

SP2024-00022

SE2024-00031

Living Earth School

Board of Supervisors – June 4, 2025

PROJECT: SP202400022 Living Earth School

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Samuel Miller

TAX MAP/PARCELS: 10100-00-00-020C0, 10100-00-00-02000, and 10100-00-00-01900

LOCATION: 3626 Red Hill Road

PROPOSAL: A request for a special use permit to allow a boarding camp on approximately 287.13 acres. The requests includes a max of 250 attendees (plus staff) at any given time for year-round activities and special events for up to six times per year with a max of up to 500 attendees. The proposed development includes camp facilities, staff residences, camping areas, and a pavilion.

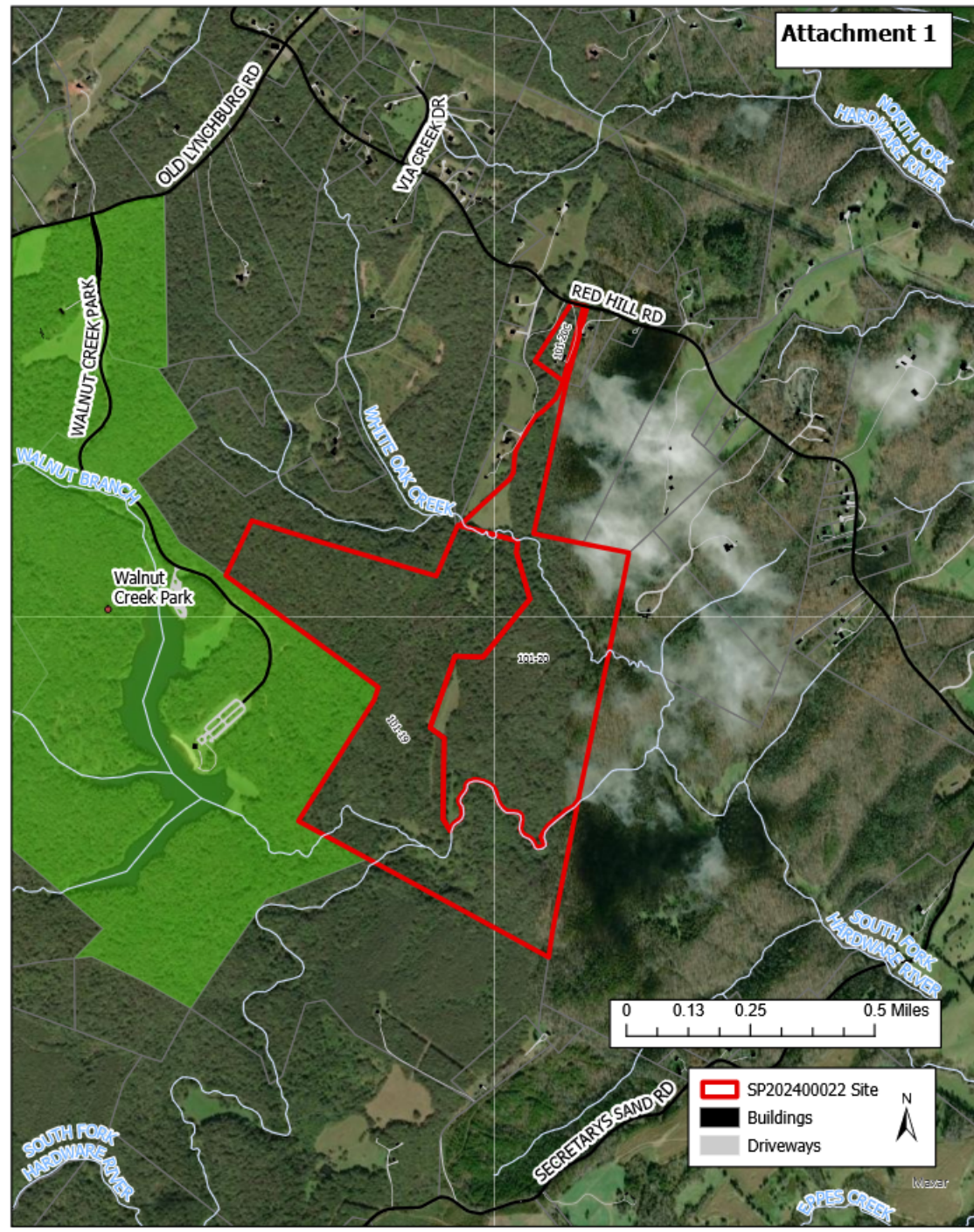
PETITION: Request for a special use permit in accordance with Section 18-10.2.2 (20) and Section 18-5.1.05 for a Boarding Camp.

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR: No

ZONING: RA Rural Area - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots)

OVERLAY DISTRICT: Flood Hazard

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Area – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots) in Rural Area 4 in the Comprehensive Plan.



Summary

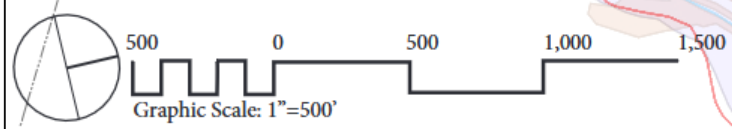
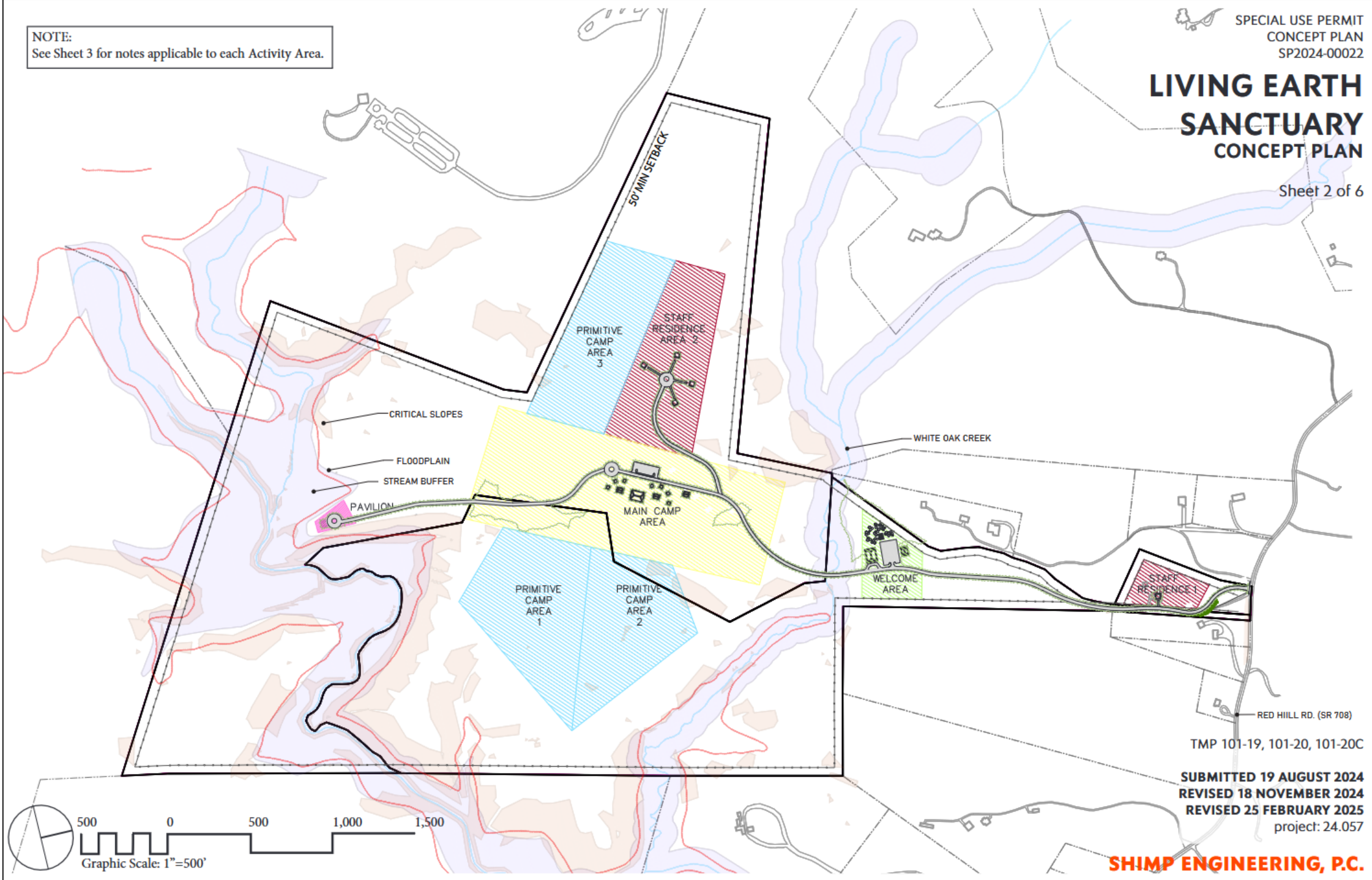
Summer Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eight weeks per year• Up to 250 campers
Other camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 44 weeks per year• Up to 100 campers
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 12 programs per year for 200 or fewer attendees• Up to six events per year for 201 - 500 attendees<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendees after first 200 to arrive/depart by shuttle van/buses
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome pavilion• Camp hall• Cabins• Staff residences (up to 6)• Other small structures (nature library, activity pavilion, greenhouses)• Central water/septic system request

