

**AN**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**  
**PLAN FOR**  
**CONNESTEE FALLS**

## Preface

The Environmental Stewardship Committee (ESC) was formed in early 2003 at the request of the Board of Directors of Connestee Falls Property Owners Association. The Board of Directors formed the ESC because of several issues that needed to be addressed: (1.) Forest Stewardship, (2.) Aquatic Environment, and (3.) Safety Issues.

The ESC developed the following mission statement, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Directors:

The Environmental Stewardship Committee strives to identify the Connestee Falls environment and identify means to preserve it to the greatest extent possible consistent with property rights and development, safety, maintenance of natural habitat and with residents' expectations and enjoyment.

The ESC engaged a consultant (Ed Hicks) paid by the State of North Carolina within a state program to prepare a Forest Management Plan of Common Areas. Most recommendations from this plan are already being undertaken. The ESC also prepared and distributed to residents a twenty page *Landscape Handbook and Recommended Plant Lists for Connestee Falls*. The ESC has also addressed many Safety issues, including Fire Safety, and has incorporated some recommendations into this Stewardship Plan.

We believe that, when adopted by the Board of Directors, this Plan will become a basic document that will establish priorities and set forth a program to preserve the "forest environment" of Connestee Falls.

An initial Plan was submitted to the General Manager, and then to the Board, in May 2005. That plan contained many issues for resolution.

The Environmental Stewardship Committee analyzed all the issues that were unresolved in the May 2005 version of the Plan and presents resolutions in this document. Accordingly, all issues in *Section 4, Issues Requiring Further Resolution* in that prior plan were moved in the current version to *Section 3, Issues Under Management Process*.

# Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan

Issue Date: February 2006

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# **1 General Description of Connestee Falls**

## ***1.1 The Southern Appalachians and Connestee Falls***

The Southern Appalachians, long considered the backwater of American regions, has emerged in recent decades as a premier retirement locale. The region offers forested mountains, fast-flowing streams and waterfalls, multi-hued green landscape year around, and a mild, four season climate plus abundant cultural opportunities. The steep slopes of the mountains presented a formidable barrier to early westward migration and to viable agricultural settlement. The first wave of settlers, few in number, was destined to live in a time warp while surrounding regions modernized. Many years later following the construction of good roads, the very features that made life difficult for the earlier settlers attracted another wave of settlers, retirees unconcerned with earning a living. Thus began an era of retirement home development.

Connestee Falls, a 3,900-acre gated community eight miles south of Brevard, is within sight of one of America's most scenic highways, the Blue Ridge Parkway. Traveling the roads in any direction from Connestee Falls is a visual treat as mountain vistas, waterfalls, flowering trees, shrubs and roadside wildflowers provide ever-changing variety in the lush green landscape; no other region in America has a greater variety of native plants.

## ***1.2 Connestee Falls Features***

In 1971, the Connestee Falls developers envisioned a community of part-time residents, but when people assessed the wonderful amenities of the development and region, increasing numbers became full-time residents. What does Connestee Falls have to offer? The short answer is just about anything one would want. The list of amenities is long: paved roads, underground utilities, staffed entrances, adjacent fire department, hiking trails, 18 hole golf course, driving range, all-weather tennis courts, bocce courts, paved walking track, large heated outdoor swimming pool, magnificent clubhouse that includes regular dining service, meeting rooms for some three dozen clubs, the largest multi-function room in the county for plays, musicals, meetings, receptions and dining, a library, fitness center, locker rooms and golf shop all staffed and cared for by dedicated employees. In addition to dedicating many acres to remain wild as common property, the developer built four deep-water lakes ranging in size from 31 to 81 acres for fishing, boating and swimming. The lakes are stocked each spring with legal-size fish. Each lake has a public boat landing and dock. All lakes have boat launch ramps; all lakes but Tiaroga have parks and the major one on Lake Atagahi has a protected swimming beach, boardwalk, large pavilion for picnics and meetings, picnic tables and grills, children's playground, outdoor game area and restrooms.

The Connestee Falls Property Owners Association (CFPOA), a not-for-profit corporation consisting of all property owners, administers the governance and maintenance of all common property. Covenants protect the owners from unusual construction that would detract from property values and aesthetics by ensuring the conformance with requirements on minimum house size and décor, preservation of natural vegetation, setbacks with screening, and environmental issues. Homeowners are strongly urged to retain trees and native plants on their lots to maintain the “woody” look throughout the development. Houses are decorated with muted colors so they meld into the wooded landscape. Through careful attention by the individual owners and the Architectural and Environment Committee, the community has succeeded in making minimal impact on the forest environment.

## 2 Current Environment

### 2.1 Natural Aspects

#### Terrain and Rainfall

Connestee Falls is nestled in the southern edge of the "Blue Ridge" range of the Appalachian Mountains. As such, it contains elevations ranging from about 2400 feet to 3300 feet. The mountain valleys afforded the original developer with the opportunity to construct dams to make four lakes, ranging from 31 to 81 acres in size. The terrain is as steep as 70 percent in some places. The Appalachian Mountains are "old" compared to chains like the Rocky Mountains and so most of the major changes in shape occurred many millions of years ago. The topography consists of rounded hills and is relatively stable when undisturbed.

The average annual rainfall in Connestee Falls ranges from about 61 inches in 2001 to over 110 inches in 2004, with a 14-year average of about 81 inches. Figure 1 is a tabulation of rainfall at Lake Wanteska reflecting the large annual variation. Only one month (October 2000) saw no rainfall during the data-collecting period.

Annual Precipitation Totals 1993-2004*												
Year	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
Inches	64	97	89	81	74	85	73	74	61	85	97	110
* rounded to nearest whole number												
Average Monthly Precipitation 1993-2004												
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Inches	7.5	6.7	7.3	5.7	5.5	8.1	8.2	6.1	8.9	4.6	6.9	5.6
Annual average 81.4 inches												

**Figure 1**

The Appendix contains details on rainfall in a memo by George McDermott.

Early in the development of Connestee Falls, it was recognized that the steep slopes also presented an environmental challenge: to prevent erosion. Erosion is exacerbated by the high rainfall. Current Rules and Regulations reflect this concern that any change in water runoff (such as new homes or major changes in lot landscaping) properly arrange for runoff control to minimize erosion.

The combination of high rainfall and wide variation in slope and direction of outlook provides an environment that encourages a very wide diversity of plant varieties. The existence of many "microclimates" causes significant climate variations within a lot, or from one lot or sector to another within the development.

### **Forest Environment**

Most forest areas in the world are dominated by three or fewer varieties of trees. No single tree species dominates the Connestee Falls forest, which consists of combinations of many species and varies from place to place. Diversity was increased by logging of the area (about four times) prior to commencement of the development. Local species identified in various tracts may be found by referring to the Hicks Report in the Appendix Section of this Plan.

The Connestee Falls development has always emphasized its "natural wooded environment" appearance. Especially as new houses are added, it becomes important that tree removal be limited to what is necessary. By keeping the majority of trees on the periphery of each lot, other houses see a forested vista.

### **Animals**

The large proportion of forested area in Connestee Falls, and in the surrounding lands, creates a favorable habitat for many wild animals: black bears, bobcats, chipmunks, coyotes, deer, ducks, foxes, geese, groundhogs, opossums, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, skunks, wild turkeys, turtles, and occasionally beavers. Animals present a two-edged sword: they are beautiful to watch and represent Nature, but they can impose problems on owners.

Bears, coyotes, raccoons, and even squirrels and chipmunks can invade bird-seed stocks or outside garbage cans. If these animals become comfortable around human scent, they can become too assertive. The community strongly discourages leaving anything where such animals can get it.

Deer pose a serious foraging problem; they will eat about one pound of vegetation per ten pounds of body weight per day, and are especially fond of non-native species. Furthermore, deer in a place like Connestee Falls, with no natural enemies, are very prolific.

Geese are a health hazard because they produce about three pounds of droppings per day, usually near the lake edge. This is washed into the lake, introducing coliform bacteria, and excess nitrogen, polluting the lakes.

While most other animals are less damaging in their impact, it is best for the animal if they are left on their own to find food. It does not help the animal when people provide food, and in fact, often the food we offer is not appropriate for their digestive system. Connestee Falls has strongly promoted a policy of not feeding any animals. A possible exception is feeding of birds in the early spring before natural foods become available. Even there, our area has enough wild food that feeding is probably not necessary. People who feed birds need to insure they are not feeding other animals (squirrels, bears, raccoons) inadvertently.

## **2.2 Introduced Aspects**

Connestee Falls covers about 3900 acres, of which about 232 acres are lakes, 70 acres are golf course, 270 acres are roads and road right of ways, and 870 acres are in undeveloped green space. About 2400 acres are in residential lots.

