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*Safety, Health Endangered along Popular US Biking and Pedestrian Routes. Public Outcry
Against First Private Rock Mine on Public Land in North Carolina*

RALEIGH, NC — Plans to build a new quarry adjacent to one of North Carolina’s busiest state parks and US bike routes is facing significant opposition from community leaders. The new 400 foot deep rock mine would be the first private quarry on public land in the State of North Carolina and would set a new precedent for public land management in the state. The quarry is planned to be built on 105 acres known as the “Odd Fellows Tract”, adjacent to one of North Carolina’s most visited state parks, US Bike Route 1 and the East Coast Greenways, which run from Maine to Florida.

A virtual Public Hearing continues today, July 7, 2020 starting at 9 a.m. with speakers that include experts ranging from environmental scientists, wildlife experts, civil and environmental engineers, educators, advocacy groups, politicians and concerned Triangle residents.

“We have demonstrated clear evidence for denial according to the criteria in the NC Mining Act,” said Dr. Jean Spooner, Chair of The Umstead Coalition. “Adverse and unmitigatable impacts would occur to potable groundwater supplies; wildlife; Crabtree Creek; water and air quality standards; direct hazard to public health, safety and property; our prized William B. Umstead State Park and the connected Old Reedy Creek Road Corridor.”

Local elected officials share the public’s concern for the new quarry. The Town of Morrisville unanimously passed a [Resolution](#) on June 23, 2020 requesting the NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) deny the mining permit application. This joins two statements previously released by the [City of Raleigh in 2019](#) and [Wake County in 2017](#).

[North Carolina State Senator Wiley Nickel](#) and [Wake County Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee](#) have also issued statements opposing the quarry requesting denial of the permit. The [Regional Transportation Alliance RDU Airport Infrastructure Development \(AID\) task force](#) recommended RDU "should revisit the entire 2040 master plan given the reality of an adjacent, beloved state park" citing the proposed quarry as a “costly distraction” for the RDU Airport. The [Town of Cary](#) has engaged a consultant to evaluate the potential impacts to Town facilities including the North Cary Water Reclamation Facility, Old Reedy Creek Road and Cary’s one-lane bridge.

“The southern end of Umstead represents the best chance to make sure the state park remains ecologically connected to other natural areas, particularly Jordan Lake, which has over 40,000 acres of public forest/gamelands,” said Dr. Ron Sutherland, Chief Scientist, Wildlands Network. “Jordan Lake’s forests are also connected (via several large rivers) to the broader network of habitat across North Carolina, and it is essential to try to keep Umstead linked together with that network.”

Opponents to the quarry are advocating for preserving the Odd Fellows Tract — publicly owned land and deeded to the four local governments: City of Raleigh, City of Durham, Wake County and Durham County. The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority (RDUAA) manages the land for the four local government owners.

The Odd Fellows Tract was purchased in 1976 for a runway never built due to public opposition over the harm to Umstead State Park. The Tract is located two miles from the nearest runway at Raleigh Durham International Airport (RDU). The [NC State Park system](#) has identified the Odd Fellows Tract as “Critical” for land acquisition for new single-track bike trails and water quality protection for the adjacent Crabtree Creek that runs through the middle of Umstead State Park, as well as connecting to the Neuse River, a major river system in NC.

In 2017, The Conservation Fund offered to buy the Odd Fellows Tract from RDU to expand Umstead State Park. The RDUAA did not accept the offer from the Conservation Fund, and also rejected an offer from the private mining company.

After a long period of “silence,” with only two days’ notice to the public, and no public discussion, in March 2019, RDUAA executed an Option and Lease Agreement with Wake Stone for the proposed RDU quarry. The RDUAA Board meeting lasted 4 minutes and 17 seconds. The agreement did not follow the normal contracting procedures of the RDUAA. This mineral lease is subject to approval of a NC Mining Permit.

The public can [submit comments](#) to DEQ and local elected officials until July 17, 2020.

About The Umstead Coalition:

The Umstead Coalition has been working since the 1960’s to support and protect William B. Umstead State Park through fundraising, sponsorship of volunteer activities, and oversight of environmental and legal protections. William B. Umstead State Park was established in 1934 as a public works project during the Great Depression. For more information, visit <https://umsteadcoalition.org>.

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