

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

3. McLEAN Rezoning (Attachment #8)

The Planning Board Notes for this agenda item state the following:

"On page 3 of the Plan a major recommendation is to retain the current five 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 an area recommended for protection."

I spoke with Kristen Sinclair, NC Natural Heritage Program, this morning to clarify the status of the Big Woods SNHA. The SNHA was apparently misrepresented in the 2006 data release from the NC Natural Heritage Program but has since been corrected. **Thus, the majority of the McLean tract still remains within the Big Woods Wilderness SNHA boundary.** See attached map showing revised 2006 data from the Heritage Program as it relates to this tract.

Because the western side of the previously designated 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 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, especially 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 and connectedness to Jordan Lake.

Current zoning also helps mitigate negative impacts to water quality. Though our Watershed Protection Ordinance allows for greater density within the general area of the WS-IV-PA watershed, our Zoning Ordinance recognizes the importance of this area for water quality under current RA-5 zoning and is therefore protective of water quality. Since there is no subdivision plan for this property, no conditions may be placed on the request to ensure wildlife habitat and water quality are adequately protected.