



## ⊠ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ⊠

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Richard B. Hamilton, Executive Director

### MEMORANDUM

Date: 4 January 2007

To: Chatham-Cary Joint Land Use Plan Committee

From: Jacquelyn Presley, Urban Wildlife Biologist, NC WRC

Re: Comments on Chatham-Cary Joint Land Use Plan

I would like to update the comments and map that I submitted in October for the Chatham-Cary JLUP. Please replace the comments dated October 31 with this document as the comments below reflect our highest priorities.

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission is very pleased with efforts being taken to plan for future growth in the Chatham-Cary Joint Land Use Plan study area. We commend the Town of Cary and Chatham County for taking such a proactive approach to planning. We have an interest in the JLUP study area because, according to the EPA's Southeastern Ecological Framework, the JLUP study area harbors some of the greatest biodiversity in the Triangle region of NC. In addition, NC WRC Game Lands exist within the JLUP boundaries.

The area's valuable wildlife, water, and recreation resources are important assets for Chatham County and the Town of Cary, contributing to the quality of life of area residents and to local economies. *Conservation of these resources can be compatible with economic growth*; however, proper planning and management is required to ensure their persistence for future generations.

To minimize the negative impacts of growth on sensitive environmental resources in the JLUP study area, we believe the recommendations described on the following pages and displayed on the attached map should be integrated into the JLUP.

## **NCWRC GAME LAND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Establish a ½ mile smoke management buffer around Jordan Game Land burn blocks.
  - This recommended buffer is displayed in dark red on the attached map.
  - We recommend no additional major roads nor further residential/commercial development be allowed within this buffer.
  - At a minimum, we recommend the JLUP: 1) recognize this ½ mile smoke buffer, and 2) set the stage for future ordinances to regulate land use within the unprotected areas of this buffer.
2. Establish a 150-yard hunting safety buffer around Game Land boundaries.
  - This recommended buffer is displayed in dark green on the attached map.
  - We recommend no inhabited structures be allowed within this safety buffer.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Zone Natural Heritage sites and The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Ecoregional Portfolio sites for very low density residential (1 du/10 acres) or for working lands. Alternatively, create a resource conservation overlay district for these sites.**
  - Aside from buffering Game Lands, creating protections for Natural Heritage Sites and TNC sites is our foremost priority because these areas have been documented to house the most significant wildlife habitat in this area.
  - The three Significant Natural Heritage Areas are displayed in light brown on the attached map and are labeled. For the most part, these SNHAs are located on NC WRC Game Land.
  - The TNC site is displayed in purple hatch marks on the attached map. Much of this site is unprotected and therefore, we recommend zoning this area for very low density residential or placing a conservation overlay on this site.
2. **Protect 100 foot native, forested stream buffers around all perennial streams.**
  - These recommended buffers are displayed on the attached map.
  - To adequately protect aquatic habitat and water quality in this area, we recommend establishing 100 foot native, forested buffers around all perennial streams in the JLUP study area.
  - These buffers will serve as wildlife travel corridors and, if connected by the American Tobacco Trail, will allow species to travel between the southern and northern portions of Jordan Game Land.

- 3. Establish a 300 meter wide wildlife corridor around the American Tobacco Trail as a high priority for future park land acquisition or land conservation efforts.**
  - To benefit the full range of species in this area that have been identified as conservation priorities in NC's Wildlife Action Plan, we recommend protecting a 300-meter wide greenway corridor around the American Tobacco Trail.<sup>1</sup>
  
- 4. Enable residential “zoning extremes” that encourage very high density development (0.5 du/acre) or low density development (1 du/5 acres).**
  - Instead of zoning the entire area for mid-density development (1 du/2 acres), we recommend using the JLUP to enable residential zoning extremes.
  - Zoning the area for 1 du/2 acres will fragment the entire landscape, leaving little habitat for priority species. On the other hand, zoning for very high and very low density should protect some habitat in areas with the low density designation while still allowing for the same number of residents.
  
- 5. Encourage the use of “conservation subdivision design” principles in subdivision and land development processes, which are well-defined in Town of Cary’s Open Space and Historic Resources Plan (<http://www.townofcary.org/depts/dsdept/CSD.pdf>)**

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<sup>1</sup> The 300-meter recommendation is drawn from recent research by George Hess & Chris Moorman’s Greenways for Wildlife work at NC State.