### **Lakes**

The four man-made lakes are Lake Atagahi (80.6 acres), Lake Ticoa (75 acres), Lake Wanteska (45 acres), and Lake Tiaroga (31 acres). The lakes and dams were originally certified by the US Corp of Engineers, and are maintained by CFPOA and certified annually by North Carolina Department of Water Resources.

Much of the perimeter of each lake consists of a "berm", a flat 15 foot wide path along the shore under which is buried the sewer pipe. By using a central sewer system, virtually all lakeside lots, and many in adjacent areas, are able to avoid septic systems. Septic system failure would introduce pollution into the lakes.

The lakes are all stocked with trout, bass, and other varieties of fish. The stocking is studied and managed to keep the lakes and fish healthy. In addition, the lakes are consistently found to be very clean. There are beaches for swimming at Atagahi Park and Ticoa Park. Boats may be launched at ramps on each lake. Only manually or wind powered boats, or those propelled by electric motors, are permitted; gasoline motors would introduce water pollution and noise. Before boats are brought into the community, they are sprayed with biocide at the main gate to prevent introduction of exotic marine plant and animal species into the lakes.

### **Golf Course**

Connestee boasts a beautiful 18 hole golf course, playable year round. Golf course architect George W. Cobb created this challenging 6,000 yard, par 72, course against a spectacular backdrop of mountains and the forest.

The Golf Maintenance Operations Manager has concentrated maintenance work on maintaining the beauty of the course, while practicing careful water management, and fertilizer and pesticide control to avoid environmental damage to the course and surrounding grounds, ground water, and lakes. The maintenance team recently completed a tree thinning effort, which improves fairway grass growth without the need for additional fertilizer and pest control.

The golf course adds to the beauty and recreational enjoyment for Connestee Falls members.

## **Roads**

The road system in Connestee Falls embraces about 46 miles. There are three gates: the Main gate, the East Fork Road gate, and the Walnut Hollow gate. Most roads have a 60 foot right-of-way within which is a 30 foot pavement (not necessarily in the center). Dead end roads terminate in a turn around approximately 40 feet in diameter, usually. The road system is maintained by CFPOA.

## **Green Spaces**

The 870 acres in green space consists of tracts as large as 117 acres, which have been left in their natural state. The volunteer Trail Building Crew has developed hiking trails to afford hikers the chance to enjoy the natural beauty. Trails lead to waterfalls, cascades, along lakes, to vistas of the distant Mount Pisgah, and through areas that contain rare plants. The natural areas also provide a barrier between the community and exterior properties. Some trails afford access for fire defense.

## **Residential Space**

There are about 3000 potential building lots in Connestee Falls, but some are considered very expensive to build upon because they are so steep or have ground water problems. Some are held by The Connestee Falls Property Owners Association (CFPOA) for various reasons. As of February 24, 2005, 1131 homes were finished, another 225 lots were "combined", 49 homes were in various stages of completion, and 1300 lots are "unimproved". If an owner purchases more than one lot, the additional lots can be combined with the original lot to afford additional buffer around the home, and to prevent future development of the extra land. Once combined, a lot may not be cut into multiple pieces.

Many lots are situated so as to have a desirable view of the distant mountains, a lake, or the golf course.

## **Common Amenities**

In addition to the features listed above, the community has a clubhouse adjacent to the golf course that contains a restaurant, attractive meeting rooms, a fitness center, a golf shop, and a golf operations office. Near the clubhouse are five tennis courts, a walking track, a bocce court, and a heated outdoor swimming pool.

All four Connestee Falls lakes have a boat launch ramp and dock. Parks at Lakes Atagahi, Ticoa, and Wanteska also have boat storage areas, and picnic facilities. In addition, Atagahi Park, on Lake Atagahi, has a covered pavilion and a protected swimming area.

The CFPOA also has a major Maintenance Shop, and an “Equestrian” Center building used for storage. The Maintenance organization mows the grass on the golf course, berms, roadsides and other common spaces; maintains the common buildings, roads, lake structures, parks, etc.; plows snow in the winter; and generally keeps Connestee Falls in fine shape.

### **2.3 Governance**

Property owners agree, at purchase of a lot, to abide by covenants, called “declarations”, which run with the land, that specify restrictions within Connestee Falls. The declarations provide for the Connestee Falls Property Owners Association, a not-for-profit corporation which holds the common property, operates all the amenities, and performs the common property maintenance. The declarations also provide for bylaws, a Board of Directors, and a General Manager to manage the affairs of the community in a manner that is consistent with the declarations. The Board of Directors adopts Rules and Regulations that spell out the routine details of day-to-day operations. Much day-to-day management is involved in the upkeep of facilities. Other activities address improvements to common green spaces, and overall safety issues. The combined effect of professional and volunteer efforts is that Connestee Falls has been very successful in maintaining a forested environment with excellent amenities.

Alteration of the declarations or bylaws requires an affirmative vote of the majority of the owners. The rules and regulations are subject to change by a majority of the Board of Directors.

The declarations provide for the establishment of the Architectural and Environment Committee, which oversees the appropriateness of home appearance and new or changed landscaping of lots. All new housing starts, changes in house footprint, deck additions, repainting, re-roofing, docks construction, tree or shrub removal or trimming, landscape changes, or other appearance changes to a house or lot in Connestee Falls require an approved permit from the A&EC before activities begin. The A&EC balances individual owner choices with the appearance of changes to the community at large, to maintain the “woody” appearance of Connestee Falls.

## 3 Issues Under Management Process

### 3.0 Issues Index

#### 3.1 Environmental Issues

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Resolution Group(s)</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Plan Section</u>
Water runoff and erosion control	A&EC	Ongoing	3.1.1 (A&EC)
New house & addition impact	A&EC	Ongoing	3.1.1 (A&EC)
Community appearance	A&EC	Ongoing	3.1.2
Managing the lake berms	Gen. Maintenance	Ongoing	3.1.3
Lakes quality mgmt. & fishing	Fishing Club	2004	3.1.4
Control of biocides & exotic species	Owners	Ongoing	3.1.5
Golf course maintenance	Golf Maintenance	Ongoing	3.1.6
Hiking trails location & mtnce.	Trails Mtnce. Crew	Ongoing	3.1.7
Tree culling in common areas	Gen. Maintenance	Ongoing	3.1.8

#### 3.2 Animal Control Issues

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Resolution Group(s)</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Plan Section</u>
Do not feed animals	ESC/ Board	Feb. 2004	3.2.1
Cooperation with Local Hunt Club	Board	Open	3.2.2

#### 3.3 Safety Issues

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Resolution Group(s)</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Plan Section</u>
Community Fire Safety	Board	Ongoing	3.3.1
C F Evacuation Plan	Gen. Mgr.	Ongoing	3.3.2
Household fire safety suggestions	Owners	Ongoing	3.3.3
Fire Safety Issues for A&EC Action	A&EC/Board	Ongoing	3.3.4
Protect Roadside Power Pedestals	Gen. Mtce.	2006	3.3.5

#### Abbreviations:

A&EC: Architectural and Environmental Committee  
 CFPOA: Connestee Falls Property Owners Association  
 ESC: Environmental Stewardship Committee

## ***Issue Description Sections***

### **3.1 Environmental Issues**

#### **3.1.1 The Architectural and Environmental Committee**

##### **Purpose**

The Architecture and Environment Committee (A&EC) is charged with the maintenance of our rustic setting, applying consistent decision criteria to earth tone colors, compatible architectural design, and protection of neighbors. A part of this charge is oversight of environmental issues for construction and site changes, especially water runoff and erosion control.

##### **Authority**

The A&EC administers the Declarations, and Rules and Regulations, applicable to landscape and building construction, appearance, and harmony thereof with the Connestee Falls community. In the Restated Declarations of August 1999 Article V deals solely with A&EC powers, membership, grounds for disapproval, and process.

In particular, the Declarations state that the A&EC "may disapprove of applications:

1. If such application does not comply with the declaration;
2. Because of the reasonable dissatisfaction of the A&EC with grading plans, insufficient screening vegetation, location of the proposed improvements on a lot, finished ground elevation, color scheme, finish, design proportions, architecture, height of foundation, shape, height or style of the proposed improvement, the materials used therein, the kind, pitch or type of roof proposed to be placed thereon; or
3. If in the judgment of a majority of the A&EC reasonably exercised, the proposed improvement will be inharmonious with the Community, or with the improvements erected on other lots."

The Rules and Regulations, as modified by the Board of Directors from time to time, deal with the routine process and criteria by which the A&EC deals with applications for any change to the external appearance of a lot or existing building.

