

November 13, 2014

Dr. Tallman Trask
Executive Vice President
Duke University

Dear Dr. Trask:

We were disappointed to learn only through a 5 November 2014 email from Alphonso Alonzo (Facilities Management) that a new Student Health and Wellness Center is to be sited on what is widely known as Anderson Woods, at the corner of Towerview and Union Drives. We were disappointed first that this area, which provides so much environmental and aesthetic benefit and is so important for ecological research and teaching, would be selected for a project that will greatly diminish those values (albeit providing a student service). We were even more disappointed that those who have much invested in this site were not engaged in the site evaluation and approval process. Much will be lost if this project moves ahead as planned in February 2015. Therefore, we urge that this project be reconsidered with all appropriate input by both the University's and Trustees' Committees on Facilities and Environment.

As you know, the name Anderson Woods refers to the late Dr. Lewis Anderson, a distinguished faculty member in the former Botany Department and founder of the Bryophyte Herbarium at Duke. Anderson Woods has had and continues to have great value as a teaching and research resource. It was first sampled in 1931 by Clarence Korstian as part of his initial survey of the Duke Forest. Because of the unique old-growth character of its forest and its proximity to the Bioscience Building, Anderson Woods has been an important teaching laboratory for courses in botany, zoology and forestry for over 6 decades. Norm Christensen sampled the woods in 1977 as part of a system of permanent sample plots located across Duke Forest. He subsequently (1982) established a 1.4 hectare plot in the woods in which the identity, size and location of over 3,000 trees were recorded. That plot has been re-sampled several times (most recently in 2004). Christensen's data are currently being used by Drs. Justin Wright and James Clark in their studies of forest change. Other faculty in multiple areas of the university, including Drs. Bill Morris, Emily Bernhardt, Alec Motten, Daniel Richter, Chantal Reid, Paul Manos, Jon Shaw, and Rytas Vilgalys, have carried out research or teaching in Anderson Woods. Since 2011 research in the Anderson Woods has served as a central element in the experiential learning objectives of the introductory ecology course of the Biology Department (BIOL 209), and over 150 students have spent time collecting data there and analyzing those data in class. This combination of the site's ecological complexity and its proximity to the Biological Sciences building make it irreplaceable as a site for learning.

But, even if no research or teaching had ever been done in Anderson Woods, it would still merit special attention for conservation. Unlike most of the woods on campus, this site was never farmed, nor was it ever heavily cut. Many of the large trees got their start in this hillside over 300 years ago, before any significant European settlement in this area. Because of its old-growth character, it supports a unique assemblage of plants and animals. These woods shelter the headwaters of Sand Creek which Duke has worked mightily to protect. Precious few areas of intact woods remain on campus, much less woods of this stature.

Although the proposed project is confined to the eastern half of Anderson Woods, the construction proposed will very seriously impact all of the above values across the entire area. It will open up much

of the forest to side lighting which will alter the dynamics of plant and animal populations in ways that will greatly impair its value for future research and teaching. It will facilitate the invasion of nonnative plants. It will diminish the value of the many ecosystem services Anderson Woods provides, including biodiversity and water quality.

We are especially unhappy to be at this juncture given that our interest in and commitment to Anderson Woods as a teaching and research resource was well known to various parties, including the office of the University Architect and Facilities Management. A student health and wellness center is a very worthy project that we all can support. We appreciate that its size made the siting decision for such a worthy facility more complicated, but a decision to develop this particular area—one with such important consequences— simply deserves further, and more comprehensive, deliberation that involves all stakeholders. Thus we repeat, this project must be reconsidered with all appropriate input by both the University's and Trustees' Committees on Facilities and Environment.

Respectfully,

Family members and a colleague of Dr. Lewis Anderson:

Children of Dr. Anderson

Philip Anderson
Sarah Jane Anderson Beaton
Nancy Ruth Anderson
David Anderson

Grandchildren of Dr. Anderson

Lisa Gilmour
Matthew Crosby
Keith Anderson
Joyce Skaperdas Anderson
Becky Grebosky
Sara Crosby
Robert Anderson Goodridge
Alistair Goodridge
Paul Robert Bellora

Colleague

Marshall R. Crosby, St. Louis Botanical Garden

Staff in the Nicholas School of the Environment:

Scottee Cantrell, Associate Dean of Marketing, Communications and Strategic Engagement
Ellen Cooper, research scientist
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Anne Marie Davis, Administrative Services Manager, Nicholas School of the Environment
Kathryne Doughty, alumna - Trinity 1980 - and current IT specialist
Nancy Kelly, Events Coordinator
Connie Kot, Associate in Research
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Co-chair Duke Environment Inclusion and Diversity Working Group
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Megan Mullin

Ram Oren

Sari Palmroth

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Katia Koelle
François Lutzoni
Paul Magwene
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Dan McShea
John Mercer
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William Morris
Alec Motten
Diana Nemergut
Fred Nijhout
Mohamed Noor
Sheila Patek
Kathleen Pryer
Mark Rausher
Chantal Reid
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Jon Shaw
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cc.

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