stecoah, as well as Bryson City, provides insight on the local population's economy, demographics, and social values.

The study area, shown in Figure 1, is in western North Carolina, in portions of both Swain and Graham counties. It extends from just west of Fontana Village to the eastern municipal limits of Bryson City, covering an area of roughly 120,000 acres (48,562 ha). Fontana Lake divides the study area to include land north and south of the lake. The southern limits of the study area parallel just south of NC 28 and US 19/US 74, while the northern limits follow an arc that includes the majority of land transferred in the 1943 Agreement.