NOTE:
See Sheet 3 for notes applicable to each Activity Area.

SPECIAL USE PERMIT
CONCEPT PLAN
SP2024-00022

LIVING EARTH SANCTUARY CONCEPT PLAN

Sheet 2 of 6



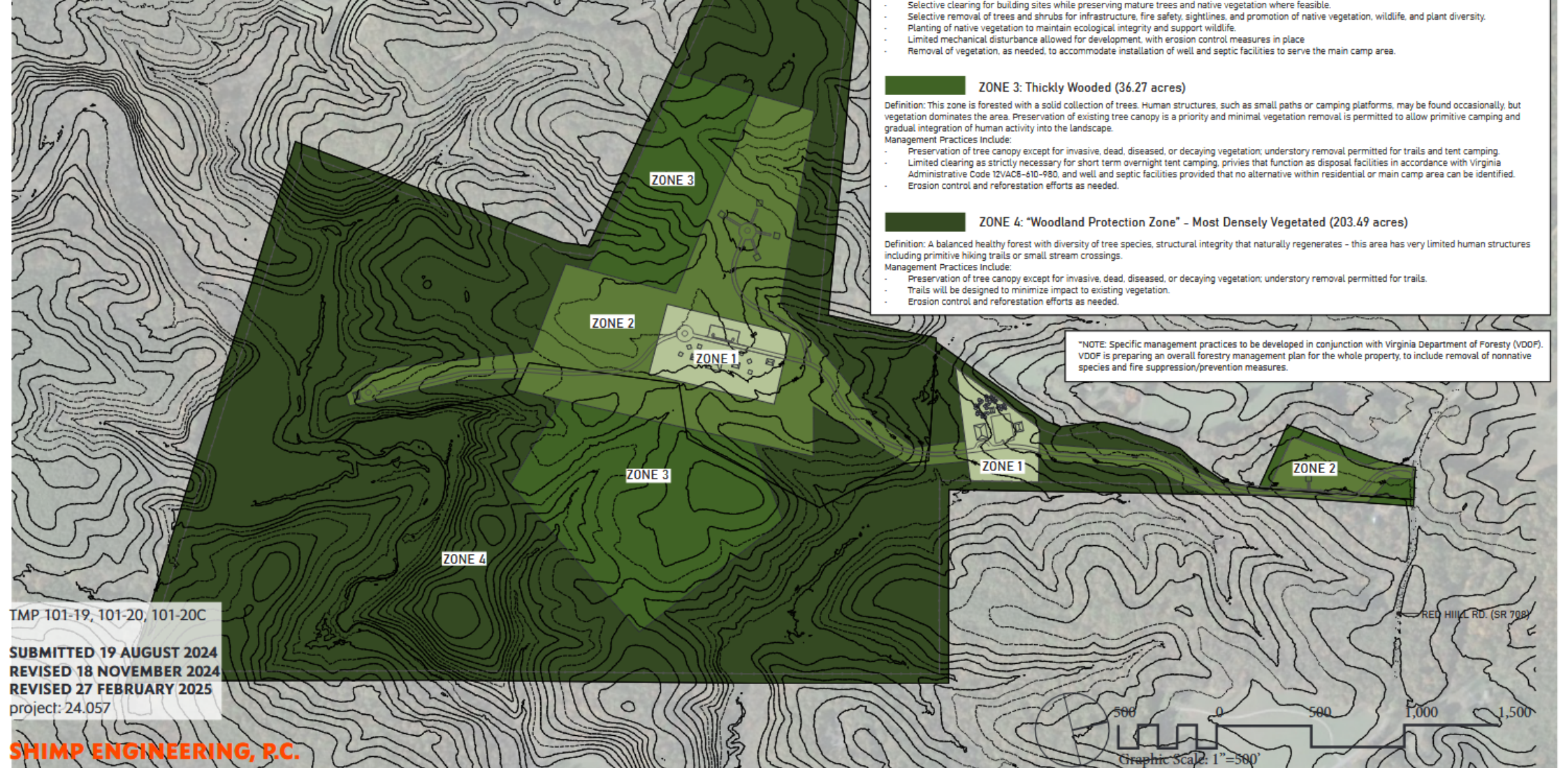
TMP 101-19, 101-20, 101-20C

SUBMITTED 19 AUGUST 2024
REVISED 18 NOVEMBER 2024
REVISED 25 FEBRUARY 2025
project: 24.057

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LIVING EARTH SANCTUARY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Sheet 6 of 6



