

MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT NO. 08-41
Proposed Expansion of Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge and
Preservation of Historic Holly Bend Property in Huntersville ETJ

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Mecklenburg County proposes to purchase approximately 219 acres (Tax Parcels 013-041-01 and 013-181-13) to expand the 668-acre County-owned Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge. The property, located on Neck Road in Huntersville's ETJ, is primarily forested with a scattering of open fields. The historic Holly Bend House is located on the north side of Neck Road on one of the subject parcels (PID 013-041-01). This two-story wood frame plantation house, reportedly constructed between 1795 and 1800, is designated on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, approximately 22 acres surrounding the house were designated as historic property by the Board of County Commissioners in 1975. With the exception of several out-buildings surrounding the house, the remainder of the property is undeveloped.

The intent of the proposed acquisition is three-fold:

- Preservation of the property as open space and for watershed protection
- Designation of the property as a nature preserve and to preserve existing habitat, and
- Work toward future preservation of the historic portion of the property

No improvements are planned for the property. The historic character of the Holly Bend House will be maintained by the Park & Recreation Department, which is currently investigating potential appropriate uses for the house with input from the Mecklenburg County Historic Landmarks Commission.

The property is zoned R (Rural district) with MIL-O (Watershed Overlay) by the Town of Huntersville. The Town Zoning Ordinance contains the Mountain Island Lake Watershed Overlay District (MIL-O) to provide for the protection of public water supplies as required by the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act, within that geography that contributes surface drainage into Mountain Island Lake. The intent of these watershed regulations is to require more stringent development standards in the critical areas of the watershed due to the relatively greater risk of water quality degradation associated with physical development. For instance, the majority of the subject property lies within Critical Area 4 (CA-4) – which allows a maximum of 24 percent impervious surface development, with the southeastern corner in Critical Area 2 (CA-2) – which allows a maximum of 12 percent impervious surface development.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Acquisition and preservation of open space in the Critical Area of the Mountain Island Lake Watershed continues to be a priority for Mecklenburg County. Preservation of the Holly Bend House and land adjacent to Neck Road will further protect the rural character of this area, consistent with the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

Expansion of existing park/nature preserve facilities is supported by the *2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan*. Additionally, the proposed preservation of the property in an undeveloped state supports both the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance as well as the requirements under the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

This purchase is consistent with the objectives and recommendations of Huntersville's adopted *Beatties Ford Road Corridor Small Area Plan*, which endorses preservation of land areas in the western part of Huntersville's ETJ. According to the plan "... the focus of new initiatives in lands west of Beatties Ford Road should be to retain preservation goals and to limit recreational use to those areas where preservation interests can support them".

PROJECT IMPACT:

This project will serve to protect the Holly Bend House, preserve additional open space and contribute to the protection of water quality in the region's most critical watershed. Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation has consulted with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission on the preservation and possible adaptive reuse of the Holly Bend House. The Landmarks Commission will review any work or use changes planned for Holly Bend to ensure that the integrity of this important structure, one of the oldest surviving residential structures in Mecklenburg County, is not compromised. No negative impacts are anticipated.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

This project has no relationship with, nor will it impact, other public or private projects in the vicinity. The purpose of this acquisition is historic preservation and the preservation of open space for the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Mecklenburg County anticipates acquiring the property by January 31, 2009.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