##### **Architectural and Environmental Committee Activities**

Applications are required for (1.) new houses; (2.) house additions; (3.) repainting or replacement of exterior surfaces of a building (re-roofing); (4.) surface water and erosion control (including landscape or drainage changes) on a lot; (5.) landscape changes, (6.) tree cutting or pruning; (7.) mountain laurel or rhododendron cutting or pruning; (8.) exterior lighting locations and intensity levels; (9.) fences and hedges; (10.) docks; (11.) fuel tank screening; and (12.) mailboxes deviating from the standard specified in the Rules and Regulations. These issues are covered in the current issue of Rules and Regulations, Article XVI.

The committee reviews both new house site plans and changes to existing improvements and lots, to enforce erosion control principles. New houses and significant additions must have a water control plan, erect silt fences, and maintain erosion control diligently in the course of construction. Specifically, erosion control or other environmental problems are to be corrected within 24 hours of verbal or written notice. The water control plan is examined to insure that water can be controlled during periods of heavy rainfall.

Trees larger than 3 inches in diameter at a level of four feet six inches from the ground may not be cut down or trimmed without A&EC approval. Likewise, all trimming of mountain laurel and rhododendron require committee approval. Since trees are such an important part of screening the house from external viewpoints, the A&EC often requires limited thinning rather than complete tree removal.

While most members think primarily of the A&EC in connection with new house construction, the majority of committee agenda is usually devoted to applications from member to make changes on their property: trim, prune, or remove selected trees and or mountain laurel or rhododendron; repaint or re-roof a house; install a walkway; or install a dock. A vital part of the forested appearance that is unique to Connestee Falls is the wooded margin around the houses. These trees and cover soften the view of houses, conveying an atmosphere of houses immersed in a forest. In addition, from a distance, very few houses are visible, so the whole community appears to be mostly forest.

Some of the lighter paint colors that were formerly approved are no longer acceptable, and white windows are no longer permitted. Some lighter roof colors are no longer accepted. The lighter colors have been found to stand out excessively, especially in bright sun. These issues among others necessitate the review of all exterior projects that affect color choices. If the house color is not one of the currently approved colors, the committee will discuss with the owner which colors that meet the owner's needs while fitting into the community's scheme.

Most applications are approved with little or no problem, and Connestee Falls continues to be a very attractive community with a rustic look.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

There are two modes of operation for the A&EC, (1.) periodic review of rules and regulations to propose improvements for Board of Directors approval, and (2.) ongoing performance of their duties in applying current rules and regulations to requests for permits for new construction and modifications to properties. The ongoing mode shares responsibility with Owners, who apply for permits for work covered in the rules and regulations; with A&EC liaison persons, who handle routine details of permit requests; and the A&EC, who review and approve, or deny, permits within the framework of the rules and regulations.

### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

The Connestee Falls Board of Directors receives recommendations from the A&EC for changes to the Connestee Falls Rules and Regulations relevant to A&EC matters and considers action on such items. When the Board adopts such changes, the changed items become binding on the A&EC and the community.

### **By The Architectural & Environmental Committee**

The A&EC periodically reviews current Connestee Falls Rules and Regulations relevant to A&EC matters, and recommends changes (where the change improves the specificity of regulations or corrects process irregularities) to the Connestee Falls Board of Directors.

Upon submission of routine applications for permits from lot owners, the A&EC reviews applications for permits for their compliance with Connestee Falls Rules and Regulations. Where discrepancies exist, A&EC negotiates needed changes. Owners or contractors may undertake only work covered by permits approved by A&EC.

### **By A&EC Liaison Persons**

A&EC Liaison persons are employees of CFPOA who carry out field inspections and reviews of major proposed projects for which permits have been filed (or are in process). They follow up on noted discrepancies, and make recommendations as to approvability of routine applications.

### **By Connestee Falls Property Owners**

Owners apply for an A&EC permit for any action listed as needing one in the current Connestee Falls Rules and Regulations. Upon A&EC approval of the permit, owners are free to personally, or through a contractor, carry out the proposed actions listed in the permit.

## **3.1.2 Community Appearance**

### **Purpose**

Connestee Falls is very special because of the forested environment. The following recommendations are made to preserve that feature.

### **Screening**

A basic concept of Connestee Falls is that nearly all structures are screened from view by trees and woody shrubs like rhododendron and mountain laurel. Houses and above ground propane tanks should have sufficient plantings around them so as to minimize their visibility from roads, lakes, golf course and other common areas.

While owners may, without a permit, remove trees smaller than three inches in diameter, measured at a height of four and a half feet from the ground, such trees provide a natural succession of trees on the lot. Owners are encouraged to replant trees for replacement when a tree is removed.

- All trees over three inches in diameter at four and a half feet from the ground, and all pruning or cutting of rhododendron and mountain laurel require an approved permit from A&EC prior to work being done.

When heavy construction equipment is operating near trees, provision should be made to protect tree roots from soil compaction caused by equipment traveling over the tree roots.

### **Siding**

Owners are encouraged to consider materials for siding on houses that will fit in with the natural forest appearance. In addition, as covered elsewhere, materials that are fire retardant, or non-flammable, can provide a significant fire suppression advantage. Wood clapboard, "Carolina" siding, and log siding are considered fire retardant, and brick, stucco, and cementitious siding are non-flammable. Vinyl siding, while acceptable, is considered by some people to have a "non-mountain" appearance, and it will melt from the heat of a nearby fire.

### **Propane Tanks**

Owners are encouraged to bury propane storage tanks over 100 gallons. Burial will avert the need for screening, and reduce the hazard of explosion in the event of a nearby fire.

- An alternate, currently standard practice, is to place the propane tank at least 30 feet away from the building and screen it so it is not visible from the road, lakes, golf course, or other common area.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

The ESC will have submitted this Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan to the Connestee Falls Board of Directors for consideration and adoption. The Board may modify aspects of the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan, either in its own effort, or by directing the ESC to make modifications. When the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan is adopted, the provisions dealing with A&EC will be referred to that body for review and recommendation back to the Board.

In accordance with standing practices, the Connestee Falls Board of Directors will review recommendations from A&EC with respect to the proposed changes from ESC. In some cases rules and regulations changes may be adopted. In other cases, existing rules and regulations may adequately cover the issues.

### **By The Architectural & Environmental Committee**

- When the Connestee Falls Board of Directors has adopted the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan in its final form, the Board may refer some refinements of rules and regulations to the A&EC for refinement. When such changes are adopted by the Board, they become binding on the A&EC and members of the community.

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On a routine basis, A&EC will oversee all work requiring permits, and advise owners on appropriate solutions to screening, restoration, and community standards (including recommendations herein) for such issues.

### 3.1.3 Managing the Lake Berms

The residents of Connestee Falls have every right to be proud of our four attractive lakes with high quality water, a tribute to over three decades of excellent care. They provide not only the natural attractiveness of water and its numerous recreational amenities, but also water for fire fighting, an abundance of seasonal wildflowers along the shores and a level, naturalistic walking path where permitted. It is in the best interest of all residents whether lakeside dwellers or not, that the man-made lakes be maintained at a high standard.

Natural lakes are attractive because vegetation grows to the water's edge, but for man-made lakes like ours with sewer lines paralleling the shore it may be necessary to exercise some control over the growth of shoreline vegetation. One ever-present threat to the quality of the lakes is a rupture in the decades old sewer line buried along the berm on most sides of the lakes. In most areas, the maintenance crew has been trimming to water's edge once a year in order that a leak could be quickly observed, however inspections have not been frequent. Homeowners walking along the berm have discovered most of the recent leaks. The Environmental Stewardship Committee supports a compromise between a natural looking unregulated vegetation growth and an unnatural sheared lakeshore.

It seems most unwise to let large trees grow close to the shore especially if the berm is narrow. Such trees tend to produce more and heavier branches on the lakeside, thus if uprooted by heavy rain or ice storms they may dislodge considerable soil from the berm. An unstable berm will not support heavy machinery in case repairs are necessary. The decision to remove hazardous trees will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Maintenance Superintendent.

Shrubs and annuals by their roots protect the banks from erosion and by dropping leaves and stems provide humus to absorb run-off, thus they play an important role in the bank ecology. They also prevent geese from climbing onto the berm to feed and leave droppings. The main concern is that the shrubs and annuals may grow so thick that they obscure a leak in the sewer line.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

There are three potential problems in maintaining the berms that require constant vigilance:

1. Siltation where streams flow into the lakes.
2. Trees growing too close to the water may uproot in a storm and pull away some of the berm.
3. High density of vegetation along the shore may inhibit inspection for sewer leaks.

The responsibility for resolving these problems is shared by the Architectural and Environment Committee, the lakeshore homeowner, the boating public, and the Connestee Falls maintenance department. These responsibilities are enumerated below:

### **By The Architectural and Environment Committee**

1. Frequently check the effectiveness of erosion control measures around building sites.

### **By The Lakeshore Homeowner**

1. Refrain from building structures (steps, light posts, boat racks, walls, etc.) in the right-of-way that will impede the passage of machines needed to perform routine or emergency maintenance.