TMP 101-19, 101-20, 101-20C

SUBMITTED 19 AUGUST 2024
REVISED 18 NOVEMBER 2024
REVISED 27 FEBRUARY 2025
project: 24.057

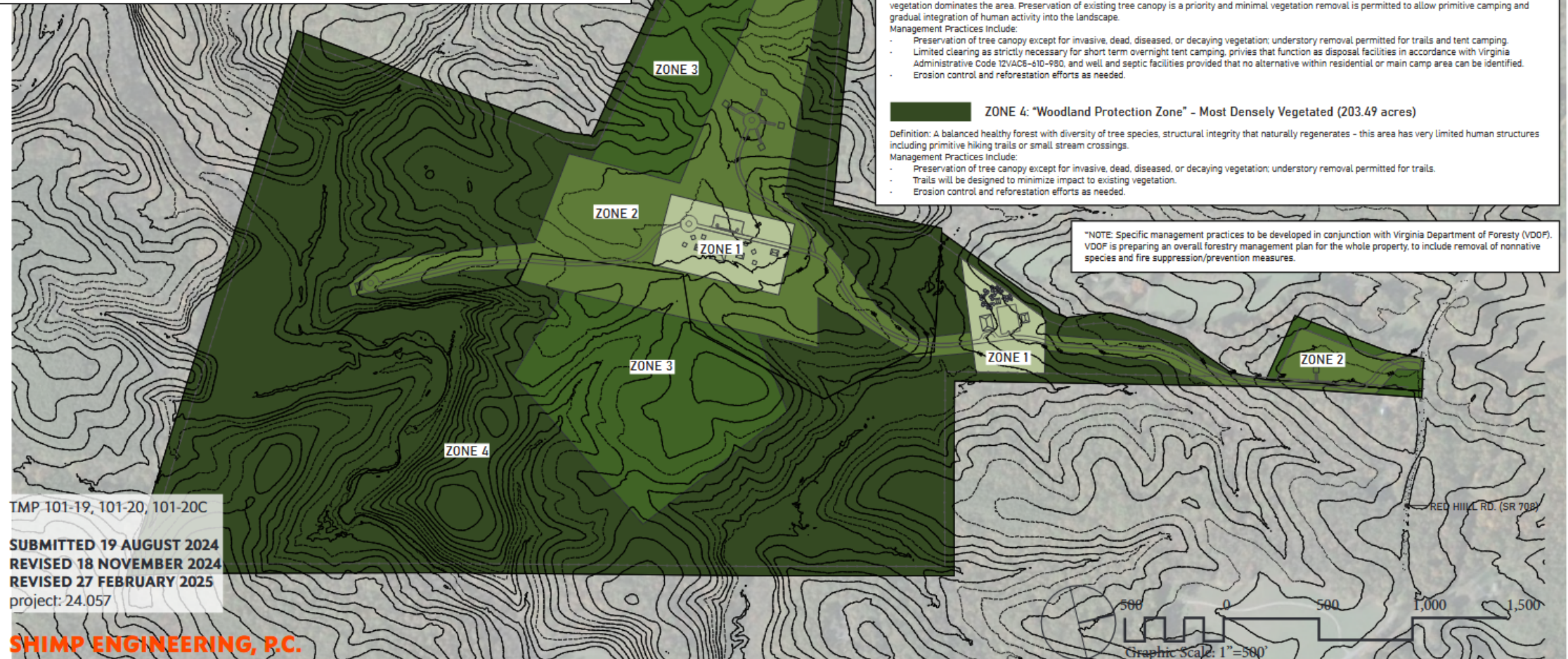
SHIMP ENGINEERING, P.C.

Zone 1: 10.05 acres

Zone 2: 37.32 acres

Zone 3: 36.27 acres

Zone 4: 203.49 acres



TMP 101-19, 101-20, 101-20C

SUBMITTED 19 AUGUST 2024

REVISED 18 NOVEMBER 2024

REVISED 27 FEBRUARY 2025

project: 24.057

SHIMP ENGINEERING, P.C.

Factors to be considered when acting (18-33.8):

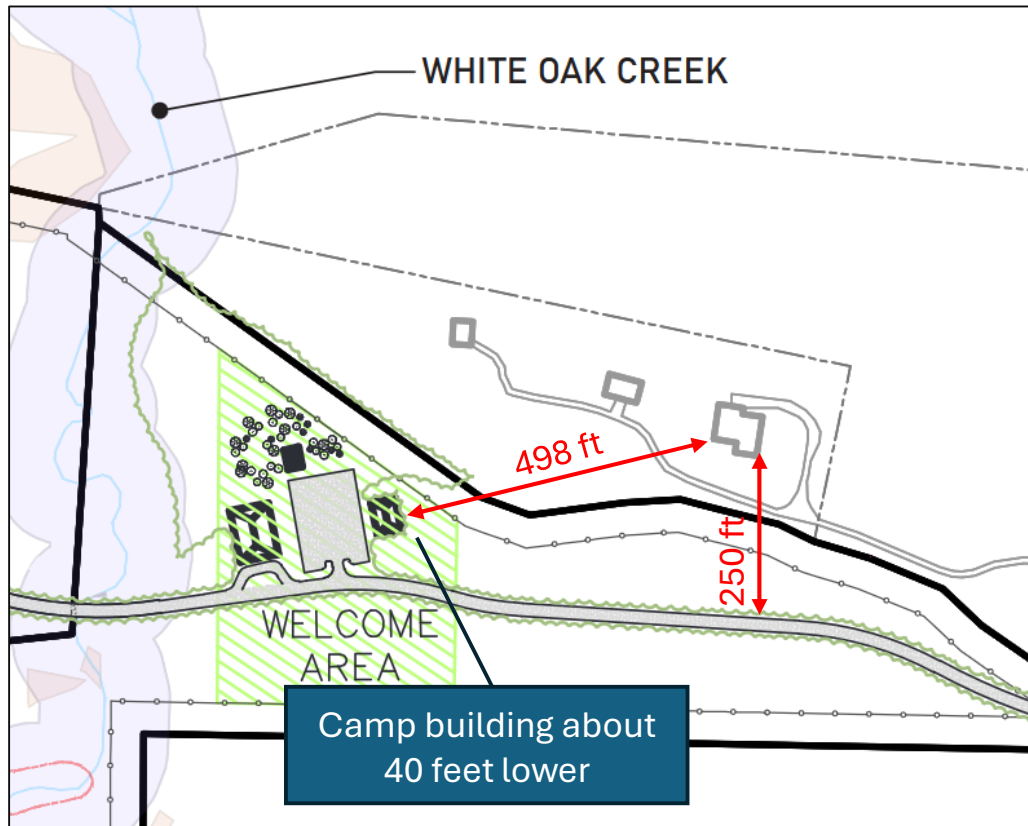
The Commission and the Board of Supervisors will consider the following factors when reviewing and acting on an application for a special use permit:

1. **No substantial detriment.** Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.
2. **Character of the nearby area is unchanged.** Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.
3. **Harmony.** Whether the proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter, with the uses permitted by right in the district, with the applicable provisions of [section 5](#), and with the public health, safety, and general welfare (including equity).
4. **Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.** Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

No substantial detriment

- Screening added or maintained near adjacent dwellings
- Driveway moved away from existing dwelling to west
- Amplified sound limited to main activity area in center of property and to “Welcome Area”

Near “Welcome Area”



Near Entrance



360 ft to existing dwelling

Character of the nearby area is unchanged

Existing Pattern:

- forested parcels
- largely-wooded public park
- large residential lots
- floodplain of the South Fork Hardware River

Proposed Use:

- large forested areas for programs
- largest open area isolated in the center of the property



