## Yellow Creek Community Working Group, 23 July, 2025

To our BOCC members:

RE: 6266 Yellow Creek Rd | Rezone | Cook Communities Applicant



Here we, (the Yellow Creek Community) are again, requesting you disapprove yet another inappropriate rezoning request, for the third time in roughly two years. We thank you in advance for reading through our packet prior to the BOCC meeting on 24 July, 2025. What we'll present across four speakers, closely matches the color-printed booklet, along with the supplemental pages included with this cover letter.

First, we'll cover what we are against and why:

- We oppose a request like this Cook Communities rezoning because it is inappropriate for our community and its enduring and desirable rural character, and
- o it is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate UDC zoning, and
- they have proceeded with their request, despite direct community input and feedback to the contrary, while apparently ignoring much of Comprehensive Plan's Chapter 3 (Community Input,) and
- it insufficiently addresses real inherent risks to natural resources, specifically the
   Yellow Creek and the Yellow Creek wetlands, and/or our community's quality of life.

Secondly, here's what we are for, that is, what we are asking the BOCC to do:

We recommend the BOCC deny this rezoning application and establish the following conditions, a priori to the next submission of a development plan for *this* property:

- Hall County BOCC will only approve development that is authentically AR-1, Rural Neighborhood, with a Greenspace Overlay per the Comprehensive Plan,
- o with appropriately large lots, in character with the existing 9.4-acre proximal lot size average,
- o require substantial dedicated greenspace, with a limited number of homes overall,
- o 100' streambed buffers (since the property encompasses the watershed of an unimpaired State Waterbody and the headwaters of a protected wetlands,) and
- require a CWA Section 404 Federal Permit with Section 401 State Certification, stipulating best management processes, plans and execution that pre-empt storm runoff and pollution damage to an authentically sensitive and unimpaired downstream aquatic wetlands area.

Each of the above conditions is consistent with O.C.G.A. § 36-66-1 et seq., the Comprehensive Plan, the UDC, the Clean Water Act of 1972 ("CWA"), 33 U.S.C. § 1251(a), and the Georgia

### Yellow Creek Community Working Group, 23 July, 2025

Erosion and Sedimentation Act (O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 et seq., **ALL** of which were in place and publicly available prior to Cook Communities applying to re-zone *this* property.

We want to emphasize, we're not against growth; we just want the right kind of growth and that is already defined in the Comprehensive Plan. We recognize each of our homes represented growth. In fact we agree with Geoff Cook that 'growth is inevitable.' But South Hall-style growth does not belong along Yellow Creek, and neither does development that risks serious damage to important natural resources.

Please deny this request for rezoning and consider establishing conditions for future applicants.

Very respectfully,

The Yellow Creek Working Group

by Greg Rutledge 7724 Barkers Bend Dr.

Murrayville, GA 30564

770.995.9520

gregrut1@bellsouth.net

As mentioned before, Yellow Creek is the last clean, unimpaired headwater/watershed area of Lake Lanier in the Chestatee region. Per the EPA, and per the GA EPD [Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 et seq.)] \*ANY\* land distur within 200' of a State Waterbody requires:

An LDP (Land Disturbance Permit),

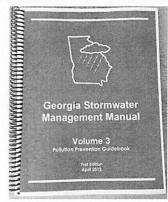
An Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollution Control (ES&PC) plan with BMPs, (best managed)

A filed NOI (Notice of Intent) ...

which apparently were not in place prior to cutting in the ~10' wid

Note well shortly after the road was cut, we filed a complaint with rain shower. Per SOPs, that complaint was referred to the County, site and "could not find evidence that sediment was escaping the disturbed areas." That remediation is not yet scheduled.

This is all in the "Blue Book"





Regarding the lack of a permit and silt fence for disturbed earth within 200' of a State Waterbody

UPDATE

County Engineer Jason Skarda is now personally addressing this matter.

