



November 16, 2021

To: Orange County Board of County Commissioners, the Carrboro Town Council, and the Chapel Hill Town Council

**RE: Greene Tract**

Dear Commissioners and Council Members:

The Center for Biological Diversity and its 1.7 million members and supporters across the country urge you to protect the Greene Tract for its rare species, habitat diversity, carbon sequestration, and public use.

The Board and the Town Councils should vote NO on this proposal and direct their planning departments to work on the previous 2016 Community Resolution that sets aside 20% of this property for affordable housing and puts the remaining 80% into an easement for conservation and public park use.

The Greene Tract is a 167-acre parcel of publicly owned land. Center for Biological Diversity encourages you as elected officials to act in the public interest and protect public resources.

The Greene Tract is one of the last remaining places in the state where the four-toed salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) are breeding and nesting. The four-toed salamander is listed as a Species of Special Concern under the North Carolina Endangered Species Act, and it is designated a Species of Greatest Conservation Need designated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The four-toed salamander is also being petitioned for federal listing protections under the Endangered Species Act. The populations are known to be in decline and requiring monitoring, and their habitats are significantly threatened.

Four-toed salamanders only nest in rare spring and seep habitats, which are abundant in the Greene Tract. As described in the Greene Tract Environmental Assessment, four-toed salamanders have been observed nesting in the seeps of old Field Creek and Bolin Creek. They lay their eggs beneath Sphagnum moss adjacent to streams and wetlands. Females guard their eggs for over a month, never leaving the eggs. Some females succumb to starvation before their eggs hatch.

Upon hatching, the gilled larvae will move into adjacent wet areas and undergo metamorphosis, which will usually take a little over a month, before emerging from the streams and onto land as a terrestrial salamander, dependent on mature, intact forests. They disperse widely and move between breeding sites.

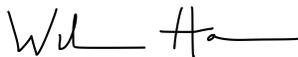
Four-toed salamanders play an important role in our ecosystem. They feed on insect populations and providing nourishment to birds and mammals. They also contribute to nutrient cycling within the forest floor and in wetlands.

In 2016, the Eno New Hope Landscape Conservation Group was formed to bring together natural resources management and conservation professionals working in the Eno and New Hope watersheds to address concerns over habitat fragmentation in these rapidly developing watersheds. Orange County and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission jointly funded a landscape-scale habitat analysis to identify priority wildlife habitat patches and corridors for sensitive wildlife species in the Eno and New Hope watersheds. The Greene Tract was highlighted and selected to be part of the priority habitat network. In addition, the Greene Tract was selected to include corridors within it to connect habitat patches. These corridors are critical for species like four-toed salamander. The protection of wildlife corridors ensures that wildlife will have the ability to move across the landscape to find food, shelter, and mates and can adapt to our changing climate.

Other rare and sensitive salamanders, frogs, turtles, birds, mammals, and plants depend on the wetlands and spring-and-seep habitat provided by the Greene Tract. The current proposal for developing up to 97 acres of publicly owned land is incompatible with protection of the four-toed salamander and other rare and sensitive species inhabiting the Greene Tract. It is also incompatible with your mandate as elected officials entrusted to protect public lands, public interest, and the public good.

Please vote no on the joint resolution. Instead, create plans for the Greene Tract that protect the four-toed salamander and other species that depend on it. Protecting the Greene Tract for its conservation, recreation, and public use is the best and highest use of this publicly owned resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Harlan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Will Harlan  
Senior Biologist  
Center for Biological Diversity  
North Carolina Office  
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