



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0462, Version: 1

Item:

Approve a Special Military Project Cooperative Agreement between Durham County and the Army National Guard for financial funding support for conservation easements

Date of BOCC Meeting: September 14, 2020

Request for Board Action:

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 in northeastern Durham County, 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.

This is a financially advantageous funding source for Durham County when there are proposed farm easements within this one-mile area. The County has used federal FRPP/ALE grant funds in the past to protect important farms in Durham County totaling over 2,078 acres. These FRPP/ALE funded farms have included six farms with over 501 acres within the ACUB area. The federal FRPP/ALE funds provided a 50% funding match of the easement's value. The attached ACUB agreement provides for a more generous 75% funding match instead of the 50 % ALE funding the County is often been able to use to help fund farm easements.

While there is no initial \$\$ amount included with this agreement, it is important to put the cooperative agreement in place between the County and the National Guard so that the County is eligible for funds for specific easement projects which would be allocated to the agreement at a later date. As with other farm easements, any farms considered for a conservation 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.

Alignment with Strategic Plan: This agenda item supports Goal 4: Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity” as well as Goal 5: “Accountable, Efficient and Visionary Government”

Resource Persons: Jane Korest, Division Head, Open Space and Real Estate; Celeste Burns, Open Space Coordinator; Peri Manns, Deputy Director - Engineering and Environmental Services

County Manager's 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.

County Manager: _____