

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(5)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, June 1, 2004

TITLE: Combined Report: 1) Tree Cover Update and 2) Landscape with Wildlife SubCommittee (Environmental Advisory Board & Planning Board)

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES __ NO _ X _
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Staff report C. Subcommittee report	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Noah Ranells, 918-7326

PURPOSE

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board of Aldermen with a combined report on 1) tree cover update and 2) Landscape with Wildlife Subcommittee of the Environmental Advisory Board and the Planning Board.

INFORMATION

The tree cover update and landscape with wildlife subcommittee reported are presented together because the tree cover update was used to help inform the Landscape with Wildlife subcommittee.

The Board of Aldermen passed a resolution accepting the original report and referred this report to the Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) and Planning Board (PB) on 8 Feb 2000 with a request “to develop Carrboro-specific criteria, conservation map, and plan for Carrboro.”

In 1997, the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) completed a report entitled *A Landscape with Wildlife for Orange County*. A subsequent companion report, *Rating Land in Orange County by its Wildlife Value* was published in 1999. The TLC reports utilized 1985 aerial photography. These reports examine forested areas of at least 40 acres in size or more. However, many forested areas within Carrboro are smaller than 40 acres and not included in those analyses. Prior to the TLC reports, Dr. Haven Wiley, an ecologist in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Biology Department and designer of the TLC study, had also delineated forested areas within the Town’s planning jurisdiction from the 1985 aerial photographs. The 40-acre threshold was not used for this project when the tree cover information was used by the Town to develop its Natural Constraints map and to evaluate future development activity.

Tree Cover Update

The Town participated in the acquisition of new aerial photography in 1998 and these data became available in late 2000. A 2001 staff report (Attachment B) completed by Pam McIntosh, former Environmental Planner, reported on 1) changes in forest cover and maturity (i.e. hardwood, mixed, pine) between 1985 and 1998; and 2) TLC’s methodology to evaluate, on a smaller scale

appropriate to Carrboro, the value of forests for wildlife using the 1998 aerial photography. The analysis from which these data were obtained was funded in part by a Forestry Grant that allowed the Town to hire an intern who updated the forest delineation using the more recent aerial photography from 1998. Using a modified version of TLC's methodology described in the attached report, each tract from the 1998 photography was then assigned an intrinsic rating value. The intrinsic values can be used to compare the relative value of forest tracts for wildlife.

Efforts continue to maintain tree cover information for use in evaluating existing and future development activity. In 2004, an intern began updating tree cover based on the 2003 aerial photography. This project is in final phases and will offer the most up-to-date information on tree cover and allow for the continued evaluation of changes in tree cover over time.

Review of Landscape with Wildlife Reports

The EAB and the PB were presented with a Joint Review of the Landscape with Wildlife reports and the staff reports on changes in tree cover and the local wildlife intrinsic ratings analysis on 19 Sept 2002. A subcommittee was formed that included Glynis Gore and Rickie White for the EAB, and Britt Ludwig and Randee Haven-O'Donnell for the PB. This group met 5 times from 19 Sept 2002 to May 2004. The subcommittee also reviewed the following information:

1. Excerpts from the report "Inventory of the Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats of Orange County, North Carolina" specific to Carrboro's jurisdiction;
2. Lands Legacy Action Plan;
3. Relevant excerpts from the report "Shaping Orange County's Future (SOCF);"
4. Minutes of the Board of Aldermen work session on the SOCF report;
5. Excerpted tree protection provisions of the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance;
6. "Carrboro Vision 2020."
7. Maps and Town Geographic Information Systems data on public and private open space and greenway easements.

A report of the subcommittee's activities that includes recommendations for further action has been prepared (Attachment C). Of the focus areas listed in the subcommittee report, several relate to ongoing activities within the Planning Division, as noted below.

1. **Focus Area A.** The "Great Spaces of Carrboro", Wet and Wild category supports increased watershed awareness, an item included in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II stormwater permit application that ToC submitted to NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Spring 2003.
2. **Focus Area C.** The topic of exotics and land management was recently reviewed by the Board as part of updating the List of Invasive Species (LUO Appendix 17).
3. **Focus Area D.** Mapping of ecological communities in the Carrboro planning jurisdiction is an ongoing priority for the Planning Division. Current efforts to finalize the 2003 tree cover database will allow for a 2003 update to the intrinsic wildlife rating for forested areas.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board accept the report and refer to staff for a recommendation on implementation the proposed project components.