2. Must not plant trees and shrubs that will grow into the right-of-way space.

3. When walking on the berm be on the alert for leaks in the sewer line and immediately report such leaks to Security at the Main Gate (885-2121) AND Transylvania Utility (1-800-222-5291).

4. The homeowner is permitted to maintain the vegetation on their property between the level berm and the water's edge in accordance with the policy approved by the CFPOA Board of Directors December 8, 2004. The policy in brief states that there shall be no trees over eight feet high and openings must be made in the vegetation to permit observation for sewer leaks.

### **By The Boating Public**

1. People in boats have a particularly good vantage point to spot oil slicks or water entering the lake from leaking sewer lines. If either is observed, immediately call the numbers above.

### **By The CF Maintenance**

1. Maintain the berms by adding steel supports and riprap stone where needed to stabilize the bank and roadway.

2. Selectively cut trees growing too close to the water. Because tulip poplar trees grow large very quickly, they should be removed while small.

3. Where necessary, annually cut the woody vegetation along the banks to a level two feet or taller above the roadway leaving some shrubs here and there to grow taller to break up uniformity.

4. Allow annuals, most of which will be wildflowers, to grow up through the woody plants. They can be cut in October after seeds have matured and dropped to develop the next year's plants. The combination of woody plants and annuals will help keep geese off the berm.

5. Create small gaps in the bank vegetation here and there to permit inspection of the water along the shore for signs of sewer leakage.

6. Periodically dredge out sedimentation ponds.

### **3.1.4 Lakes Quality Management and Fishing**

Traditionally, the Fishing Club has conducted periodic studies of water quality and fish counts, using professional firms specializing in those activities. The results have been presented to CFPOA General Manager and Board of Directors, and made available to interested members and committees, as appropriate. The Fishing Club makes recommendations about actions proposed by the study firm and balances general Connestee Falls member interests with fishing interests so as to meet the needs of the whole community. The Fishing Club recommends quantities of fish to be stocked and oversees the stocking operations.

The Environmental Stewardship Committee anticipates that the fishing club will continue to fill the role of directing the periodic study of lake water quality and fishing management.

Copies of the detailed Lake Study dated 1994 , and a recent Fishing Survey dated 2004 are included in the Appendix.

#### ***RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:***

##### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

Based on recommendations from the Connestee Falls Fishing Club, the Connestee Falls Board of Directors will consider action and expenditures to (1.) conduct lake water quality and fish surveys, (2.) take actions, recommended by the Fishing Club, which may improve lake purity, fish stocking, quality of fishing, or related issues.

##### **By CFPOA Administration**

The CFPOA Administration budgets for routine expenditures associated with lake surveys, fish surveys, and fish stocking. Routinely, these items are planned and included in the annual operations budget.

On an ongoing basis, CFPOA Administration issues Connestee Falls fishing licenses to members when requested.

##### **By The Connestee Falls Fishing Club**

Evaluates fishing quality on a continuing basis. Periodically, or when otherwise needed, the Fishing Club proposes lake water quality and fish count surveys by professional firms. Based on the results of these studies or other facts, the Fishing Club recommends relevant actions to the Board.

##### **By The Owners**

Owners obtain Connestee Fishing licenses, and comply with relevant Connestee Falls Rules and Regulations.

### 3.1.5 Control of Biocides and Exotic Species

#### **Purpose**

In order to maintain the current natural balance among native species of plants, animals, and fish, all members of the Connestee Falls community are requested not to introduce any "exotic" species of plants or animals. Our professional staff are the only people who can perform pest control in our common areas.

#### **Native Plants**

Ornamental plantings around buildings should be selected from native varieties. Examples of invasive plants that must not be used are grapevine, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, multiflora rose, and oriental bittersweet. If found these plants should be removed to prevent spreading.

#### **Native Animals**

Animals must not be released into the wild. It is prohibited to release cats, dogs, pet hamsters, etc. into the wild.

#### **Fish**

Non-native fish must be prevented from entering Connestee Falls lakes.

Related to this topic is the aquatic and insect pest control issue. All watercraft coming into Connestee Falls from outside will be sprayed thoroughly with biocide at the main gate to preclude introduction into our lakes of exotic aquatic plants and animals.

#### **Owner Participation**

Owners may find the "Landscape Handbook", (copies available free at the Administration Building) helpful in deciding which plants will perform well in Connestee Falls.

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All owners are encouraged to seek advice and actively participate in pest control. Owners should apply biocides on their own property as needed following container directions and warnings. It is imperative that biocides not be introduced into lakes and streams. Use of appropriate chemicals to control Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), and/or removal of diseased trees, following the proper A&EC permit process, is strongly encouraged.

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## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

### **By CFPOA Administration**

Administration will publish notification of current pest threats and provide information on pest control through Friday Flyers, Member Information Committee meetings, Connestee Falls News, and flyers. Administration will work with the Board of Directors to fund additional expenses of such control activities in Common Areas.

### **By The CF Maintenance**

General Maintenance and Golf Maintenance will perform professional pest control chemical application and plant removal in Common Areas. Where their qualifications apply, they may render central advice to the community on proper and inappropriate treatments.

### **By The Owners**

Owners will design and install landscaping plantings (A&EC permit may be required), perform pest control chemical application, or hire professionals to perform applications, on their property. Owners may participate in committee activities to identify threatened plant species in Common Areas where their qualifications apply, but may not perform any plant removal or biocide application.

## **3.1.6 Golf Maintenance Operations**

Connestee Falls has a golf course of unique beauty cared for by a competent superintendent and a well trained staff. The superintendent has a quarter century of experience in the environmentally sensitive, safe, and economical application of pesticides. The superintendent holds commercial licenses from North and South Carolina in aquatics, forestry and turf and ornamental chemical treatment. Regular training sessions are held for the staff, four of whom are also licensed applicators. The maintenance staff keeps up to date with changing regulations and new technology and regularly holds training sessions.

Water samples from the golf course are collected regularly and sent off to a laboratory for analysis. The analysis made in the spring of 2005 indicated no chemical contamination and nitrate at a level well within the requirements.

Scheduled sampling for pesticides and nitrate levels are only two of the many functions of the Maintenance Staff, which constantly looks for ways to improve the golf course. A recent recommendation is to put up nest boxes for bluebirds because of the large volume of insects they eat. In late 2005, the golf course applied for membership in the prestigious Audubon International, an organization that encourages good stewardship of natural resources.

The golf course is in capable hands dedicated to environmentally sound maintenance practices.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**By Connestee Falls Golf Maintenance**

Golf Maintenance Supervisor should continue present process.

**3.1.7 Hiking Trails Location & Maintenance**

A network of hiking trails on Connestee common property is developed and maintained by a group of volunteers. All new trail work is reviewed and approved by the General Manager before work commences. Volunteer stewards are responsible for ongoing maintenance of each existing trail.

With the exception of chain saws for large logs, all work is accomplished with manual hand tools. Trails are built to maximize the hiking and aesthetic experience while minimizing environmental impact. Clearing of vegetation is generally limited to invasive, nuisance, or abundant species such as dog hobble.

Maps of the trail network existing as of the date of this plan are in the appendix. Consult Administration about the most current plans.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**By The CFPOA General Manager**

When requested by the Trails Maintenance Crew Chair, the General Manager will review proposals for (1.) new recreation trails, (2.) changes in status for existing trails, (3.) other trails-related actions. Approval by the General Manager constitutes authorization for volunteer work on the trails in accordance with the proposed plan.

**By The Connestee Falls Trails Maintenance Crew Chair(s)**

As the need arises, the Chair(s) review possible trails locations and propose specific actions to the Connestee Falls General Manager. If the General Manager agrees, the Chairs organize the volunteers to clear and maintain the trail.

**By Connestee Falls Trails Maintenance Crew**

This group of volunteers from the community constructs new trails and maintains existing trails so as to minimize environmental impact, and maximize hiking and aesthetic experience.

### **3.1.8 Tree Culling and Succession in Common Areas**

#### **Purpose**

It is desired to maintain the Connestee Falls Common Areas in a pristine forest condition.

#### **Culling**

All common areas will normally be left to continue to mature in a natural process. When General Maintenance believes stands should be thinned they will perform the culling.

Justifications for removal are:

1. Tree(s) present a safety hazard to roadway or adjacent structure.
2. Stand of Pine or Hemlock is too thick for healthy growth and needs thinning.
3. Tree borders golf course and interferes with proper golf course condition.
4. Plant is one of an invasive species: such as grapevine, Japanese honey-suckle, kudzu, multiflora rose, and oriental bittersweet.
5. Such other comparable reason.

