

DNREC-Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Delaware Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Comments  
Projects to be reviewed during February 2007 by  
New Castle County Technical Advisory Committee

2005-1045-S La Grange (232 lots & 54,000ft<sup>2</sup> commercial on 178.46 acres, Tax 11-026.00-039, 11-021.00-003):

This project was reviewed via PLUS 2005-06-15. It has been well over a year and we still have not received a developer's response to PLUS comments. I believe this is a requirement as part of the process.

*Below are concerns specific to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program:*

***Bog Turtle***

A Phase I survey has been conducted within the project area and suitable habitat for the federally listed bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) was found. Phase II surveys (to determine if turtles were present) were conducted in spring 2006 on wetlands identified during the phase I surveys and no turtles were found. However, the phase I and II bog turtle reports were missing a substantial amount of information. Among the missing information was phase I data on a number of the wetlands on site and the Division of Fish and Wildlife requested further phase I work as well as clarification on a number of details. A revised report was recently received and is being reviewed by the Division. After reviewing the revised report, our non-game wildlife biologist, Holly Niederriter, may want to visit the site before making a recommendation regarding further survey work at this site. She can be reached at (302) 653-2880, extension 119.

***Forest loss***

According to the application there are 119.7 acres of forest on this property and 25.4 acres is going to be removed. In reality, the amount of forest that will be removed is probably higher once this site is built out and homes, driveways, sidewalks, roadways, and stormwater management ponds are constructed. Future landowner activities (construction of playgrounds, sheds, swimming pools, etc.) also result in further clearing. Forest fragmentation caused by the current site plan greatly diminishes the value of this forest to a host of plant and animal species rather they are rare or not. Larger, connected areas of forest are more beneficial to wildlife than small, fragmented areas like those currently in the site plan. Forest fragmentation separates wildlife populations, increases road mortality, and increases "edge effects" that leave many forest dwelling species vulnerable to predation and allows the infiltration of invasive species. In addition, when forested areas are cleared, displaced wildlife must disperse into surrounding areas which often results in human/animal conflicts, including interactions of the roadways.

### ***Wetland Buffers***

Although the application indicates a 100ft riparian buffer, there is not adequate buffers along wetlands located on the property. In order to adequately protect the function and integrity of the wetlands and species that depend on this habitat, there should be at least a 100ft buffer between lot lines, infrastructure and the edge of the wetlands. Buffers are an integral component of aquatic and wetland habitats, reducing the amount of sediments, pollutants, and other non-point source material that may affect the function and integrity of habitat and the condition and survivability of aquatic organisms.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these projects. If there are any questions, please contact me at [Edna.Stetzar@state.de.us](mailto:Edna.Stetzar@state.de.us) or at (302) 653-2883 ext. 126.