- **Road Safety**

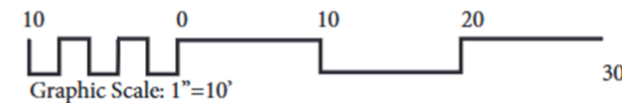
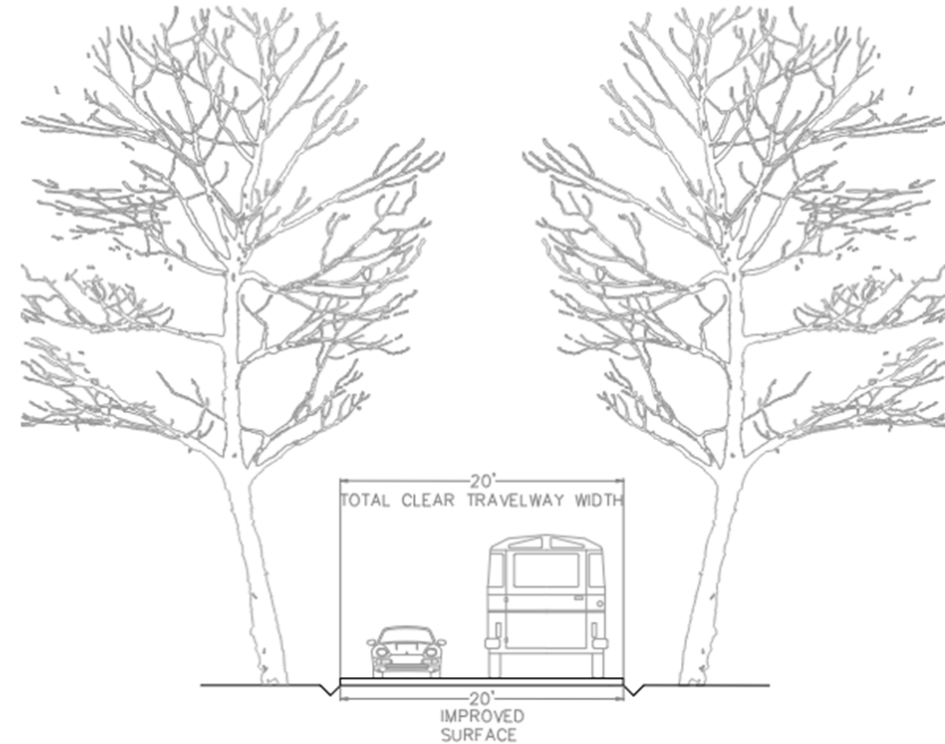
- Access via Red Hill Rd
- VDOT: No objections to proposed use
- Special exception for critical-slopes disturbance requested to allow sight-distance improvements at access – 2,674 sq ft (0.06 acre)



- **Emergency Access**

- Concept plan shows internal road design as requested by Fire/Rescue
- Emergency access plan required by condition

TYPICAL INTERIOR ACCESS ROAD CROSS SECTION:



- **Fire Safety – Recommended Changes to Conditions After Planning Commission Hearing:**

Following the PC public hearing, Community Development and Fire-Rescue staff revised the recommended conditions of approval:

- Safe site access for emergency vehicles

6. The existing crossing of White Oak Creek must be removed. The replacement crossing must span the stream bed. **The vehicle weight capacity of the crossing requires County approval prior to approval of a final site development plan.**

- Design and management of outdoor fire rings to address concerns about forest fires

12. Campfires on the site must only occur in constructed fire rings whose location has been approved by the County.

(a) All fires must be attended by camp staff from lighting until complete extinguishment.

(b) A fire extinguisher must be maintained at the site of each active fire.

(c) Fire rings must have a clear zone without trees within 25 feet of the edge of the fire ring.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Natural Resources
Strategy 4j: “[i]ncrease the community’s awareness of the importance of biodiversity to encourage protection of biological resources.”
Objective 6: “retain and improve land cover near rivers and streams and protect wetlands.”
Rural Area
Objective 2: “[p]rotect and preserve natural resources...”
Objective 3: “protect the county’s historic, archeological, and cultural resources.”
Objective 7: “provide information to citizens so they are well-informed and understand the cultural, economic, and ecological aspects of the rural area.”

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Comparison to By-right Residential Development

- Residential Development:
 - 23 dwellings permitted
 - No limits on structure size, road/driveway lengths
 - Limited control of vegetation changes
- Camp Proposal:
 - Less extensive construction and vegetation removal
 - “Worst case” traffic counts higher in summer season
 - Summer camps usually a mix of overnight and day campers
 - Rest of year, lower traffic counts

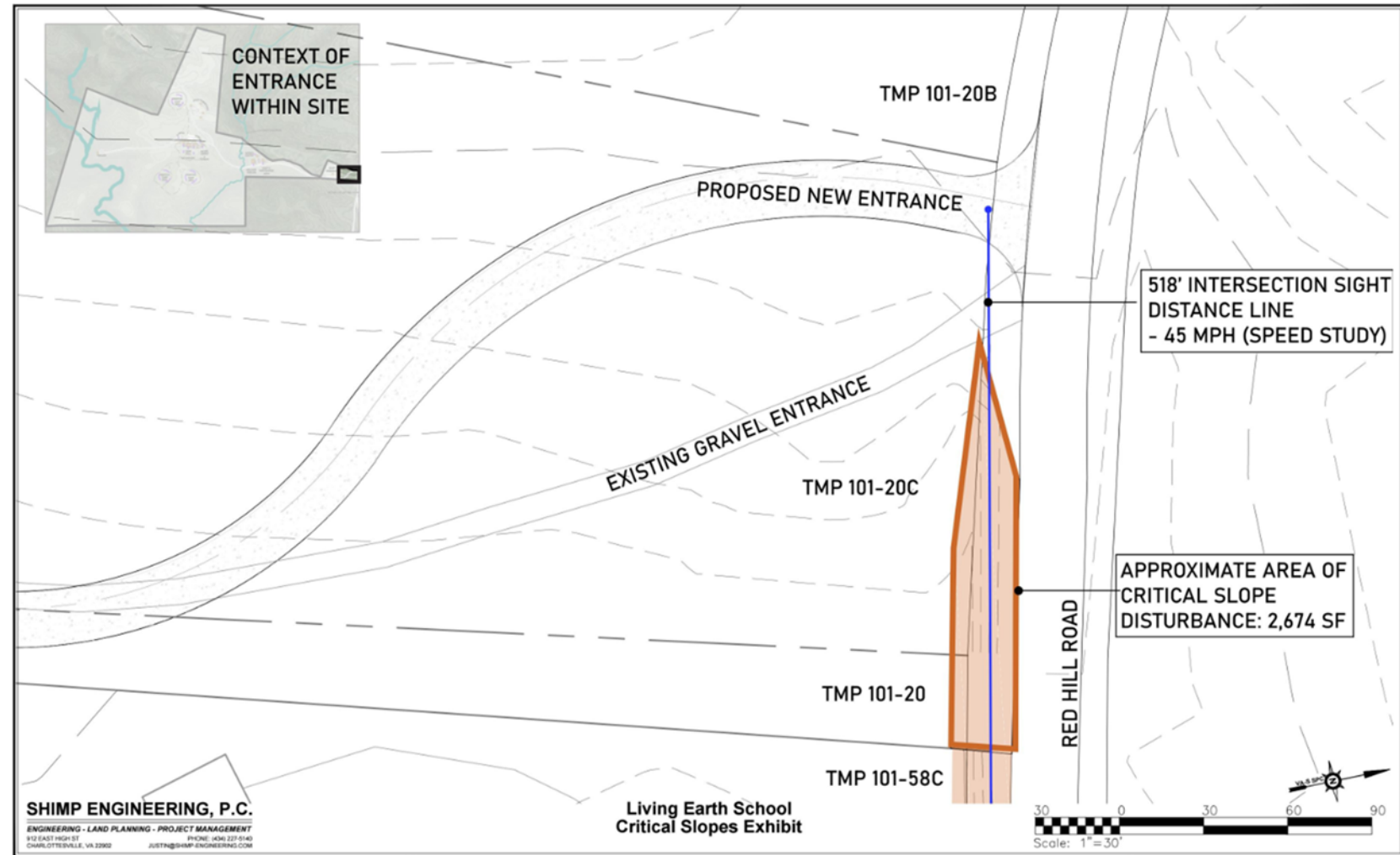
8 Weeks/Year

44 Weeks/Year

Traffic Generation			
Use	Daily Trips (Weekday) – ITE Estimate	Daily Trips (Sunday) – ITE Estimate	Daily Trips -- applicant estimates
23 Single-Family Dwellings	261	134	
Summer Camp weekend peak (250 overnight campers)	n/a		333 <i>(Sunday and Friday)</i>
Summer Camp weekday peak (250 day-only campers)	n/a		384 <i>(Monday to Friday)</i>
Day Camps (at permitted max of 100 people)	n/a		144

