

To the Valley News 2/15/06

To the Editor:

The Hanover Conservation Council applauds the decision of the town's Zoning Board of Adjustment to require a new, independent assessment of the extent and nature of wetlands in the project areas on Greensboro Road currently proposed for development by Paragon LLC. The Council concurs with the Town's Open Space Plan in identifying the Mink Brook corridor and associated wetlands as a top protection priority. A full and accurate understanding of all the wetlands is essential; there is a variety of ponds, streams, intermittent streams, and wetlands north side of Greensboro Road. Since water from the area proposed for development drains into to an extensive wetlands area behind the houses on the north side of Greensboro Road, the distributed impacts of the project must be considered with great care.

The Council places very high priority on protection of Mink Brook and its associated flood plain. For many years, we have engaged property owners along Mink Brook in discussions about protecting their high natural resource value lands from development. Together with the Upper Valley Land Trust, we successfully protected the 113 acres that is now the Mink Brook Nature Preserve. The part of Paragon's development proposal that would allow the entire 95 acres south of Greensboro road to remain undeveloped and conserved is consistent with our aspirations for that area.

We are concerned about wetland and habitat impacts on the north side. The new, independent wetland study will provide critical information to help the community to examine whether development of the 161 acre area north of Greensboro is feasible in a way that will protect the fragile ecosystem, preserve wildlife habitat and corridors, and provide for public access to scenic areas along the Appalachian Trail corridor. It will also provide time to determine whether there might be other approaches to protecting this special land.

The proposed Paragon project is large and challenging. We are fully supportive of Hanover's volunteer Planning and Zoning Boards in giving the project such thorough scrutiny.

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