



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Recreation

Michael F. Easley, Governor

William G. Ross Jr., Secretary

Lewis R. Ledford, Director

August 22, 2007

Mr. W. David McNeill, Jr., County Manager
Guilford County Government
301 West Market Street
P.O. Box 3427
Greensboro, NC 27402

SUBJECT: Haw River State Park

Dear Mr. McNeill:

I understand that David Craft, a member of the Haw River State Park Advisory Council, has filed an appeal of the Guilford County Planning Board's decision to approve rezoning from AG to PD-R of the property proposed for development by the Blue-Green Corporation (case #07-07-GCPL-04974). I would like to take this opportunity to communicate to the Board of County Commissioners and other leaders and citizens of Guilford County the state parks system's support and endorsement of this appeal.

Guilford County stands at a significant intersection with respect to the new state park. The path you choose will have a vital bearing on the shape and character of the new state park in Guilford and Rockingham counties. Decisions made now reach beyond the fate of a single subdivision and concern the important balance of economic development and conservation as well as quality of life. The future of Haw River State Park and the protection of natural resources in this area are important to all the state's citizens.

Several factors and pieces of information pertinent to the Division of Parks and Recreation do not appear to have been evaluated and considered as part of the Planning Board's August 8 vote on the re-zoning. Essentially, the re-zoning would adversely impact current and future operations, management and plans for Haw River State Park, located adjacent to this property. We welcome the opportunity to address the Board of Commissioners.

I would also like to address some misconceptions and misinformation regarding the state parks system's interest in the properties being considered for re-zoning. From the outset, state parks identified the properties as appropriate for addition to Haw River State Park based upon natural resources, habitat and location. Under state law, the State Property Office, the state agency which oversees land acquisition, is not allowed to make a purchase offer without benefit of an appraisal. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure permission to appraise the properties prior to the assemblage of the development proposal. We are currently completing appraisals of some of the property and will be seeking permission on the remainder so we can be in a position to pursue acquisition for addition to the state park. Bottom-line, we remain interested in acquiring the property and have the funding options in place to be able to close in a timely manner.

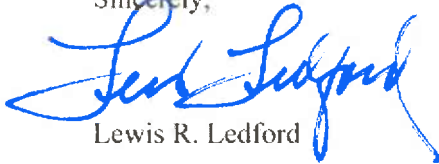


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In advance of the public hearing, I would like to provide you with the attached list of issues and concerns the division has with the re-zoning. The information provided represents a brief list and is not inclusive of every consideration. I would appreciate it if these concerns were shared with the county commissioners.

I appreciate your consideration of our concerns. Please feel free to contact me at 919-733-4181 if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Lewis R. Ledford

LRL/shm

Attachment

cc: David Craft, Haw River State Park Advisory Committee
Thomas B. Robinson, Rockingham County Manager
Representative Pricey Harrison
Senator Kay Hagan
William G. Ross, Jr., Secretary, NC DENR
Susan McBean, Haw River Park Superintendent



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**State Park System Concerns
Regarding the Proposed Patriot's Landing Development**

- The Guilford County Open Space Report, adopted by the Guilford County Parks and Recreation Commission May 9, 2000 and the Guilford County Board of Commissioners July 20, 2000 has, as one of its guiding principles for the open space program, a proposal for a state park, then known as Cape Fear Headwaters State Park, located in the upper reaches of the Haw River in Guilford County. Approval of this rezoning is inconsistent with this previously indicated intent of the County Commissioners.
- The Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park houses thousands of students every year. One of the primary educational themes is wetland ecology. Students spend time experiencing the wetlands – many for the first time in their lives. They learn the purposes and value of wetlands. If a significant amount of water is drawn from the Haw River, this opportunity may be severely limited or eliminated.
- Haw River State Park has been included on the NC Birding Trail. The main component of this site is the wetlands. Our hope is that the state park will eventually be considered as an Important Birding Area, designated by the National Audubon Society. Narrow corridors of green space are less valuable to nesting birds and are less productive than are large contiguous tracts of land.
- The Blue-Green Corporation requests to draw up to 100,000 gallons of water from the Haw River daily for 5 – 7 years to irrigate their planned golf course. The removal of this water from the river could potentially diminish or destroy the wetlands downstream, including those in the state park. Native species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insects, fish, and plants which currently thrive in this habitat may be harmed or eliminated from the site. In addition, the proposed development may cause significant adverse impacts to the existing great blue heron rookery (at least 20 nests have been reported).
- Water quality will or may be threatened with erosion sediments, pesticide and herbicide use, and potentially through the spray irrigation system for waste water. Also, the location of the water intake and water treatment plant adjacent to the Haw River raises concerns.
- The Mountains to Sea Trail is expected to follow the Haw River corridor. To meet state park trail standards, a wider corridor than that initially proposed by Blue-Green is required.
- The Haw River State Park environmental education center is adjacent to the property under consideration for re-zoning. If acquired by state parks, the property would provide public use access for traditional facilities. It would also increase environmental education opportunities at the park.