Pending remediation and repair

https://cdn.atlantaregional.org/wp-content/uploads/gsmm-whatsnew-final.pdf updated to focus on stormwater runoff

https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/storm-water/georgia-epd-coastalstormwater-supplement-stormwater ← update covers the specifics of stormwater runoff rules due to increasing adverse effects (from development) of runoff and the ensuing runoff pollution.

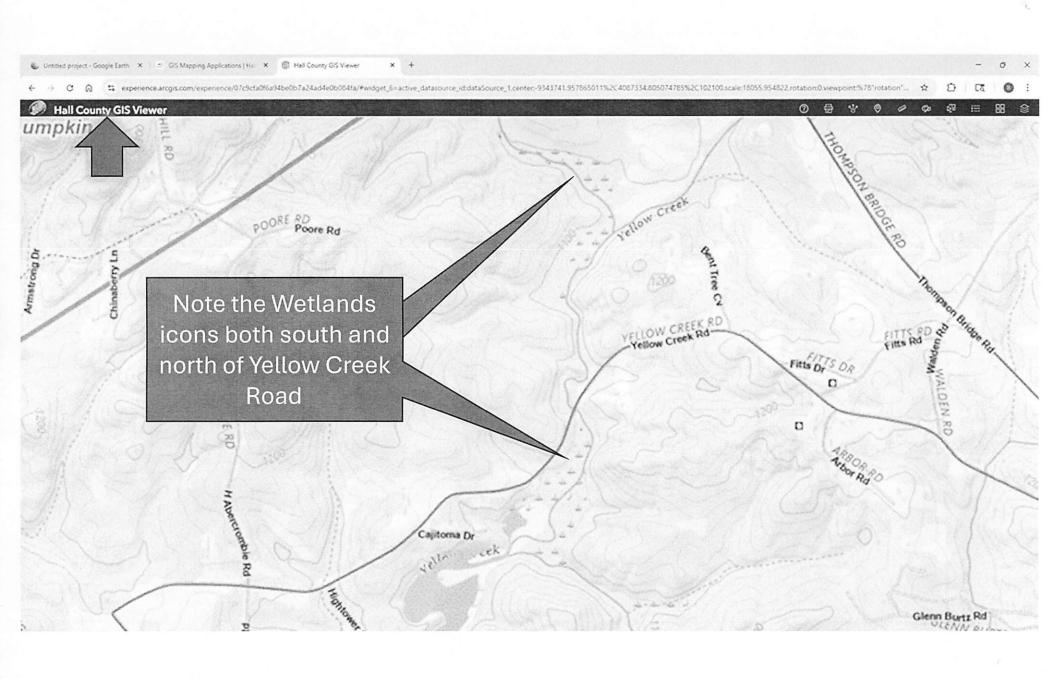
# The County is now working with Cook Communities to remediate any future silt/mud releases due to a lack of proper silt fences

The failure to install required silt fences in proximity to state waters, after disturbing earth without a permit, and within 200' of those state waters, followed by foreseeable rain events and observable sediment releases, fits the mold of a situation that:

- Would not ordinarily occur without negligence,
- · Was within the developer's or their contractor's exclusive control,
- Produced direct and visible harm to water quality, and
- The absence of basic erosion controls notably silt fencing within 200 feet of the Yellow Creek, prior to typical and/or forecasted precipitation resulted in three observed releases of notable sediment into a protected state water, (the Yellow Creek) in a 30-day period. This kind of failure, absent extraordinary external factors, strongly suggests negligent site management.

Res Ipsa Loquitur (the thing speaks for itself)

We do not seek fines or punishment, just remediation and suitable permitting and care going forward.



The Cook development plan is not a bad plan but should be built in an area that supports it and is in fact consistent with the Comprehensive Plan – such as proximal to the identified development corridors along Highway 60 and the Sardis Connector, **NOT** an area slated to remain rural in character and reality.

