

DATE: 1 July 2007

TO: Chatham County Board of Commissioners

FROM: Allison Weakley, Chair
Chatham County Environmental Review Board (ERB)

SUBJECT: ERB recommendations for
Environmental Assessment (EA) thresholds

As requested by the Board of Commissioners (BoC), the Chatham County Environmental Review Board (ERB) has drafted and recommends the attached thresholds for Environmental Assessments (EAs).

Our recommendations have been developed based on the current Chatham County Subdivision Ordinance, with the incorporation of the collective knowledge of and research by ERB members, public and staff input, and many hours of discussion. We also considered State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) guidelines and the Orange County Environmental Impact Ordinance in our review of standards for EAs. The minutes of both the EA threshold subcommittee and the full ERB meetings fully document the development of these recommendations.

It is important to note that, though the recommendations have been derived from considerable review and discussion, they may be modified in the future once environmental standards are incorporated into existing ordinances. For instance, if standards for environmental review were incorporated into the development review process for major subdivisions, the requirement for an EA could lessen.

In the meantime, we recommend you add the attached EA threshold criteria to both the Subdivision Ordinance (Section 5.2) and Zoning Ordinance (Section 11.3), where requirements for EAs based on Chapter 113A-8 of the N.C. General Statute allow that an EA may be required if minimum criteria are met. We would also like to request from the BoC the opportunity to review the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances so that the many constituents important to environmental review can be effectively integrated into standards for development.

The ERB looks forward to working with the BoC to implement these recommendations, and welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions you may have about the work that we have done.

Very sincerely,

Allison Weakley
Chair, Chatham County Environmental Review Board