

# New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting of January 8, 2009

(Present: Edeburn, Fowler, Berndt, Welch, Healy, Harrison, Kent, Penny, Schuster, Bo Howes-Triangle Land Conservancy)

(1) Update on Turkey Farm Road Bridge. Construction has not started (some trees were cut by Duke Power for temporary utility line re-rerouting just after the meeting). NCDOT has still not agreed to our request for a net to catch demolition debris and for a pad to bear the weight of heavy machinery. Lack of such a pad could cause damage, especially if machinery is in or near the floodplain. We have secured permission to cross TLC land, and land owned by the Lockridge Community Association so as to get close enough to visually inspect the construction site. We will be particularly attentive to erosion and erosion control. Two Duke Nicholas School students will be working with us this semester.

(2) Auto dealership rezoning proposal. No representative from the applicant was at the meeting. We are holding our comments until some final information is provided. **[Post meeting note: I talked with Bob Zumwalt, the site planner by phone. He said the application has been withdrawn “for economic reasons”. We need to talk about this tract, and adjoining ones, at a future meeting.]**

(3) The December 14 hike came after two days of rain and the area north of 15-501 was very soggy. John Kent reported that:

Five (wet tolerant) souls did show at 9: Walter Fowler, John Goebel, John Kent, Greg Schuster, and Charlie Welch. After a short discussion concluding that a "not less than soaking experience" would be had by all if the original hike were undertaken, it was decided that those present would still hike along the Creek, but on the existing west bank loop trail down stream, between 15-501 and Old Chapel Hill Road [Githens School Trail]. It was decided to begin the hike at the trail head just off Watkins Road, and folks got in cars to reconvene at that spot.

Now for the wildlife moment, with a bit of introductory background first:

Background:

To drive to the trail head on Watkins Road, all cars left Oak Creek (shouldn't it be rightly be called Mud Creek? after all is there an Oak Creek somewhere even close?) Shopping Center turning right onto Garrett Rd then again right onto 15-501, heading west to cross the Creek and proceed to the "new" light at Watkins Road. As you know the 15-501 bridge replacement project is in full swing. It will replace the two two-lane bridges (on the existing 15-501 four-lane) with two three-lane bridges (on a new 15-501 six-lane). To keep that portion of 15-501 open during the construction, a temporary two-lane bridge is being constructed, to the

north of the existing two two-lane bridges. On 12/14 that temporary bridge, to the north, and to the right for west bound traffic, was under construction.

#### Wildlife Moment:

As folks were driving west on 15-501 and approaching the bridges over the Creek from the east, a deer, same side of the Creek, came from the right where it must have navigated the difficult construction site for the temporary bridge, vaulted over the right guard rail, ran across the west bound two lanes, vaulted the left guard rail, and disappeared down into the median gap between the two existing two-lane bridges. (Basically it ran right to left across 15-501 in front of us.) I believe everybody saw it, judging from the later discussion at the Watkins Rd trail head.

#### Testimonial:

To me this was a confirmation that work making new 15-501 bridges provide ample room for wildlife underneath, so that the open space corridor along New Hope Creek between the Jordan Lake Gamelands and Duke Forest continues to work, has been time worth spending. Even under the difficult conditions that exist while the 15-501 construction project is underway, to see that deer make such an effort to use the NHC Corridor, that was a special moment for me. Also, I certainly wasn't the only one to work on the 15-501 bridge effort, and as a result I'm really proud to live in a community that makes such things happen.

Schuster reported that the Githens Trail was not terribly wet that day, but it had become wet as a result of heavy rain before our January meeting. He said he has seen evidence of past ATV use, but not evidence of this now. He also noted that erosion from the parking lot at Triangle Orthopedic was being washed onto the trail.

Turning to Hollow Rock trail, Schuster said that he has laid out about 2500 ft. of new trail, finding that it will require three (expensive!) bridges. He noted that in building bridges one has to account not only for water level, but also for water movement. Bridges can settle, causing a trip hazard for hikers and runners. It was suggested that we hike the area with Rosetta Radtke of the Durham Parks and Recreation Department, who would be involved in any future trail planning involving the park.

- (4) Potential sidewalk along Erwin Rd. between Forest View Elementary and Hollow Rock trail access. Healy suggested that required sidewalks for the 15-501 auto dealership and Duke Primate Center might be relocated to this area. Harrison said that the sidewalk requirement is part of the zoning code and would have to be signed off on by the city manager. Edeburn said he thought the Primate Center rezoning had already been resolved, likely foreclosing a sidewalk transfer option. Berndt asked whether an Erwin Road trail/sidewalk was in the DOST Trails and Greenways Plan. Healy asked Welch to report back on the new revisions to the DOST plan that have been proposed by staff.

Fowler noted in a later email that “The distance between Pickett Rd. and Randolph Rd. along Erwin Rd. is exactly half a mile (more or less). So if we can only find a million dollars to fund planning of a pedestrian bridge across Erwin Rd. (and 1-3 million to build it) Forest View Elementary may be within reach for the fit and hardy toddlers.”

- (5) Budget Cuts. Schuster said that Durham County is facing a \$14 million budget deficit this year unless cuts are made. One proposed cut is eliminating \$500,000 in planned acquisition funding for ag land and open space. Healy noted that the one mitigating factor is that the pace of land development has slowed along with the economy.

Next meeting 5 pm Thursday, February 12 at the clubhouse at Garrett Farm.