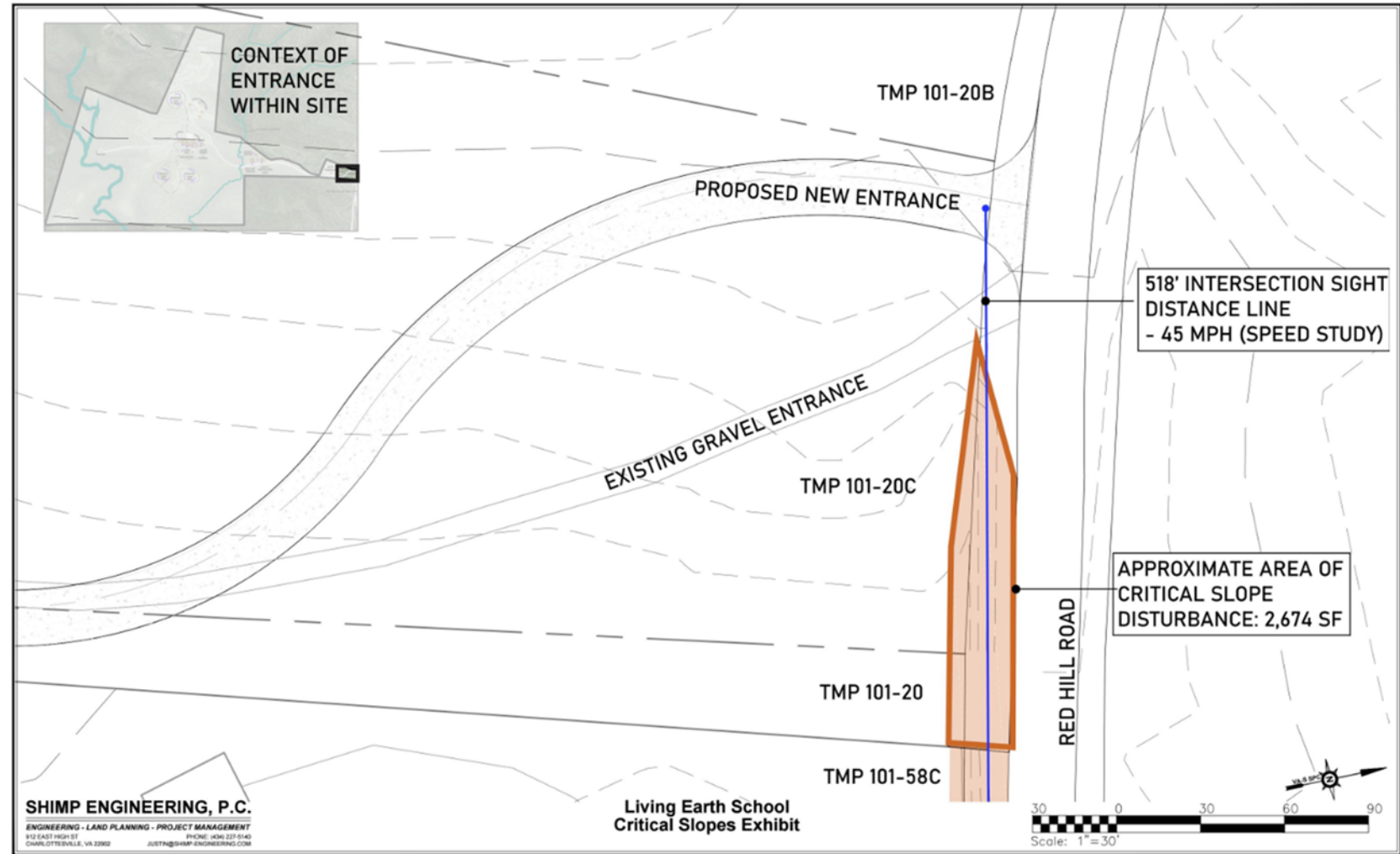
PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting a special exception to allow the disturbance of approximately 2,674 square feet of critical slopes (slopes greater than 25%) in order to improve sight distance from the entrance on Red Hill Road.



Summary:

- Small disturbance area on existing road cutting
- Not in a reservoir watershed or stream buffer
- Not located along a designated Scenic Highway or Entrance Corridor
- Disturbance area would be subject to site-plan, stormwater, and erosion-control requirements
- Disturbance would increase sight distance at entrance, increasing safety



Recommendation – Special Use Permit

PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW:

At its meeting on March 11, 2025, the Planning Commission voted 6:0 to recommend approval of SP202400022 with conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the special use permit application with the following conditions:

1) Development and use must be in general accord (as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator) with the conceptual plan prepared by Shimp Engineering, PC, titled "Living Earth Sanctuary," revised 27 February 2025 (hereinafter "Concept Plan"). To be in general accord with the Concept Plan, development and use must reflect the following major elements as shown on the Concept Plan:

- a) General location of structures, camping areas, and activity areas as shown on Sheet 2 of the Concept Plan;
- b) Access-road cross section as shown on Sheet 5 of the Concept Plan

Minor modifications, with the approval of the Zoning Administrator and the Director of Planning, to the Concept Plan that do not otherwise conflict with the elements listed above, may be made to ensure compliance with all applicable laws.

- 2) Vegetated forest cover on the site must be managed in general accord with sheet 6 of the Concept Plan.
- 3) For up to eight weeks each year, an overnight Summer Camp is permitted on the site during June, July, and August ("Summer Camp Season"). Summer Camp attendance must not exceed 250 campers on the site at any one time.
- 4) Outside of the Summer Camp season, camp attendance must not exceed 100 participants (excluding staff) on the site at any one time. Overnight camping is permitted only as part of a scheduled program run by the operators of the camp. The site must not be used as a commercial campground.
- 5) Programs or events on the site for up to 200 participants (excluding staff or contractors) must occur no more than 12 times per calendar

year. Events on the site for more than 200 participants must occur no more than six times per calendar year, and the maximum number of attendees (excluding staff or contractors) for those events is 500 persons. For any event with more than 200 attendees, all attendees in excess of 200 must arrive and depart the site in shuttle vans or buses rather than individual vehicles.

6) The existing crossing of White Oak Creek must be removed. The replacement crossing must span the stream bed. **The vehicle weight capacity of the crossing requires County approval prior to approval of a final site development plan.**

7) Existing stone walls and foundations on the site must not be removed or dismantled during development of the site or operation of the camp use.

8) Health Department approval is required for all well and septic facilities prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.

9) Fire/Rescue approval of an emergency-access plan for the site is required prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.

10) Outdoor lighting is limited to full cut-off fixtures, shielded to reflect light away from all abutting properties.

11) Outdoor sound amplification is permitted only in the Main Camp Area and Welcome Area shown on the Conceptual Plan. In the Welcome Area, outdoor sound amplification is not permitted between the hours of 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.

12) Campfires on the site must only occur in constructed fire rings whose location has been approved by the County.

a) **All fires must be attended by camp staff from lighting until complete extinguishment.**

b) **A fire extinguisher must be maintained at the site of each active fire.**

c) **Fire rings must have a clear zone without trees within 25 feet of the edge of the fire ring.**

Recommendation – Special Exception

The request to allow disturbance of critical slopes meets several of the criteria for granting a modification or waiver, allowing the Board to grant a modification or waiver.

Based on an analysis of the request, staff recommends approval of the request to disturb critical slopes.

QUESTIONS?

