



Agenda Action Form Overview

The County Manager recommends that the Board approve the Special Military Cooperative Agreement between Durham County and the Army National Guard and authorize the County Manager to execute the Cooperative Agreement.

The agreement would be used to support farmland conservation easements in a 1-mile radius around Camp Butner northeastern Durham, as shown shaded on the attached map. This area, referred to as the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) area, consists of an area where the National Guard would like to reduce future residential development by using conservation easements or fee simple acquisitions. The Guard is interested in reducing future residential development to minimize conflicts between residents and this active military training area

Background/Justification

Durham County has a robust program of permanently protecting farmland using conservation easements with interested landowners. To date, the County has used federal FRPP/ALE grant funds to protect important farms in Durham County totaling over 2078 acres. These FRPP/ALE funded farms have included six farms with 501 acres within the ACUB area, as shown on the attached map. The federal FRPP/ALE funds provided a 50% funding match of the easement's value, while the ACUB agreement provides for a more generous 75% cost match.

The National Guard has been interested in reducing population growth surrounding this active military training area for some time. In 2007, the BOCC was presented a Camp Butner Joint Land Use Study prepared by the National Guard with representatives from Durham and Granville County Planning Departments in an effort provide the policy and safety reasons for lowering the future residential density surrounding Camp Butner in the one-mile buffer area. However, it has only been recently that the National Guard has only been able to access federal military buffer funds to help pay for easements or acquisitions. The Triangle Land Conservancy and the Tar River Land Trust (in Granville County) also have existing agreements with the National Guard for protection projects for the properties surrounding Camp Butner.

The attached agreement would be formalized between Durham County and the National Guard so the County is eligible for funds for specific easement projects with the funds added at a later date for specific easement projects. As with other farm easements, any farms considered for a Durham County easement would be evaluated according to the Durham farm scoring criteria, reviewed by the Farmland Protection Board, and brought to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Bull City Farm is one pending farm easement that may switch to the ACUB funding once funds can be allocated to it in order to take advantage of the better match, and because the ACUB easement terms provide additional flexibility for farm operators compared to the ALE required easement terms.



Policy Impact

The Cooperative Agreement to help fund conservation easements supports Goal 4: Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity” as well as Goal 5: “Accountable, Efficient and Visionary Government”

Procurement Background

N/A

Fiscal Impact

N/A.

Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that the Board approve the Special Military Cooperative Agreement between Durham County and the Army National Guard and authorize the County Manager to execute the Cooperative Agreement.