When a development plan is submitted consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, we recommend the County require AR-1, Rural Neighborhood, Greenspace Overlay per the Comprehensive Plan, with appropriately large lots, in character with the 9.4-acre proximal lot size average, plus substantial dedicated greenspace, 100' streambed buffers (100' buffers are mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan) limiting the number of homes, and requiring a CWA Section 404 Permit with Section 401 Certification; these actions taken to deliberately pre-empt storm runoff and pollution damage to an authentically sensitive and unimpaired aquatic wetlands area.

Per the GA EPD "the goal is to ensure that development does not cause the unimpaired stream [and the wetlands] to become impaired in the first place."

# **GREENSPACE**

"It is understood that large-lot single-family houses in rural setting are going to be the preferred development pattern in some areas, namely ... Murrayville/Sardis. However [examples shown]... with trade-offs ... demonstrate[s] rural development can't happen in some areas without building higher densities in other areas to support it. [emphasis Hall] {highlights YCCC}

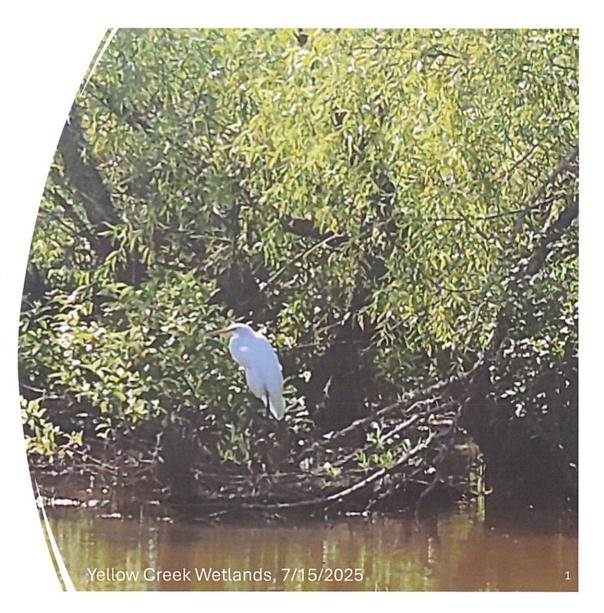
P 137 Comprehensive Plan

BOCC Meeting 24 July, 2025

Yellow Creek Community Presentation
In opposition to
Cook Communities Rezoning Request,

Following the Planning Commission's 3-1 vote against staff recommendation to approve

On 16 June 2025



6266 Yellow Creek Road | Rezone | from Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Planned Residential Development (PRD) | on a 253.58± acre portion of a tract located on the northwest side of Yellow Creek Road approximately 1,457 feet from its intersection with Bent Tree Cove | Zoned AR-1; Tax Parcel 11112 000004 (pt.) | Proposed Use: 253-lot residential development | \*\* Commission District 2 | Cook Communities, applicant

More accurately, AR-1, rural neighborhood with a greenspace overlay and wetlands
Comprehensive Plan, pp 89, 90, 168, 169, 175

# Four planned speakers in opposition, two minutes each

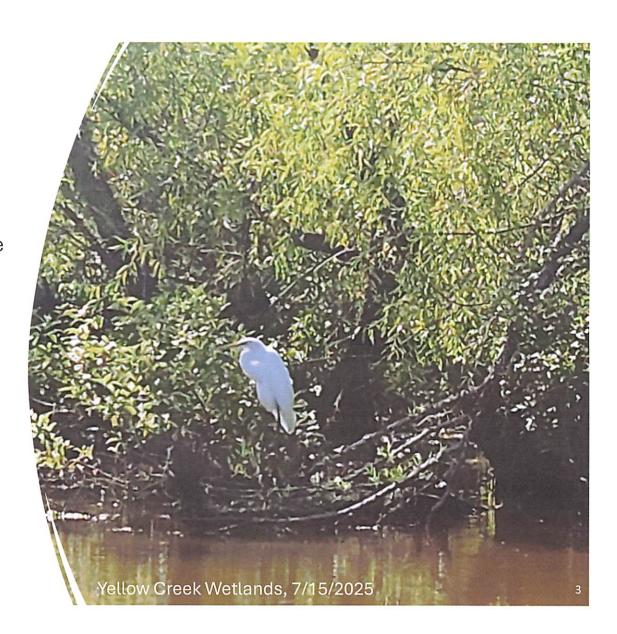
- 1. Greg Rutledge: Summary of Opposition; Recommendation
- 2. Dr. Bronier Costas: Appropriate Land Use and Existing Rural Character
- 3. Chuck Andrews: Yellow Creek wetlands and unimpaired watershed/headwaters at risk; Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 et seq.)
- 4. Dr. Courtney St. John-Wacker: Summary and Closing

