

# ***Wildlife to be bulldozed in lieu of parking deck***

**Ginny Tyson : Assistant News Editor**

**Issue date:** 11/15/07 **Section:** [Op/Ed](#)



Now don't get me wrong, I'm normally the last person to complain about grass being crushed, and I'm the first one to swat at mosquitoes, but this idea is a little ridiculous and students should be more than upset.

UNCW is continuing the tradition of being unhappy with the size of campus and lack of housing on campus by beginning what is called "Phase III" student housing project and a three-story parking deck. Awesome, a parking deck for all those commuter students-wrong.

This deck would be for faculty and the residents of "Phase III" only. This will destroy an area the size of nearly 15 football fields of wildlife habitat currently being used by students for labs and classes. This area is home to numerous animals that are species of concern, including pileated woodpeckers, venus flytraps and pygmy rattlesnakes. The land that I am talking about sits directly across from the Walton School of Education Building.

Now the real question: Why should you as students care about a bunch of pine trees?

If you've ever driven by the education building at noon, you know why this is a bad idea. It is one of the most congested traffic areas on campus.

Adding a parking deck and large housing complex would only intensify the problem. The traffic would be impossible to navigate during many times of the day, and imagine how bad it would be when it rains.

The traffic would also slow the inconsistent Wave shuttle. Routes would have to be reconstructed anyway for the large project and traffic would make arriving on time more than challenging. The bikers and pedestrians would have it almost as bad as the motorists. More traffic equals dangerous conditions for bikers and boarders alike.

So why can't a university with its multitude of resources and its large science department be swayed to place this building somewhere else? This land is officially designated as a conservation area and endorsed by the

Board of Trustees and should be protected. Do we own a random old cinema on Oleander Drive? Why yes, I think we do and students miserably pay \$200 to park there.

The university should use this abandoned movie theater for more than just a shuttle stop. The apartments would be within a mile and conveniently close to restaurants, the mall, grocery stores and the beach.

It just seems that a university of our magnitude would have thought of these issues and maybe they have. The problem is no one bothers to tell the people who are affected the most: the students.

## Board okays Phase III construction despite environmental concerns

By: Jeff Golden : News Editor



Posted: 11/15/07

Nearly finalized plans for more on-campus housing have caused controversy, as it would require building on more than 15 acres of wildlife habitat.

The area in question is located directly across Reynolds Drive from the Watson School of Education. The majority of the forest is composed of longleaf pine and wiregrass communities, populations native only to southeastern coastal regions. Though no endangered species call the habitat home, several species of concern are present in the area, said Dr. Steve Emslie, biology professor and advocate of protecting the habitat. These species of concern are four types of birds and two species of snakes; the birds are on the state species of concern list while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the snakes as federal species of concern.

Students and Wilmington residents use the area for a variety of recreational activities, such as running, hiking and biking.

"We use the forest every semester for BIO 366 ecology labs. The students do surveys, test ecological hypotheses ... it's a perfect natural laboratory for us right out our back door," Emslie said.

Phase III of privatized student housing, a continuation of the Seahawk Landing and Seahawk Village apartments, is scheduled to be built over part of the forested area. Both Phase I and Phase II are roughly the same size-about 15 acres-as the new project. Phase III will consist of four three-story tall buildings and hopes to accommodate approximately 670 students, said Ed Shuford, the director of project management for the UNCW Facilities office. It will have four-, six- and eight-person suites aimed at housing sophomores, while Seahawk Village and Seahawk Landing both target juniors and seniors. Once Phase III is completed, the goal of having 40 percent of students living on-campus will have been met and no more housing construction is planned for the immediate future, Shuford said.

Included in the 15 acres will be a parking deck with more than 1,000 spaces, though most of them are exclusive to Phase III residents and faculty members. The additional faculty parking will be necessary because the new School of Nursing building is being constructed over the existing faculty lot T.

A report filed by the Faculty Senate Building and Grounds Committee ranked the area now planned for construction as the last of seven potential sites.

"Many of those buildings can still be built, but there are better places on the edge of campus," Emslie said.

A second report filed by the Housing Taskforce, however, considered six locations for Phase III. According to Shuford, four of them were already cleared but are existing parking lots, which would not be big enough to allow 670 beds, a parking deck and new places for the people who formerly used these lots to park. The remaining two locations were the area chosen and another similarly forested habitat behind Seahawk Village. The Housing Taskforce decided the land behind Seahawk Village would have also required 15 acres of forest to be cut down and was too far out of the way to be convenient housing for students.

Both reports were present at meetings of Chancellor DePaolo's cabinet and of the Board of Trustees, and both considered and debated each point of view before deciding to go with the Housing Taskforce's recommendation, Shuford said.

Before construction can begin, the university must file an Environmental Assessment where a team of scientists comes up with their own findings, based on 12 criteria, as to the environmental effects of construction. If the report finds that there will be no major negative consequences a Finding of No Significant Impact is issued and construction can begin.

"The same thing happened before construction of Phase II, and we're expectant that there will be the same outcome for Phase III," Shuford said.

Emslie calls for the creation of a "UNCW Nature Reserve" that would consist of almost all of the undeveloped land currently on campus to be saved. He believes that the university can continue its growth off-campus, citing three vacant spots directly next to campus including the old cinemas off of College Road and Oleander Drive.

The 2005 Master Campus plan, passed by the Board of Trustees, does call for 140 acres of land on-campus to be set aside for preservation. The university also owns roughly 200 acres of preserved land in the surrounding counties. The habitat across from the Watson School of Education, however, was not part of this plan, and more than the 15 acres currently in jeopardy could be cut down in the future, probably for additional recreational fields.

Two buildings currently with construction plans underway-the new nursing and psychology buildings-have been approved to be built over existing parking lots and will not require the further deforestation of campus.

The clearing of the forest is scheduled to begin in late April or early May 2008 and Phase III should be open to students Aug. 1, 2009, said Shuford.