#### **Replacement**

Normal succession will usually fill empty Common Area spaces. Where necessary, transplanting, seedling, or seed will be used to fill spaces or provide rapid ground cover.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **By CFPOA Administration**

Administration will work with the Board of Directors to fund specific additional expenses of culling and replacement activities in Common Areas.

#### **By The Connestee Falls Maintenance**

Maintenance (both General Maintenance and Golf Maintenance) will perform culling and replacement activities in Common Areas as part of routine operations.

### **3.2.1 Do Not Feed Animals**

Signs have been placed near the entry gates to Connestee Falls reminding people not to feed deer, bears, geese and other wild animals. These signs are sponsored by the Environmental Stewardship Committee. Why we are promoting this policy so strongly?

#### **Deer**

We experienced more damage to plants from deer in the winter of 2003-2004 than ever before, and the deer are proliferating at an alarming rate. It is very important that we curb the proliferation as soon as possible. While they will always be able to find things to eat here, if we go out of our way to attract them, they will favor our area and reproduce here, and browse the area even more severely. Deer eat about one pound of vegetation per ten pounds of body weight per day. As the deer population grows, it becomes even harder to deal with the problem.

One doe can bear young each year for ten years. Because our landscaping plants are fertilized, they are very nutritious, so most years the doe will bear twins. Over the ten-year period, that one doe and her offspring could produce as many as 8000 more deer! While this is somewhat simplistic in that it does not account for attrition, it demonstrates how rapidly the deer can proliferate. At present, there are no predators or hunting in Connestee Falls, and deer are rarely killed by autos in the area. The statewide growth rate is estimated at twenty percent per year. Statewide hunting has reduced the population by only a fraction of the annual growth.

At present, the Environmental Stewardship Committee promotes a strategy whereby Connestee Falls would be less attractive to deer than the surrounding area. We encourage homeowners to plant deer-resistant plants, use repellants, and use deer netting to discourage deer foraging.

However, the artificially landscaped areas such as the golf course and home lots and the prohibition of hunting create problems difficult to surmount. Thus, sterner measures may be required soon.

### **Bears**

In their normal element, bears are shy, and will usually not bother humans, but will run away (unless it is a mama protecting her cubs). While the proliferation of bears in North Carolina is not as great as that for deer, they can become a nuisance, especially when they find bird food or exposed garbage. If they become successful in getting food in this manner, they lose some of their fear of humans. This can lead to more brazen activity, such as coming onto a deck, or trying to come into a house. At this point, the animal is dangerous, and may have to be destroyed. Bird food and garbage should be kept inside the building where bears will be less likely to detect it and come after it. Birdfeeders should be brought into the house at night and, if they continue to attract bears, they should be removed entirely.

### **Geese**

The average adult goose produces about three pounds of defecation per day! This is deposited along the grass on the berms of the lakes and leaches into the lake. This causes both increased chemical pollution of the lake, and introduces coliform bacteria. Both products are bad news!

While we should not kill geese (without a permit or license), we are permitted to annoy them so they will not like it here. Obviously, feeding geese is inconsistent with the desire to chase them!

### **Other Animals**

There are many additional forms of wild life within Connestee Falls besides those mentioned above. We have beavers, many varieties of birds, bobcats, chipmunks, ducks, foxes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, and wild turkey, to name a few that have been seen. While these rarely cause problems, they are best left to go their natural way. If they become dependent on humans for food, they will suffer when the food source is

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interrupted. In addition, giving animals food that is incompatible with their digestive system can sicken or kill them. Keeping our distance is the fairest approach!

### **Conclusion**

Connestee Falls residents should refrain from feeding the animals. Feeding them leads to damage to Connestee, and probable damage to the animal. While the animals are beautiful, they should be enjoyed at a distance in their natural state. They and we will be better off for it!

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **By Owners And Renters**

Owners and renters should refrain from attracting and/or feeding any wild animals.

## **3.2.2 Cooperation with Local Hunt Club**

### **Purpose**

The proliferation of deer calls for a plan to control deer numbers. Members have already been encouraged not to feed any animals. These subsequent steps would involve cooperation with hunt clubs on land adjacent to Connestee Falls to maximize their success in hunting where it would impact the number of deer within Connestee Falls.

### **Description of Plan**

The Muir Creek Hunt Club leases hunting rights from the owner of lands southwest of the water tank above the Overlook Clubhouse. It is proposed to cooperate with this club to maximize the effect of their hunt upon the deer herd in Connestee Falls.

The following steps could be taken without any hunting occurring within Connestee Falls:

1. Permit hunt club access to the water tower boundary of Connestee Falls for purpose of setting up deer feeding stations on the hunt club lands.
2. Permit hunt club access to Connestee Falls for purposes of retrieving wounded deer from the hunt activities.

These two steps would accomplish the following:

1. Entice deer in Connestee Falls to feed on hunt club lands, where they could be hunted during hunting season.
2. By approaching the feeding stations from the CFPOA side, there would be a reduced chance of deer retreating to Connestee Falls if they are spooked. Instead, they would move further onto the hunt club lands where they could be hunted.
3. As part of the North Carolina state hunting license requirement, a hunter agrees to pursue prey and find it if it is wounded. Allowing access to Connestee Falls for this purpose would increase the chance that a wounded deer would be retrieved, and

removed from the area with as much discretion as possible. Failure to agree with this step could result in wounded deer dying within the community, or other undesirable consequences.

If deer continue to proliferate, a next step would be to permit hunters to enter Connestee Falls to “drive”, or spook, the deer toward the hunt club lands.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Most of these steps are incremental, progressing from “easiest” to more assertive.

#### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

Board of Directors approval is required before the General Manager could implement the following steps:

1. Permit hunt club access to the water tower boundary of Connestee Falls for purpose of setting up deer feeding stations on the hunt club lands.
2. Permit hunt club access to Connestee Falls for purposes of retrieving wounded deer from the hunt activities.

A “drive” of deer (on common lands only) would fall in the same action category if drivers did not enter individual lots.

If all of these steps do not successfully limit deer herd growth, it would be necessary to consider allowing hunting within Connestee Falls. There are a number of possibilities to be studied:

1. Allow North Carolina licensed hunters to hunt only on Common Areas. (Allow retrieval wherever needed.)
2. Charge a non-refundable lottery fee to licensed hunters and draw lots on which hunters are allowed to hunt in the community.
3. Employ professional hunters to hunt and remove deer.

A referendum of the Connestee Falls membership would probably be required

If hunting were to be undertaken, it would probably be necessary for the Board to authorize each hunting event.

#### **By Connestee Falls Members**

Hunting within Connestee Falls would require a majority of owners favoring the hunting proposal in a referendum.

#### **By Environmental Stewardship Committee**

In the event hunting within Connestee Falls is under further consideration, the Environmental Stewardship Committee could study ramifications of different hunting issues for Connestee Falls Board of Directors consideration.

#### **By CFPOA Administration**

Administration will contact the hunt club, provide access passes, and oversee operational issues where Board and/or Membership approve any of the above steps.

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If a referendum is conducted, Connestee Falls Administration will handle the budgetary and operational load of conducting it.

### **3.3.1 Community Fire Safety Recommendations**

#### **Purpose**

This recommendation covers the rationale and implementation plan for fire safety activities in the Connestee Falls Community. Because the incidence of drought is very low in Connestee Falls and forest fire risk is very low, still it is prudent to plan for certain steps which would only be taken in the advent of severe drought. The analysis of rainfall as it affects drought risk, the proposed fire plan, and the rationale for these steps follow.

#### **Impact of Rainfall on Wildfire Risk**

Rainfall accumulations for each month from January 1993 through June 2005 at Lake Wanteska were analyzed and reported to the ESC by the Fire Safety Subcommittee. It was concluded that an accumulation of two inches of rain or less in a month was the most suitable criteria for drought frequency. There is less than a nine percent chance of

receiving less than that amount of rain in any one month, and about a two percent chance of that low an accumulation in two successive months. (See Appendix for memos).

With such a low probability of occurrence, it makes sense to create a Fire Plan sequence of steps which would be commenced only in the event that a drought situation arises. By not undertaking the steps now, we forego substantial maintenance costs associated with the upkeep.

#### **Fire Plan Process**

A sequence of Fire Plan steps is proposed such that, when a drought becomes severe, the General Manager can initiate the steps. The entire approach will be reviewed by the Board of Directors in advance as an integrated process, so that the implementation can be expeditious in a drought emergency.

### **A. IMMEDIATE INITIAL ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. ADOPT FIRE PLAN**

Adjust and adopt the proposed Fire Plan initially, and adopt an update process for maps.

#### **2. MAP**

Construct an accurate topographic map of all existing roads, utility access lanes, hiking trails, within Connestee Falls. Contributions of information will be integrated from the

Hiking Trails Maintenance Crew, Transylvania Utilities, Transylvania County aerial maps, the Administration, and other reliable sources.