PUBLIC HEARING

SP2024-00022

SE2024-00031

Motions

Special Use Permit (SP202400022):

To approve:

I move to adopt the Resolution attached to the staff report as Attachment E, with Condition 12(c) amended to read: 'Fire rings must have a clear zone without trees within 25 feet of the edge of the fire ring.'

To deny:

I move to not adopt the Resolution attached to the staff report as Attachment E.

Special Exception: (SE202400031):

To approve:

I move to adopt the Resolution attached to the staff report as Attachment F.

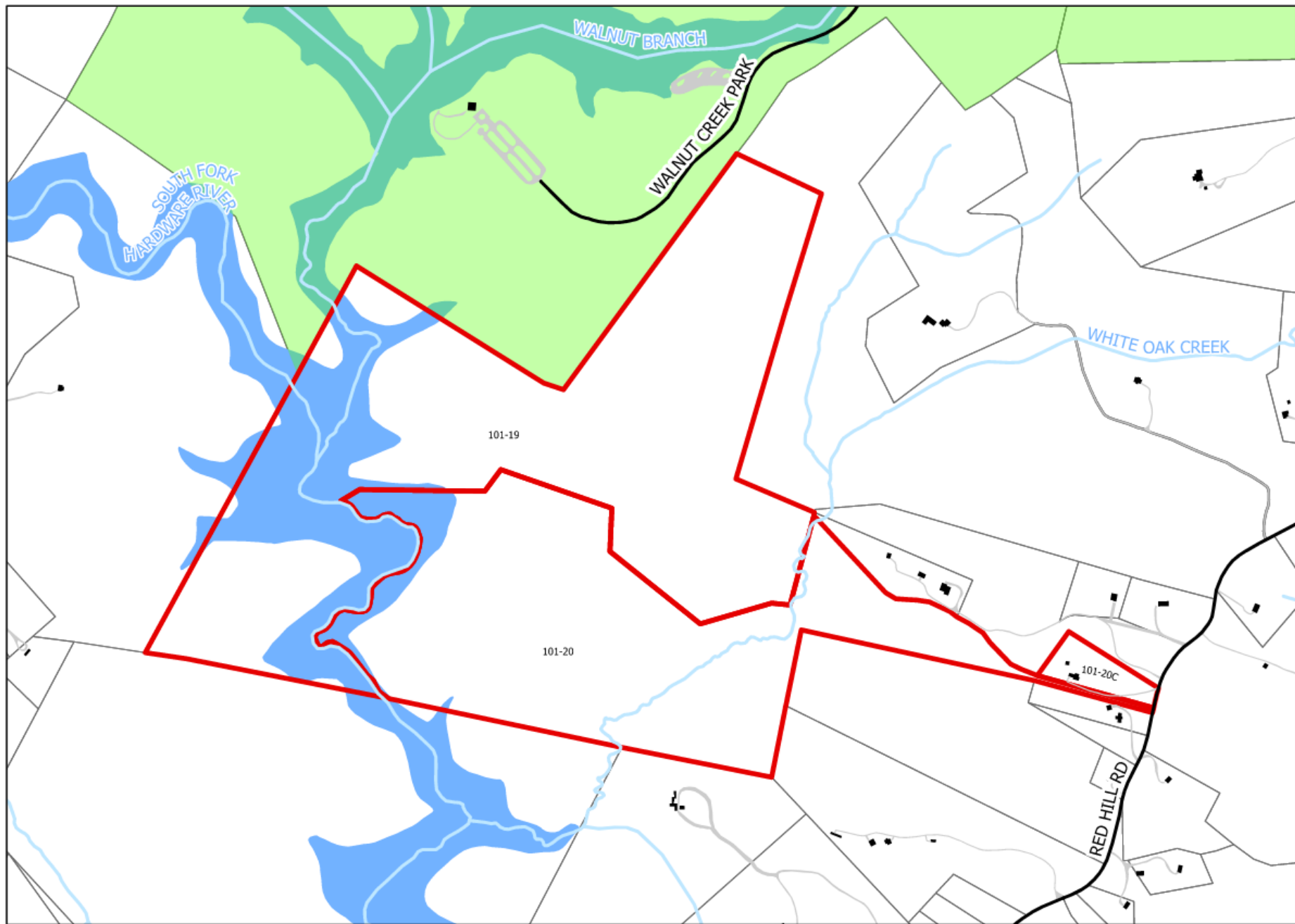
To deny:

I move to not adopt the Resolution attached to the staff report as Attachment F.

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting on March 11, 2025, the Planning Commission (PC) voted 6:0 to recommend approval of SP202400022 with the conditions stated in the staff report, with the following amendments:

- Removing Conditions 3b and 3c, which were inadvertently included by staff in the draft
- Changing Condition 5 from requiring that all attendees for events of up to 500 persons access the site by shuttle buses/vans, to requiring that attendees in excess of 200 access by shuttle buses/vans.
- Amending Condition 11 to allow amplified sound at the proposed “Welcome Center” on the site between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.



0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



Sec. 4.1 - Water supplies and sewer systems.

The water supply and sewer system serving either a development or any individual lot shall comply with the following:

...

b. *Water supply and sewer system when development or lot not connected to the public water supply and/or the public sewer system.* When a development or a lot is not or will not be connected to the public water supply and/or the public sewer system, the following shall apply, except when an existing structure is damaged as provided in section 4.1(a)(1):

1. *Lots served by an alternative onsite sewage system.* On any lot served by an alternative onsite sewage system, no building permit shall be issued for any structure, the use of which requires sewage disposal, without the Virginia Department of Health's approval of the location and area for the alternative onsite sewage system.
2. *Lots served by a conventional onsite sewage system.* On any lot served by a conventional onsite sewage system, no building permit shall be issued for any structure, the use of which requires sewage disposal, without the Virginia Department of Health's approval of the location and area for both an original and a replacement subsurface drainfield that is adequate to serve the use. For residential uses, each subsurface drainfield shall have suitable soils of adequate area to accommodate sewage disposal from a three bedroom dwelling as determined by the current regulations of the Virginia Department of Health.

Sec. 5.1.05 - Day camp, boarding camp.

- a. Provisions for outdoor cooking, campfires, cooking pits, etc., shall be subject to Albemarle County fire official approval whether or not a site development plan is required;
- b. All such uses shall conform to the requirements of the Virginia Department of Health Bureau of Tourist Establishment Sanitation and other applicable requirements.

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3. For up to eight weeks each year, an overnight Summer Camp is permitted on the site during June, July, and August (“Summer Camp Season”). ~~a. Summer Camp attendance must not exceed 250 campers on the site at any one time.~~

~~b. All daily attendees must travel to and from the site only by shuttle buses or vans provided by the camp operators and must not travel to or from the site in individual vehicles, except in case of emergency.~~

~~c. Overnight attendees are permitted to arrive and depart in individual vehicles.~~

4. Outside of the Summer Camp season, camp attendance must not exceed 100 participants (excluding staff) on the site at any one time. Overnight camping is permitted only as part of a scheduled program run by the operators of the camp. The site must not be used as a commercial campground.

5. Programs or events on the site for up to 200 participants (excluding staff or contractors) must occur no more than 12 times per calendar year. Events on the site for more than 200 participants must occur no more than six times per calendar year, and the maximum number of attendees (excluding staff or contractors) for those events is 500 persons. For any event with more than 200 attendees, all attendees in excess of 200 must arrive and depart the site in shuttle vans or buses rather than individual vehicles.

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8. Health Department approval is required for all well and septic facilities prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.

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10. Outdoor lighting is limited to full cut-off fixtures, shielded to reflect light away from all abutting properties.