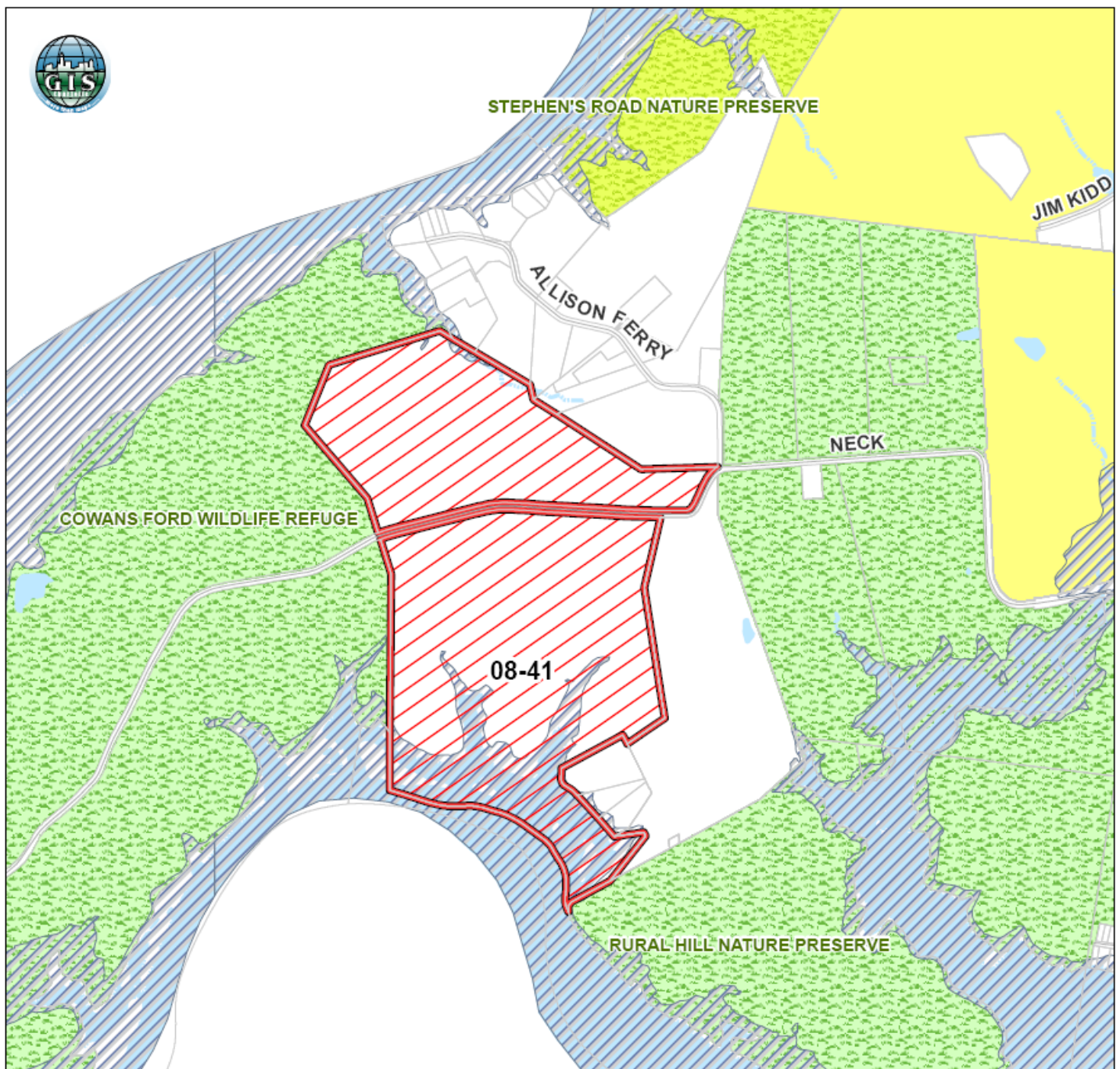
The Joint Use Task Force reviewed the matter at their November 5, 2008 meeting and no joint use comments were offered.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

After considering the support of the Town of Huntersville, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission and the Joint Use Task Force, as well as the policy support contained in the *Beatties Ford Road Corridor Small Area Plan*, Mecklenburg County's *2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan* and the consistency with the requirements of the NC Water Supply Watershed Classification and Protection Act, Planning Staff recommends approval of this proposed purchase.





CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

At their November 18, 2008 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.



Mandatory Referral 08-41

County Real Estate

-  Mandatory Referral
-  FEMA 100 Year Floodplain
-  City Property
-  Park Property