As a professional courtesy, please recognize

Greg Rutledge

as the first speaker.

Summary of Opposition; Recommendation



The Yellow Creek community has been consistent and resolute in its opposition to rezoning applications such as but not limited to this one, which:

- \* were/are inappropriate for our community and its character,
- \* inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate UDC zoning,
- \* brush off direct community input and feedback, and apparently the entirety of Chapter 3, Community Input, and
- \* insufficiently address risks to natural resources and/or our community's quality of life.

Our sort of community-based opposition effort, which has consumed considerable time and resources for the Yellow Creek community members in the last year, could have been avoided if <u>all</u> applicants had taken to heart and heeded the guidance of the <u>first two paragraphs</u> of the Comprehensive Plan, a publicly available document.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Hall County's comprehensive plan, *Hall County Forward*, is a policy document that guides the county's long-range vision for growth and development in the unincorporated portions of the county. This plan is intended to balance population, economic, and employment growth with the desire to maintain rural character, greenspace, and natural resources. This plan also addresses the need to coordinate new development with infrastructure capacity. This executive summary presents highlights from the plan, including the process used to develop recommendations, the recommendations themselves, and how the plan will be implemented.

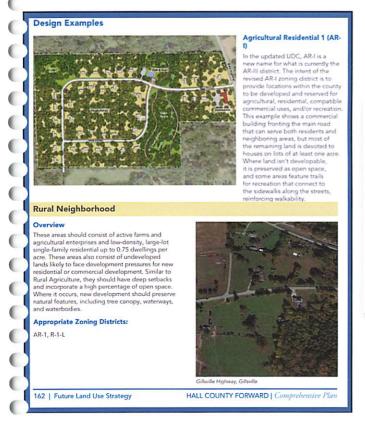
This document is to be used as a guide by the following groups:



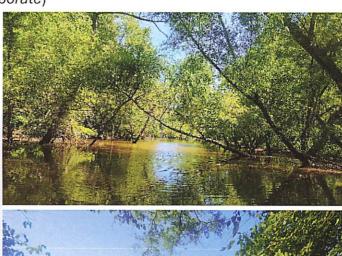
- 1. Developers. Developers will use this plan to determine if they can build what they want to build, where they want to build it, before undertaking their plans.
  - 2. Hall County Staff. County staff will use this plan to determine if new development meets the goals outlined in this document, as well as to guide future planning and project efforts.
  - 3. The Hall County Board of Commissioners (BOC). The BOC will use this plan as their guide to make decisions related to rezonings and approving new developments.
- 4 | Executive Summary

The Comprehensive Plan is clear that the appropriate, compatible and consistent zoning for this property is as already defined in the Comprehensive Plan: AR-1, Rural Neighborhood with a Greenspace Overlay. NOT PRD, and NOT R-1L.