As new hiking trails are established, they will be entered onto the map, and as hiking trails are removed from service, the map will be so noted.

Proposed fire trail locations will be chosen and placed on the map. These locations will be limited to areas where the trail would afford strong ability to prevent a ground fire from entering a vulnerable part of the community. Where priority differences among proposed trail locations can be distinguished, the map will convey such priorities.

### **3. FLAG PROPOSED FIRE TRAILS**

All proposed fire trail locations will be reviewed and flagged in the field. Any discrepancy found between field conditions and proposed map routing will be resolved and corrected so that flags and map are kept in agreement.

### **4. FIELD REVIEW WITH GENERAL MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR**

After all proposed fire trail flagging has been complete, or after all flagging in a convenient area is complete, the flagging/mapping crew will accompany the General Maintenance Supervisor, or a designee, along the flagged trail route. Trails may be

adjusted for ease of clearing, and/or large trees which interfere with the trail will be located and noted for subsequent routine removal as covered below.

When the General Maintenance Supervisor and the flagging/mapping crew are in agreement on each trail location:

1. The fire trail location will be shown on the map as adopted.
2. General Maintenance will schedule routine work to remove any large trees that would interfere with the proposed trail location. A record will be kept of all such tree removal activities so that any incomplete removals can be accomplished on a priority basis if the Fire Plan is implemented.

## **B. EMERGENCY FIRE PLAN STEPS IN THE EVENT OF A DROUGHT**

### **1. DROUGHT EMERGENCY DETERMINATION**

The General Manager will track rainfall data at one or more Connestee Falls locations regularly to obtain and record monthly rainfall accruals. When less than two inches of rain accumulation occurs in each of two successive months, the Fire Plan will go into Alert: Level One. If less than two more inches of rain accumulation occur in the next successive month, the Fire Plan will go into Activation: Level Two.

## **2. ALERT: LEVEL ONE STEPS**

1. PUBLISH notices to Connestee Falls Community about drought status:
  - posters at Gates, Clubhouse, Golf Shop, and Administration building
  - Friday Flyer squib
  - gate flyer regarding status and steps to be taken
2. NO BURNING. No outside fires will be permitted, including outside charcoal grills, barbecues, or other such appliances.
3. YARD CLEANUP. All occupied residences will be asked to comply with the rules for yard cleanup published in the fire safety suggestions list. See Section 3.3.3. of the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan.
4. CONTACTS. The General Manager will contact neighboring landowners with fire hazard risks: camps, developers, and alert them to the drought status. The General Manager may also ascertain information regarding increased risk from work on the adjacent lands, such as debris burning or heavy development on such adjacent lands.
5. EVACUATION PLAN REINFORCEMENT. Homeowners will be reminded of the importance of becoming familiar with the Connestee Falls Evacuation Plan.

## **3. ACTIVATION: LEVEL TWO STEPS**

1. PUBLISH notices to Connestee Falls Community about drought status and about the Fire Plan:
  - posters at Gates, Clubhouse, Golf Shop, and Administration building
  - Friday Flyer squib
  - gate flyer regarding status and steps to be taken
2. TRAIL CLEARING. All existing trails identified as perimeter defense trails will be evaluated, and re-cleared if necessary

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3. TRAIL CUTTING. Proposed perimeter trails may be created as needed. Only those trails held to be essential for defense need be cleared immediately. It is expected that a proposed trail would be cleared if an actual fire threat in that area occurs. Priority of Trail Cutting may consider increased need in certain areas because of known increased risk in neighboring areas outside Connestee Falls.

### **IF AN ADDITIONAL DROUGHT WEEK OCCURS:**

4. MORATORIUM ON CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT OPERATION. The General Manager may determine that need is sufficient to request all contractors to refrain from operating heavy construction equipment, to preclude that equipment as an ignition source. An alternative may be to allow continued use with enhance fire protection at the site (water truck, fire extinguishers, etc.).

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

The following actions relate to Initial Plan approval, related budgeting issues, and routine preparation operations prior to invocation of the Plan by the General Manager.

The CFPOA Administration, General Maintenance, Trails Maintenance Crew, and Environmental Stewardship committee share some of these responsibilities in preparing for Plan Administration.

### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

The Connestee Falls Board of Directors considers and adopts plan initially, and agrees to roles of CFPOA groups mentioned, or requests modifications be made. It is expected that, while the Board would not normally be involved in event-based implementation of the plan, it will be expediently informed by the General Manager of intention to implement the plan.

### **By CFPOA Administration**

Connestee Falls Administration budgets estimated additional funds for General Maintenance for the initial approval activity.

Once the Plan is approved, Administration (1.) monitors rainfall, (2.) routinely budgets for Maintenance activities caused by the Plan, and (3.) publishes drought status information and procedures to be followed.

### **By Environmental Stewardship Committee**

ESC provides map, flags proposed fire trails, reviews proposed fire trails with General Maintenance Supervisor, and reconciles field and map trail locations.

### **By Connestee Falls Trails Maintenance Crew**

Trails Maintenance Crew reviews map for accuracy of hiking trail locations and status of use.

### **By Connestee Falls Maintenance**

General Maintenance reviews locations of proposed flagged fire trails, negotiates changes as needed, and schedules routine removal of trees which would interfere with fire trail cutting.

The following activities occur once the Fire Plan is invoked by the General Manager:

#### ***Alert: Level One***

### **By CFPOA Administration**

When the General Manager declares the Fire Plan in effect, the General Manager oversees the activities of all organizations. At Alert: Level One status, the General Manager may contact surrounding landowners to inform them of the Fire Plan and danger of fire initiation spreading to Connestee Falls Community. The General Manager may also ascertain fire risks posed by activities being conducted on neighboring properties at this time.

### **By Connestee Falls Trails Maintenance Crew**

When the Fire Plan enters Alert: Level One, the Connestee Falls Trails Maintenance Crew coordinates with General Maintenance to clean up, on a priority basis, all hiking trails which have fire trail value. They notify General Maintenance of any shortfall in the crew's ability to complete clearing within two weeks.

### **By Owners**

Residents comply with "no burning" order, cleanup yard debris, review the evacuation plan and take other requested steps.

### **Activation: Level Two**

#### **By CFPOA Administration**

The General Manager publishes the new status to the community, and instructs members and contractors on the impending moratorium on use of heavy construction equipment.

If needed, the General Manager also calls a moratorium on construction equipment operation.

#### **By C.F. Maintenance**

When the Fire Plan enters Activation: Level Two, General Maintenance cuts the proposed fire trails as flagged, and completes any shortfall in clearance of existing hiking trails which have fire trail value. This work will be done on a high priority basis once Activation: Level Two is declared! General Maintenance may undertake clearing of existing trails earlier at its option.

## **3.3.2 Connestee Falls Evacuation Plan**

### **1 Authority**

1.1 The Incident Commander of a fire scene and the Transylvania County Office of Emergency Management are vested with legal authority to recommend evacuation of a threatened area when, in their judgment, unusual risks to human life would prevail if an evacuation were not carried out.

1.2 The Transylvania County Manager has legal authority to recommend such evacuations on a countywide basis when major threats to the area necessitate such action.

1.3 While no authority exists in North Carolina for local authorities to mandate evacuation, persons who refuse to evacuate do so at their own risk. They may also cause risk subsequently to emergency personnel if they need assistance or protection, or emergency personnel may not be available if they have been committed to other tasks.

1.4 The Transylvania County Office of Emergency Management is responsible for general plans for notification of citizens, transportation alternatives that can be made available, locations of shelters, plans for shelter supervision, and lists of resources for emergency needs.

1.5 While this plan describes a development-wide evacuation, it can also be followed for partial evacuation of Connestee Falls, where a full-scale evacuation is not needed.

1.6 This plan for evacuation of Connestee Falls is subject to the above named authorities, and is meant to provide guidelines to inhabitants of Connestee Falls to minimize risk to human life in the event an evacuation is requested. Examples of reasons for evacuation are (1.) major wildfire threat, (2.) contaminated water supply, (3.) overturned LPG truck, (4.) LPG storage tank fire, (5.) threat of dam failure, (6.) area-wide civil defense or nuclear threat. Other reasons undoubtedly exist.

## **2 Notification**

2.1 The Incident Commander of a fire scene shall consult with civil authorities as necessary and initiate a full or partial evacuation of Connestee Falls when, in the Incident Commander's judgment, the need to reduce risk of civilian injury dictates such action.

2.2 The Transylvania County Office of Emergency Management shall initiate a full or partial evacuation of Connestee Falls when circumstances dictate such need.

2.3 The Connestee Falls Property Owners Association (CFPOA) should consult with the Transylvania County Office of Emergency Management if CFPOA desires an evacuation. Such evacuation would then be done under coordination with the Office of Emergency Management.

