

**MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 01- 40**  
**ACQUISITION OF NATURAL HERITAGE SITE**

**PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:** Acquisition of a natural heritage site to protect Shuffletown Prairie Ecosystem. The site is located on Rozzelles Ferry Road south of Hart Road and north of Mount Holly-Huntersville Road.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:** The subject site is home to two federally endangered plant species and one candidate plant species and is ranked by the NC Natural Heritage Program as being of national significance. Also the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the NC Plant Protection Program considers it to be one of the best and few remaining examples of the nearly extinct Piedmont Prairie Ecosystem.

If Mecklenburg County acquires this site, it will be designated as a nature preserve in accordance with the 1997 Nature Preserve Master Plan. The Division of Natural Resources will manage the site to protect, restore, and enhance the viability of this rare ecosystem.

**PROJECT IMPACT:** Acquisition of this site for a natural heritage site will preserve two endangered plant species and protect a portion of the Piedmont Prairie Ecosystem.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:** This site has been identified as ecologically significant and targeted for protection by the Mecklenburg County Natural Heritage Inventory. Although this property is not contiguous to other county properties and capital projects, it is a vital component in the preservation of endangered species and the restoration of a significantly rare natural community.

The Northwest District Plan recognizes the growth and development taking place in the northwest and recommends single family residential development at a maximum density of four dwelling units per acre for the subject property. In addition, the plan notes that care should be given to preserving some of the rural and historic character that exists in this portion of the County and the overall need to be sensitive to environmental issues. This proposal to reserve land for a nature preserve is consistent with the intent of publicly adopted plans.

**PROJECT COST:** Market appraisals will be the basis of negotiations and land costs for this project. Approximately 1/2 of the total acreage will be donated to the County.

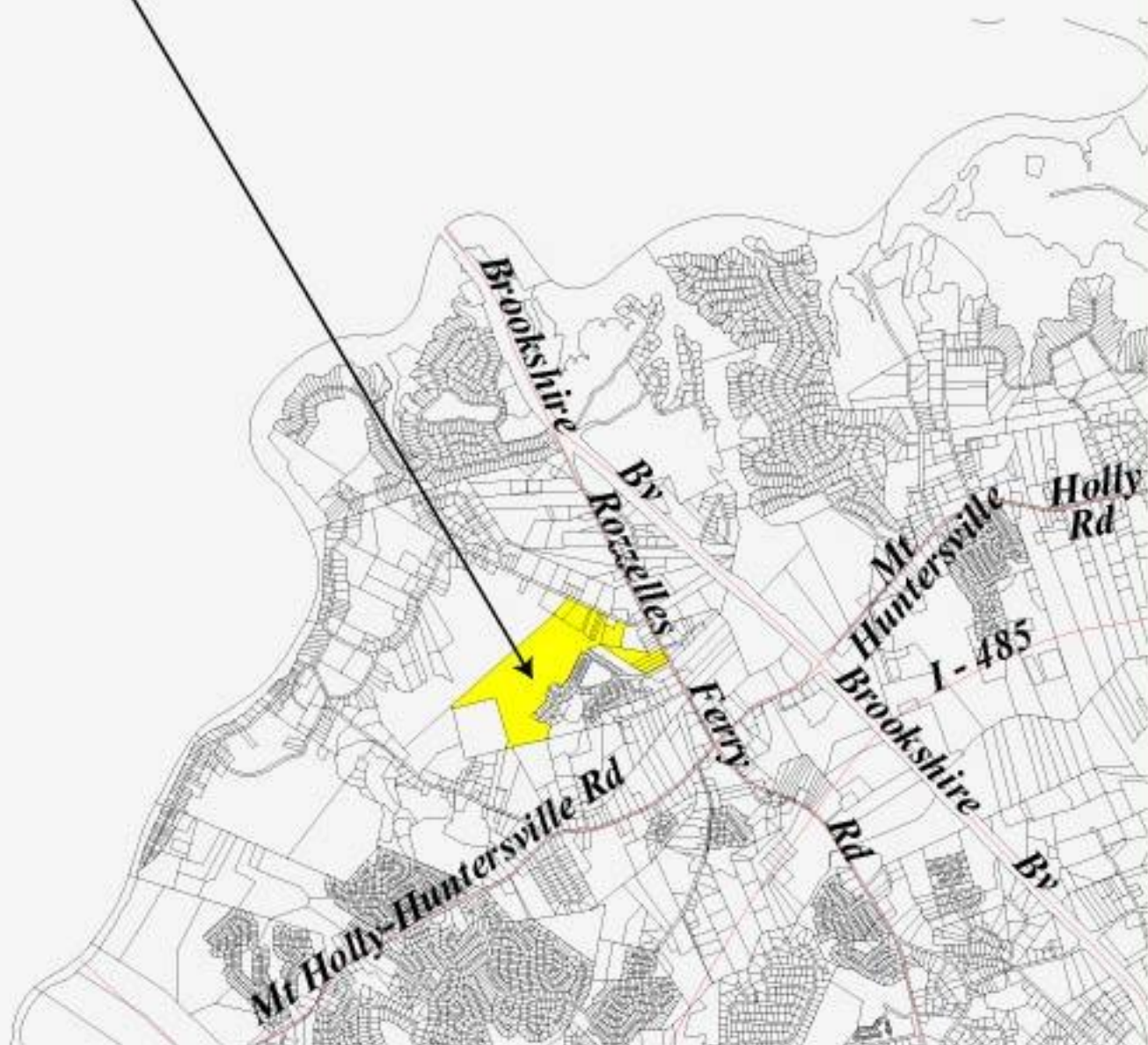
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff supports this mandatory referral to acquire land to preserve a portion of the natural ecosystem.

**PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** July 17, 2001: Defer for 60 days to give staff time to provide additional information (what is "developability" of land given existing regulations and restrictions imposed on the property as the result of the existence of endangered species?) by a vote of 5-0.

September 18, 2001: Approved 6-0.

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## **MANDATORY REFERRAL:**

### **NATURAL HERITAGE SITE – SHUFFLETOWN PRAIRIE**

**MR01-40**

## **CAPITAL PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM**

### **Instructions:**

This form is provided to capital project initiating agencies and departments for reporting proposed projects to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements of North Carolina House Bill 855.

Proposed capital projects are to be submitted to the Planning Commission using this form at least 30 days prior to presentation to the governmental unit having approval authority.

Constructive review of a project proposal requires a full description of the project and its objectives. Please provide all of the requested information as well as pertinent graphic information. You will be advised when the project is scheduled for Planning Commission consideration so that your department representatives may be present to respond to questions.

**I. Initiating Department:** Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department

**Date:** June 26, 2001

**Submitted By:** R. Wayne Weston, Director

**Department Representative:** Steven H. Law, Natural Resources Manager

**II. Project Name:** **Natural Heritage Site Acquisition – Shuffletown Prairie, Rozzelles Ferry Road (Northwest Park District)**

**III. Location and Description of Project: (Include a Map)**

The subject property (+/- 20 acres) includes an assemblage of all or portions of the following eleven (11) tax parcels: 031-191-03, 031-191-04, 031-191-05, 031-191-12, 031-191-22, 031-191-29, 031-191-32, 031-191-33, 031-191-31, 0310191-30, 031-201-21. Approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the total acreage is within a 160-foot transmission right-of-way. The remaining acreage is forested and will serve as a buffer for the protection and management of the site's ecologically significant features.

**IV. Project Justification/Need:**

This site harbors two federally endangered species and one candidate species. The site is ranked by the NC Natural Heritage Program as being of "National Significance" and is considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and by the NC Plant Protection Program as one of the best remaining examples of the

nearly extinct Piedmont Prairie ecosystem. Once acquired by Mecklenburg County, this site will be designated as Nature Preserve in accordance with the 1997 Nature Preserve Master Plan. The Division of Natural Resources will manage the site to protect, restore and enhance the viability of this rare ecosystem.

**V. Project Status (check all that apply):**

<b>Nothing done but this report</b>		<i>Land not yet acquired</i>	<b>X</b>
Preliminary plans completed		Land acquisition underway	<b>X</b>
Detailed plans completed		Land acquired	
No land acquisition involved		Project under contract	

**VI. Proposed Development Schedule:**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Begin</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Planning		
Land	Landowner contacts underway	Complete acquisition by 12/01
Construction		

(Identify any known external factors that are critical to the timing of this project. For example, the opening of a major shopping center or construction of a new school.) N/A

**VII. Relation of this proposal to other public projects: (Is this project part of a series of interrelated capital projects? Is the project affected by or does it affect other public projects in this area?).**  
 This site has been identified as ecologically significant and targeted for protection by the Mecklenburg County Natural Heritage Inventory. Although this property is not contiguous to other County properties and capital projects, it is a vital component in the preservation of endangered species and the restoration of a significantly rare natural community.

**VIII. Project Cost Estimate:** (Indicate the estimated total project cost and describe how this estimation has been made.)  
 Market appraisals will be the basis for negotiations and land costs for this project. Approximately 1/2 of the total acreage is being donated to the County.

**IX. Assistance Funds:** (If state or federal assistance funds are proposed, indicate the specific assistance program and the status of any application for project funding assistance.)  
 Funding for acquisition was pursued through the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. However, this project was not funded due to the State budget short-fall.

(Tax Parcel Assemblage)

