

August 10, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of Durham City Council

FROM: Annette G. Montgomery, Chair, Development Review Committee/Durham
Open Space and Trails Commission

Case Z1100017

Name: Southpoint Trails

Background note: This site lies within the area known as the “New Hope Creek Corridor” as noted in the Durham County Inventory of Important Natural Areas, Plants, and Wildlife.

The state has evaluated the site and determined that the site “Seems to fall outside our current State Natural Heritage Area Boundary.”

The current boundary for the Natural Heritage Inventory and any associated buffers appear to be off site, within the US Army Corps of Engineers land.

This property is located on the edge of US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Land which contains a Natural Heritage site that is known collectively as the “Lower New Hope Creek Floodplain Forest and Slopes” and is identified in the Durham County Inventory of Important Natural Areas, Plants, and Wildlife. It lies within the New Hope Creek Corridor.

This project is adjacent to the US Army Corps of Engineers Property (USACE) to the west and south which contains a Durham Natural Heritage Inventory known as the **Lower New Hope Creek Flood Plain Forest and Slopes and New Hope Levee Forest, site NH-3**. The State Wildlife Resources Commission manages this area where hunting is allowed, which is also known as the “Stagecoach Road Wildlife Sub-Impoundment” and is used for flood control. On the west and south side, the property drains into the US Army Corps of Engineers property and Jordan Lake. These Inventory sites are internal to the Corps Property.

The **Stagecoach Road Bottomlands, Site A-5**. *Exists on the south side of Stage Coach Road*. This area is a highly significant, rich avian community, including 9 species of Neotropical warblers that nest here. Five large species – hawks, owls and woodpeckers are found utilizing the large trees for nesting holes. A conservation effort should be to preserve wider upland buffers for wildlife in addition to protection for the Jordan Lake watershed. The uplands are vital as sanctuary area for the wildlife as flooding inundates this Inventory site from slope to slope.

Additionally the, **Stagecoach Road Seep, Site 14** *on the south side of Stage Coach Road*, as described below is located within the Jordan Lake Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) property.

Contains one of the most mature canopies of any site at Jordan Lake.

Plant Communities: Low Elevation Seep: Virginia Chain Fern and Pointed-leaf Tick Trefoil, both regionally rare. Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest, Floodplain Variant: Willow Oak, Swamp Chestnut Oak, Lewis Heartleaf. Basic Mesic Forest: Southern Sugar Maple, Painted Buckeye.

The area has been in consideration as a NC Historic Conservation designation. And, the general area is an extension of the Piedmont Bottomland Forest, containing the easily eroded sedimentary rock of the Triassic Period.

The Development Review Committee reviewed the project referenced above at its regular meeting. Based upon our review, we recommend the following conditions and committed elements:

- This property is in the Cape Fear Basin and drains into Jordan Lake. The applicant needs to give careful consideration to grading and drainage to avoid increased velocities, run off and pollution. Additional natural vegetation along the western and southern property lines can aid in reducing stormwater velocities and help in capturing run off and pollution. Special consideration should be given to Low Impact Development methods that would facilitate best management practices that are environmentally sound and feasible for the site.
- We recommend that the applicant designate the tree coverage area (shown in its current location, on the west side of the rail spur), as a Committed Element-Conservation area, that is to remain permanently undisturbed. Providing this as a committed element (in its current location), would provide additional buffer area and further protect the inventory site to the west and south and the proposed trail cited below, along with the Army Corp Property to the west known as the Stage Coach Road sub-impoundment, which is used for flood control. The Army Corps allows hunting on Corps Lands and this sub impoundment. Additionally, extensive grading activities within the proposed building envelop should be confined to the outside eastern edge of the existing tree line that runs along the 100' requested Greenway easement.
- We are requesting a 100' Greenway Easement along the rail spur, and 10'pedestrian access easement to the requested 100' greenway easement, as a Committed Element. This aligns with the existing old rail road bed known as the Eagle Spur Trail at the northwest corner of the Corps land that will eventually connect up to the south, and the easement to the north that the City has already acquired.
- Are there any historic structures on the site? If so consideration should be given to their preservation.

Thank you for your consideration.