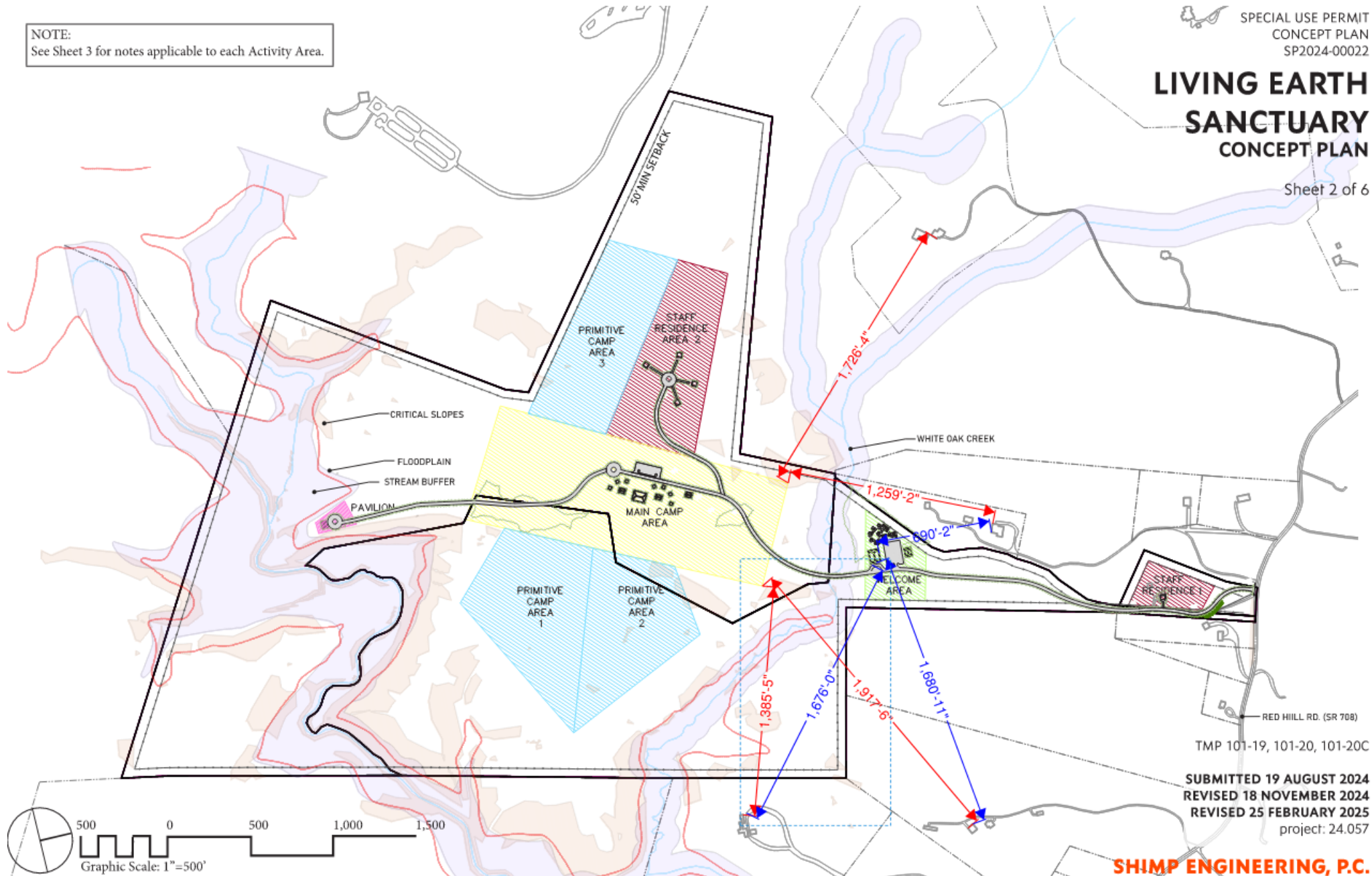
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NOTE:
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SPECIAL USE PERMIT
CONCEPT PLAN
SP2024-00022

LIVING EARTH SANCTUARY CONCEPT PLAN

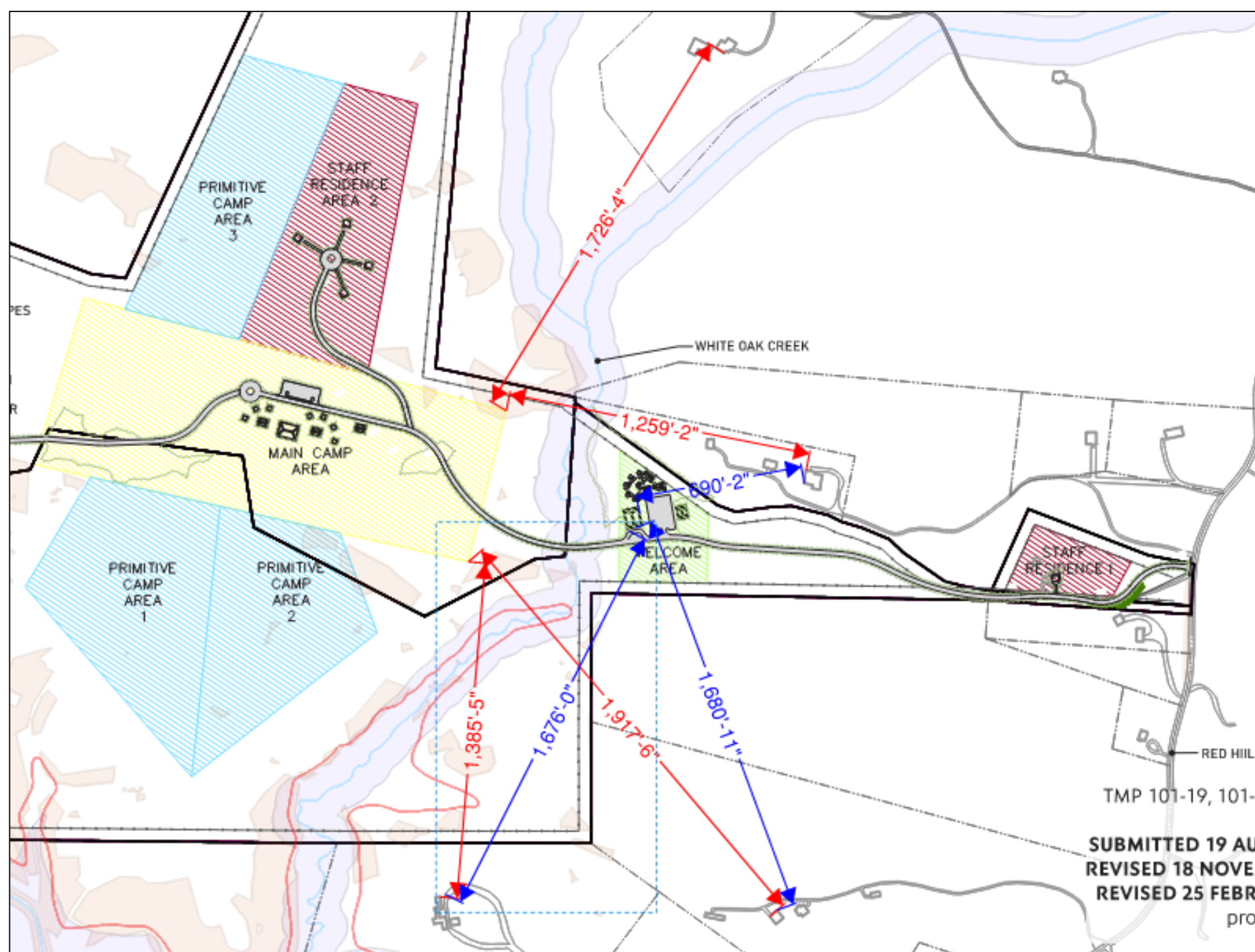
Sheet 2 of 6



TMP 101-19, 101-20, 101-20C

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SHIMP ENGINEERING, P.C.



