

Jason Sullivan

From: Allison Weakley [aeweakley@earthlink.net]
Sent: Monday, October 02, 2006 6:06 PM
To: Keith Megginson; Jason Sullivan; Angie Birchett; Lynn Richardson; Kay Everage; Charles Eliason; Jeff Austin; Mark McBee; Jennifer Andrews; Chris Walker; Winifred Smith; Cecil Wilson; Angela Brown; Clyde Harris; Bunkey Morgan; Tommy Emerson; Carl Outz; Mike Cross; Patrick Barnes
Subject: issues for PB meeting on 10/3/06
Attachments: BigWoodsSNHA_2006_smaller.jpg

4. COOPER (Contentnea Creek Dev. Co.) rezoning (Attachment #9)

The Planning Board notes for this request state:

"On page 3 of the Plan a major recommendation is to retain the current 5 acre average lot size in certain county designated watersheds and as shown as resource protection areas. This area was previously referenced in the Natural Heritage Program as part of the Big Woods Wilderness Significant Natural Heritage Area. Updated information obtained from the Natural Heritage Program now shows a significant reduction of this area. This property no longer lies within this protected area."

As mentioned above under #3 (McLEAN rezoning), **over half of the Cooper tract still remains within the Big Woods Wilderness SNHA boundary.** See attached map showing revised 2006 data from the NC Natural Heritage Program as it relates to this tract.

The Big Woods SNHA remains an important resource protection area as defined in the Land Use Plan. Rezoning this tract would significantly negatively impact wildlife habitat for area sensitive species. As stated in the 1992 Inventory of the Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats of Chatham County by Hall and Boyer (1992), "...its importance to the wildlife of the entire region is unquestionable" (see page 202 of Hall and Boyer). Current zoning is certainly more in keeping with the aspects of this site which make it significant, such as rugged terrain, extensive hardwood upland forests, and proximity to Jordan Lake.

Given that the Big Woods SNHA remains significant and is still recommended for protection by the Heritage Program, I'm hopeful the Planning staff will recognize the continued significance of this SNHA and reconsider the recommendation given for this rezoning request.

The Planning Board Notes also state that:

"Should the request be approved, further information from the Natural Heritage Program should be obtained specifically in connection with the Carolina Ladle Crayfish. Said crayfish is a species that is classified as significantly rare that may occur in the area."

What information should be specifically obtained? A records review of Element Occurrence (EO) data within a certain radius from the site? As allowed under our Subdivision Ordinance, an Environmental Assessment to determine presence and likely impacts to rare species, especially within a designated SNHA, should be required by the County. At the least, a survey for this and other rare species likely to occur should be conducted. As I stated in my written comments to the Commissioners during the public hearing for this request, Sweet pinesap (*Monotropis odorata*) and the four-toed salamander are also likely to occur at this site. Surveys for these species should also be considered a condition of approval, and, if found, measures to protect these species should be required.