2.4 If at all possible, advanced notice of at least one half hour that such potential evacuation is probable will be made to Connestee Falls residents, to afford time to gather necessary belongings and to encourage reference to evacuation instructions. This notification will include: (1.) Means by which evacuation notification will be performed: local patrol with bullhorn, radio station announcement, telephone chain, etc.; (2.) Estimated probable duration of the evacuation stay, if known; (3.) Suggested shelter destination of evacuees; (4.) Recommended transportation means and gates to be used (OR NOT TO BE USED); (5.) Whom to call for special help with persons who are sick or not mobile.

2.5 Connestee Falls Property Owners Association guards will assist in (1.) opening outward gates to expedite traffic flow; (2.) Performance of local bull-horn patrol; (3.) Traffic direction; (4.) Transportation of special needs people. These tasks are subject to the limitations of staff on hand. Law enforcement and/or Fire personnel will also perform these tasks as needed and as available.

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2.6 Actual notification of evacuation will repeat all items in paragraph 2.4 above and any timing urgency, as modified by current information. Residents will be required to notify an exit gate by turning in a piece of paper with their names and unit and lot number as a verification of exiting.

2.7 Exited evacuee names and unit and lot numbers will be cross-checked with Connestee Falls Security to ascertain that all known inhabitants have exited. The Incident Commander or Office of Emergency Management will dispatch personnel from Security, and/or fire resources to contact any inhabitants thought to be remaining, if resources permit.

2.8 The Incident Commander, Transylvania County Office of Emergency Management, and Connestee Falls Property Owners Association will exercise due diligence to notify and assist evacuees, but are not legally responsible for failure of notification or transportation of individual evacuees.

### 3 Directions for Usage of Particular Exit Gates

3.1 The evacuation announcement will direct evacuees to use particular gates, AND TO NOT USE PARTICULAR GATES, if the Incident Commander or Office of Emergency Management feels such choices are prudent. For instance, the East Fork gate may not be available for evacuation traffic if the Connestee Fire Rescue, Inc. station is used as a staging area for fire apparatus. The following plans contemplate various combinations of gate availability.

3.2 **All regular gates available:** Evacuees proceed out the nearest easily used gate; choice of gate is up to evacuee, but the presumption is as follows:

units 1, 5, 10, 16, 22, 28, 42, 64, 66 use Main Gate  
 units 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 40, 41, 43, 44, 68 use East Fork Gate  
 units 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32 use Walnut Hollow Gate.

3.3 **All regular gates, plus Equestrian Gate, are available:** Evacuees proceed out the nearest easily used gate; choice of gate is up to evacuee.

3.4 **East Fork Gate NOT available:**

units 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 27, 43 shift to Equestrian or Walnut Hollow Gate  
 units 8, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 40, 41, 44, 68 shift to Main Gate  
 all other units use normal gates.

3.5 **Main Gate NOT available:**

units 1, 5, 10, 22 use Walnut Hollow Gate  
 units 16, 28, 42, 64, 66 use East Fork Gate  
 all other units use normal gates.

**3.6 Walnut Hollow Gate NOT available:**

units 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32 use Equestrian Gate if available, or else Main Gate all other units use normal gates.

**3.7 Equestrian Gate NOT available:**

units use gates as specified in 2.2.2.

**3.8 Main Gate and East Fork Gate NOT available:**

all units use Equestrian Gate if available, and/or Walnut Hollow Gate.

3.9 The attached Table of Evacuation Gate Choices displays the above information. The unit numbers are shown at the left, the normal gate is shown next, and the first letter of the alternate gate to be used is shown under the column for each gate closure situation. An evacuee can look at the unit row and determine what action is appropriate for various conditions.

**4 Recommended Gathering Points Outside Connestee Falls**

4.1 For a local evacuation, evacuees will proceed to the suggested shelter destination and check in. Once checked in, they would normally be free to travel, as they desire, if weather and/or civil conditions permit. Evacuees are requested to observe all rules and guidelines that the shelter affords, including any shelter sign-in/sign-out procedures.

4.2 If the evacuation is part of a regional need to evacuate the area, no check-in is required after departure from Connestee Falls.

**4.3 Local shelters:**

Brevard High School.

4.4 In the event of a need to completely leave western North Carolina, evacuees are free to choose destination once they have left the gate.

**5 Return Notification Plan**

5.1 Incident Commander or Office of Emergency Management will notify Shelter Commander who will notify all inhabitants of return timing and methods.

5.2 Local radio stations will be asked to broadcast return instructions where feasible.

5.3 Local telephone or cell phone numbers or announcement machines may be set up to announce return instructions, especially if evacuation is to a remote geographic area.

5.4 If possible, return notification methods will be given to evacuees at time of departure from Connestee Falls.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

There will be some sharing of the responsibility of notifying residents, and of assisting residents who need aid, between Fire personnel and security, if it becomes necessary.

**By The Incident Commander**

The Incident Commander may declare that an Evacuation (partial or complete) of Connestee Falls is required for safety of the inhabitants. The Incident Commander will arrange to furnish evacuees with

1. When departure is requested.
2. How long (if known) the evacuation is likely to last
3. Suggested shelter, if any.
4. Which C F gates are NOT useable by evacuees.
5. Any other details, if any.

**By Connestee Falls Security**

Security at each gate will receive forms from each evacuation unit. They will also assist in notifying C F inhabitants, and removing handicapped persons, as resources permit.

**By Residents**

Follow recommendations covered in the Plan

### C F EVACUATION GATE USAGE

( M = Main Gate, E = East Fork Gate, W = Walnut Hollow Gate)							
>> Equestrian Gate, if open, can be used in lieu of Walnut Hollow <<							
UNIT NUMBER	NORMAL GATE USED			GATES CLOSED			
				MAIN	E. FORK	W. HOL.	MAIN + E. FORK
1	M			W			W
2		E			W		W
3		E			W		W
4		E			W		W
5	M			W			W
6		E			W		W
7		E			W		W
8		E			M		W
9		E			W		W
10	M			W			W
11		E			W		W
12		E			W		W
13		E			M		W
14		E			M		W
15		E			M		W
16	M			E			W
17		E			M		W
18		E			M		W
19		E			M		W
20		E			M		W
21		E			M		W
22	M			W			W
23			W			M	W
24			W			M	W
25			W			M	W
26		E			M		W
27		E			W		W
28	M			E			W
29			W			M	W
30			W			M	W
31			W			M	W
32			W			M	W
40		E			M		W
41		E			M		W
42	M			E			W
43		E			W		W
44		E			M		W
64	M			E			W
66	M			E			W
68( Qualla V.)		E			M		W

## Connestee Falls

### *Evacuation Participant Identity Form*

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ LOT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONS NOW EVACUATING IN THIS VEHICLE:

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GATE I.D.: \_\_\_\_\_

### **3.3.3 Household Fire Safety Suggestions**

These activities below afford substantial fire risk reduction and can be undertaken immediately. The ESC encourages all owners to follow these recommendations.

#### **1. Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in every home.**

Early detection of fire is an important way to save lives and minimize damage.

All houses should have smoke detectors in at least the following locations: near bedrooms and one on each level of the house. If residents have not yet installed a smoke detector system, the Connestee Fire Rescue personnel will be glad to assist the owner to find appropriate locations. If residents have smoke detectors that use batteries, they should be replaced regularly. Fire officials recommend replacement at daylight saving time changes of the calendar. All detectors should be tested periodically.

Carbon monoxide detectors should be present if you have a combustion-based furnace (as opposed to electric heat), or a fireplace or combustion-based space heater. These detectors are crucial to alert residents to carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is an insidious poison: it is colorless, odorless, lighter than air, and can kill at low levels of concentration.

#### **2. Use fireplaces and heaters properly and store wood away from the building.**

Wood-burning heaters should be professionally installed, with proper clearance from adjacent combustible surfaces.

1. Wood-burning heaters should be professionally inspected regularly for cleanliness of the burner and the flue, to eliminate chimney fires and to prevent production of carbon monoxide.

Wood-burning heaters should not be loaded with too much fuel, to avoid overheating of the burner, the flue, or nearby combustible surfaces.

Wood for fuel should not be kept "under the porch" but should be kept at least 30 feet away from the building.

Gas-burning heaters, gas logs, and gas fireplaces should also be professionally installed and maintained. While they are cleaner than wood-burning units, they still need recurring inspections for heater and flue cleanliness.

Gas and charcoal grills should be kept in good condition and positioned to eliminate possible ignition of nearby materials when the grill is in use.

#### **3. Remove combustible leaves and wood from proximity to the building.**

Please remember that some of these activities that change the appearance will require a permit from Architecture and Environment Committee!

When renovating foundation plantings, select plants that are fire resistant and/or water shrubs frequently during dry weather.

Remove loose combustibles from immediate proximity to building, and from under decks and porches.