Fire management: summary of applicant response

- Fire pit locations
 - In camping areas
 - Outside main buildings
- Fire pit design/use
 - Permanent pit/ring (often stone)
 - Cleared zone of 10-15 feet (gravel surface, organic material removed) Fire extinguishers located at fire rings
 - Fires attended by staff
- Fire suppression
 - All fire pits to have vehicular access
 - Water tank for fire suppression planned



TMP 101-20B

PROPOSED NEW ENTRANCE

518' INTERSECTION SIGHT
DISTANCE LINE
- 45 MPH (SPEED STUDY)

EXISTING GRAVEL ENTRANCE

TMP 101-20C

APPROXIMATE AREA OF
CRITICAL SLOPE
DISTURBANCE: 2,674 SF

RED HILL ROAD

TMP 101-20

TMP 101-58C

SHIMP ENGINEERING, P.C.

ENGINEERING - LAND PLANNING - PROJECT MANAGEMENT
912 EAST HIGH ST. PHONE: (434) 227-5140
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902 JUSTIN@SHIMP-ENGINEERING.COM

Living Earth School
Critical Slopes Exhibit

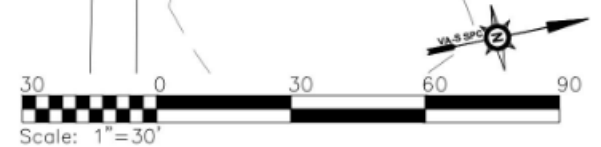







TABLE A. ACTIVITY AREAS AND IMPROVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS		
LEGEND	ACTIVITY AREA	IMPROVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS
	Staff Residence Areas 1 and 2	Buildings and accessory structures and improvements, drainfields, wells, driveways, travelways, stormwater management facilities, and similar site improvements Maximum number of dwellings permitted in Staff Residence Areas 1 and 2: Six (6) Maximum building footprint per dwelling: 2,500 SF
	Welcome Area*	Buildings and accessory structures and improvements, drainfields, wells, driveways, travelways, parking areas, stormwater management facilities, and similar site improvements Maximum total building footprint for non-residential camp structures: 16,000 SF
	Main Camp Area*	Buildings and accessory structures and improvements, drainfields, wells, driveways, travelways, parking areas, stormwater management facilities, and similar site improvements Maximum building footprint per cabin: 1,500 SF Maximum total building footprint for non-residential camp structures: 25,000 SF
	Primitive Camping Areas	Short term overnight tent camping, privies that function as disposal facilities in accordance with Virginia Administrative Code 12VAC5-610-980.
	Pavilion Area	Pole barn: maximum square footage of 5,000 SF, privies that function as disposal facilities in accordance with Virginia Administrative Code 12VAC5-610-980.
*Primary Event Space Locations		

ZONE 1: 10.05 acres "Open Grove" - Least Dense Vegetation

Definition: Human structures are most prevalent in this zone. Existing vegetation remains scattered throughout, and cleared areas around structures are replanted with native or adaptive species. This zone includes areas where active vegetation management is most necessary for operational, aesthetic, ecological health, and safety purposes and includes the removal of non-native species. It covers the most densely developed portions of the property, including lodging, recreation areas, and primary pathways.

Management Practices Include:

- Routine mowing, trimming, and landscaping for usability and appearance.
- Selective removal of trees and shrubs for infrastructure, fire safety, sightlines, and promotion of native vegetation, wildlife, and plant diversity.
- Replanting with native or adaptive species.

ZONE 2: Lightly Wooded (37.32 acres)

Definition: In this zone, there are several buildings integrated into the landscape, but they are spread out and existing vegetation is prevalent. Constructed features include pavilion, residential structures, roadways, and affiliated improvements while integrating natural landscape features. It provides a transition from main camp areas to more densely forested zones.

Management Practices Include:

- Selective clearing for building sites while preserving mature trees and native vegetation where feasible.
- Selective removal of trees and shrubs for infrastructure, fire safety, sightlines, and promotion of native vegetation, wildlife, and plant diversity.
- Planting of native vegetation to maintain ecological integrity and support wildlife.
- Limited mechanical disturbance allowed for development, with erosion control measures in place
- Removal of vegetation, as needed, to accommodate installation of well and septic facilities to serve the main camp area.

ZONE 3: Thickly Wooded (36.27 acres)

Definition: This zone is forested with a solid collection of trees. Human structures, such as small paths or camping platforms, may be found occasionally, but vegetation dominates the area. Preservation of existing tree canopy is a priority and minimal vegetation removal is permitted to allow primitive camping and gradual integration of human activity into the landscape.

Management Practices Include:

- Preservation of tree canopy except for invasive, dead, diseased, or decaying vegetation; understory removal permitted for trails and tent camping.
- Limited clearing as strictly necessary for short term overnight tent camping, privies that function as disposal facilities in accordance with Virginia Administrative Code 12VAC5-610-980, and well and septic facilities provided that no alternative within residential or main camp area can be identified.
- Erosion control and reforestation efforts as needed.

ZONE 4: "Woodland Protection Zone" - Most Densely Vegetated (203.49 acres)

Definition: A balanced healthy forest with diversity of tree species, structural integrity that naturally regenerates - this area has very limited human structures including primitive hiking trails or small stream crossings.

Management Practices Include:

- Preservation of tree canopy except for invasive, dead, diseased, or decaying vegetation; understory removal permitted for trails.
- Trails will be designed to minimize impact to existing vegetation.
- Erosion control and reforestation efforts as needed.













Purposes of RA Zoning District	
Preservation of agricultural and forestal lands and activities	Conceptual plan limits extent of development on the site compared to possible residential development
Water supply protection	The site is not located in a water-supply watershed.
Limited service delivery to the rural areas	Service demands would be limited to occasional emergency services
Conservation of natural, scenic, and historic resources.	Conceptual plan requires maintenance of most forest cover on the site

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- a. Summer Camp attendance must not exceed 250 campers on the site at any one time.
- b. All daily attendees must travel to and from the site only by shuttle buses or vans provided by the camp operators and must not travel to or from the site in individual vehicles, except in case of emergency.
- c. Overnight attendees are permitted to arrive and depart in individual vehicles.

4. Outside of the Summer Camp season, camp attendance must not exceed 100 participants (excluding staff) on the site at any one time. Overnight camping is permitted only as part of a scheduled program run by the operators of the camp. The site must not be used as a commercial campground.

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6. The existing crossing of White Oak Creek must be removed. The replacement crossing must span the stream bed.

7. Existing stone walls and foundations on the site must not be removed or dismantled during development of the site or operation of the camp use.

8. Health Department approval is required for all well and septic facilities prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.

9. Fire/Rescue approval of an emergency-access plan for the site is required prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.

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6. The existing crossing of White Oak Creek must be removed. The replacement crossing must span the stream bed.
7. Existing stone walls and foundations on the site must not be removed or dismantled during development of the site or operation of the camp use.
- ~~8. Health Department approval is required for all well and septic facilities prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.~~
9. Fire/Rescue approval of an emergency-access plan for the site is required prior to issuance of a Zoning Clearance.
10. Outdoor lighting is limited to full cut-off fixtures, shielded to reflect light away from all abutting properties.
11. Outdoor sound amplification is permitted only in the Main Camp Area shown on the Conceptual Plan.