



## ⊠ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ⊠

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### MEMORANDUM

DATE: 23 October 2007

TO: Chatham County Planning Department

FROM: Jacquelyn Wallace, Urban Wildlife Biologist, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

SUBJECT: Cooper Subdivision Proposal

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Please accept my comments on the request by Dan Sullivan on behalf of Contentnea Creek, Co. for subdivision preliminary approval of “Cooper Subdivision, Phase I,” consisting of ten (10) lots, on approximately 23 acres, located off SR-1714, Hatley Road, New Hope Township.

As shown on the attached map, Phases II and III of this subdivision will overlap a **state-designated Significant Natural Heritage Area**, the Big Woods Road Upland Forest. Although this proposal is for Phase I of the subdivision, the design of all phases will need to be revised to avoid negatively impacting the Significant Natural Heritage Area.

The Big Woods Road Upland Forest has been designated by the state’s Natural Heritage Program as a Significant Natural Heritage Area because it supports high quality natural communities.<sup>1</sup> The Big Woods Forest is a large tract of upland hardwood forest that connects with Jordan Game Land, and provides unbroken wildlife habitat for area-sensitive species such as bobcat and wild turkey.

**To adequately protect the state-designated Significant Natural Heritage Area**, we strongly suggest the following measures be incorporated into this subdivision’s plan:

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<sup>1</sup> Documentation of the site’s environmental value can be found on pgs. 200-202 of the “Inventory of the Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats of Chatham County, North Carolina.” A copy of this document can be obtained by calling Kristen Sinclair with the NC Natural Heritage Program at 919-715-8687.

- We recommend that **no built structures** (other than boardwalks, trails, or other passive recreational structures) **be placed within the boundaries of the Significant Natural Heritage Area (SNHAs)**.
  - This area harbors some of the highest quality wildlife habitat in Chatham County, and is an inappropriate site for buildings. Buildings, associated infrastructure, and resulting sedimentation will seriously damage and possibly eliminate the rare natural communities on site.
  - We therefore recommend a building envelope, no build easement, or permanent conservation easement be placed around the area that falls within the SNHA boundaries.
  
- We recommend that a qualified environmental professional conduct an **environmental impact assessment** for this development to identify 1) negative impacts this development will have on the SNHA, and 2) strategies the applicant could take to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for these impacts.
  
- We recommend the applicant document the presence of the **SNHA boundaries on all plats** (preliminary and subsequent plats) as well as on all subdivision applications.
  
- We recommend the applicant follow **conservation subdivision design principles** in this development. Application of conservation subdivision design would involve:
  - Clustering the homes as much as possible outside of the heritage area (SNHA)
  - Permanently protecting **the most environmentally valuable 50%** of the site as open space.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this subdivision proposal, and for considering our comments. I am available to discuss any site design changes the County or applicant may want to pursue. If you would like to discuss these comments further, please contact me at (919) 360-9680.

cc: Jeff Marcus, NC Wildlife Resources Commission  
Shari Bryant, NC Wildlife Resources Commission  
Vann Stancil, NC Wildlife Resources Commission  
Kristen Sinclair, NC Natural Heritage Program  
Sarah McRae, NC Natural Heritage Program  
Allison Weakley, Chatham County Environmental Review Board

# Cooper Subdivision