Keep yard areas adjacent to the building free from leaves and fallen branches. This minimizes the threat of a nearby fire igniting the leaves or branches, and subsequently igniting the nearby shrubs and then the building.

Remove plants immediately adjacent to deck support structures.

#### 4. Display your house number prominently by the road.

Connestee Fire Rescue Auxiliary will assist you to install a plaque with your house number on it. These number signs make it expeditious for rescue personnel to find the right house in an emergency.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

##### **By Owners**

Owners can improve fire safety at their premises by following the recommendations listed.

### **3.3.4 Fire Safety Issues Requiring A&EC Action**

#### **Purpose**

The risk of forest fire in Connestee Falls is low, but to reduce risk at locations that may be more susceptible, the following recommendations are made for implementation by the A&EC. These are incremental forward-looking improvements, and have modest risk reduction. Nevertheless, the ESC feels it should recommend these steps. Failure to implement these steps will have an impact only in the event of actual fire near a subject house.

#### **Fire Risk Reduction Steps**

1. Encourage fire retardant or non-combustible siding and roofing materials. Noncombustible siding is best and consists of brick, stucco, and cementitious siding ("Hardie plank"). Wood clapboards, Carolina siding, and log siding are fire retardant.

Discourage vinyl siding because, in the event of a nearby fire, it will melt at about 200 degrees Fahrenheit and sag off the underlying vapor barrier, which is usually combustible. Also, a modest fire adjacent to vinyl may cause visible damage.

Fire authorities ("Firewise") discourage vinyl in "urban interface" situations such as Connestee Falls, because of the propensity to sag under heat. They also discourage wood and cedar shingle and shake siding and roofs because of their flammability. They encourage metal roofs, but the "shiny" appearance issue and gutter-water runoff control issues need further study before the ESC could fully recommend them. Connestee Falls rules and regulations currently prohibit all but asphalt composition roofing shingles.

Architectural metal roofs, with an appearance of composition shingles, would seem acceptable under current rules and regulations, and are certainly non-combustible. ESC supports their use.



2. Encourage burial of propane tanks. A factor that increases the attractiveness of burial is the need for screening if tanks are above ground. Flammable screening (bushes, trees, and lattice) is frequently used to hide the tanks. Presence of this material increases the risk of ground fire exposure to the tanks.

Where existing propane tanks need screening, it should consist of fire retardant material such as pressure treated lattice, cementitious siding or boards, logs, or similar materials. Trees and low bushes are acceptable if they are placed so that their extremities are at least ten feet from the tank.

3. Encourage careful planning of clear space around house. The following guidelines are crafted to fit in with the current rules and regulations, but a permit might be required to accomplish these steps in some existing house cases.

1. Keep combustible debris and bushes out of the ten-foot area immediately next to the house, or provide a comparable ten-foot swath of clear space outside foundation plantings. Bushes under three feet high are acceptable next to a noncombustible wall (masonry, brick, etc.) if that part of the wall extends at least ten feet from the ground. No plantings should be placed closer than two feet from wooden deck supports and lattice screens or similar wooden structures. These measures do not preclude the need for appropriate screening.

2. Trim trees near house so that no branches overhang the house, and so that lower tree branches are at least 15 feet above the tops of bushes and shrubs underneath them.

3. If foundation plantings are present, trim branches on house side of plantings so they are at least two feet from house.

4. Where septic field exists, keep it free of saplings, bushes, and shrubs. This provides a fire defense space, and improves septic field performance by reducing root intrusion.

5. On lots with a slope over 20%, owners should be allowed greater clear space on the downhill side, where that side is exposed to open fire traverse opportunity. For example, if the down hill side on a steep slope faces common areas with little or no fire breaks to the exterior of the community, risk is greater, but if a downhill side faces the road or a lake, risk is minimal. For slopes over 20%, clear space (including septic area if present) should increase to 30 to 60 feet. This space may have intermittent bushes and trees, but should not allow easy fire transmission from bush to bush. The ESC will provide a list of lot areas where wider clear areas may be considered. (See Appendix.)

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **By The Connestee Falls Board of Directors**

Board of Directors approval is required for any proposed Rules and Regulations changes, and for any general recommendations to be made to owners.

#### **By The Architectural & Environmental Committee**

A&EC would review existing rules and regulations, and recommend to the Board of Directors such alterations as necessary.

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Where rules are changed to be in accordance with recommendations covered in this Environmental Stewardship Plan, normal A&EC permit review and enforcement would apply. Where an owner requests a permit for landscape changes, Liaison would review rules necessities, and recommendations, cited above with the owner, and recommend to the A&EC what issues obtain. A&EC would then follow normal procedures.

#### **By A&EC Liaison**

Administration will function through the A&EC Liaison persons to assist A&EC implementation of the rules and regulations, and recommendations. On a continuing basis, some facet of Administration will publish information in Connestee Falls News, flyers, and the Friday Flyer to alert homeowners of the need to perform "good housekeeping" steps regularly.

### **3.3.5 PROTECT ROADSIDE POWER PEDASTALS**

#### **Purpose**

A few power pedestals along side Connestee Falls roads are vulnerable to automobile impact if the car goes off the road. It is proposed that General Maintenance place boulders to barricade the most vulnerable of these cabinets. Boulder placement must not interfere with utility crew access to the cabinet for service purposes.

#### **Proposed Methodology**

The ESC will survey the community and report locations of all vulnerable power cabinets. General Maintenance will place barricading boulders so as to prevent cars from hitting the cabinets.

#### ***RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:***

##### **Environmental Stewardship Committee**

The ESC will identify all vulnerable cabinets.

##### **By Connestee Falls Maintenance**

General Maintenance will place boulders as required.




## **4 Issues Requiring Further Resolution**

This section lists issues which are being considered, or worked on, but are not resolved to the point of inclusion in the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan at this time. As these issues are resolved, an update will be issued for the Plan, removing the issue from Part 4 and adding it to the appropriate location in Part 3.


### **4.1 Audubon Survey**


The Environmental Stewardship Committee is assisting the Golf Maintenance Supervisor by conducting (1.) Tree, and (2.) Bird surveys for compliance with the application by CFPOA Golf Course for membership in Audubon International. This activity will not be documented in the Environmental Stewardship Plan.

### **4.2 Stewardship Video**



The Environmental Stewardship Committee intends to plan a video production covering the environmental issues. This video would be made available to all real estate professionals, current Connestee Falls members, prospective Connestee Falls members, and any other relevant audiences. The committee intends to (1.) organize a script, (2.) plan the “story board”, (3.) obtain estimates of production costs, and (4.) submit the plan and costs to the Board of Directors for approval.





## 5 Appendices & Attachments

### 5.1 Appendices Published with the Plan

This section of the Connestee Falls Environmental Stewardship Plan contains bulky or technical details that complement the plan itself, and are referenced in it.

5.1.1. *A Forest Stewardship Plan for Connestee Falls* by Ed Hicks of *Wildwood Consulting* (October 19, 2004) (Color maps are available at Administration Building, but were not published)

5.1.2. *Memorandum on Rainfall Records at Lake Wanteska for 14 Years* by George McDermott (February 16, 2005)  
Appendix Entries:

5.1.3. *Evaluation of Wildfire Risk of Lots* by Park Johnstone (8/13/05)

5.1.4. *Impact of Rainfall on Wildfire Risk* by Fire & Safety Subcommittee of ESC (8/13/05)

5.1.5. *Further Analysis of Wildfire Risk vs. Rainfall* by Park Johnstone (9/11/05)



### 5.2 Appendices Available at C F Administration Building

5.2.1 Color Maps associated with 6.1.1 above.


5.2.2. *Lakes Quality and Fish Management Survey* (1992)

5.2.3. *Lakes Quality and Fish Management Report*(2004)

5.2.4. *Report on Geological Features of Connestee Falls* by Brevard College (June 2004)

5.2.5 Compact Disk (CD) of maps associated with 5.2.4 above

5.2.6. Report on Lake Chemistry of Lake Atagahi by Brevard College (June 2004)



## **Disclaimer**

This document was prepared by the Environmental Stewardship Committee of Connestee Falls. With time, it may become outdated. It references formal documents of the Connestee Falls Property Owners Association, a not-for-profit corporation in the State of North Carolina. It is crucial that readers refer to the current formal documents related to a subject of interest, to be sure proper Connestee Falls Covenants, and Rules and Regulations are followed.

Members of the Environmental Stewardship Committee are Dick Blee, Liz Garrison (Board Liaison), Park Johnstone (Chair), Jim LeGere, Allan Leslie, George McDermott, and Larry Ragsdale (Vice-Chair). Earl Jenkins (Assistant General Manager) and Rick Wade (General Manager) are on the committee ex officio. Andy Anderson, Gary Claus, and Jan Nelson were formerly on the committee.