We respectfully recommend that when a subsequent development plan is filed, you only approve one demonstrably compatible with AR-1, Rural Neighborhood, Greenspace Overlay with conditions that increase stream buffers and restrict the total number of lots in order to protect the unimpaired headwaters and watershed of the Yellow Creek and its immediately downstream wetlands, (which have Wetlands designation and EPD/EPA protection noted in the Comprehensive Plan. (Speaker 3, Chuck Andrews will elaborate)







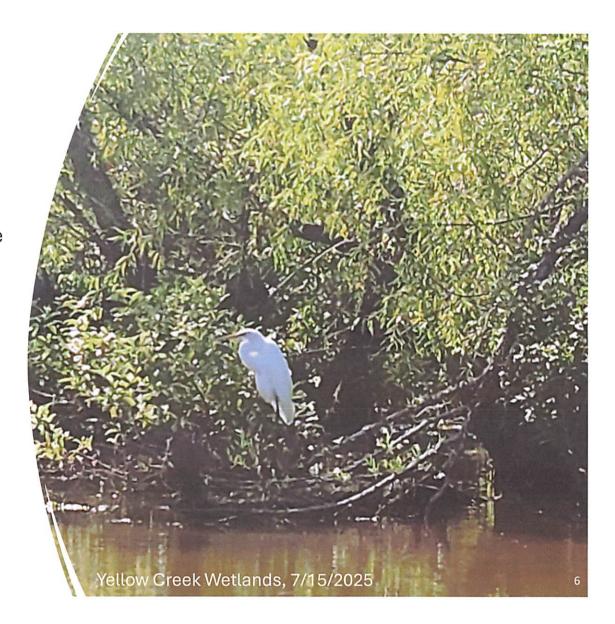


As a professional courtesy, please recognize

Dr. Bronier Costas

as the next speaker.

Appropriate Land Use and Existing Rural Character



NTENT - "The **p**roposed **r**esidential development ... should conform to the existing character and development pattern of the surrounding area." (UDC)

# Murrayville/Sardis Future Land Use & Zoning Compatibility

Future Land Use	AG-1	AR-1	Ų.	R-1-L	R-1	R-TF	8:X	R-MF	MHP	<u>ā</u>	S-S	H.B.	D-W	Ξ	3	PCD	PE	POD	PRD
Greenspace - Recreation	X	X	X	X	×		X	X.		-Х.	X	X.	X.	Х		X			X
Greenspace - Conservation	X	X	Х	X	Х		X	X		Χ	Х	Х	X	X		X			Х
Rural Agriculture	X	Ж																	
Rural Neighborhood		X.		Х								24-					7 T.		2.0
Labeside Residential			X	X	X	-1	1				100	U			17.				
Business Nodes & Corridors										X	Х	X	X	-X		X			
Rural Scenic Nodes & Conidors	Х	Х								Х	Х			Х					
Regional Activity Nodes & Comidors							×	Х		Х	Х	Х	Х			Х			X

# Proximal single-family homes have an average lot size of 9.4 acres.

(28 home sites/ Rural Character)

All-recent-(prior-10-years)-development-and-existing-home-sites-built-along-Yellow-Creek-Rd-are-all-single-familyhomes-generally-on-multiple-acres. (includes the in-progress Hathaway horse farm with home.) - With-oneexception-(Lee),-all-recent-Yellow-Creek-Rd-(and-adjacent/fronting)-are-built-on-lots-exceeding-one-acre.--Forexample:¶

- o → Singleton, 6641 Yellow-Creek-Rd, 11.76 acres. -¶
- o → Singleton, 6673-Yellow-Creek-Rd, 1.57-acres. ¶
- o → Tate, 662 ·H·Abercrombie/Yellow ·Creek ·driveway, 37.95 ·acres ·(house ·and ·outbuilding)¶
- o → Black, 6624 Yellow Creek, 4.2 acres (house and outbuildings Y
- o → Hathaway, 6384·Yellow-Creek, 54.37-acres-(house-and-/ ≥ 10 years
- o → McCrary, 6067-Walden-Rd/Yellow-Creek-frontage, 4.74-a
- o → Fauscett, 6645-Abercrombie, 3.24-acres¶
- o → Baker, 6657-Abercrombie, 3.24-acres¶
- o → Sykes, 6677-Abercrombie, 1.53-acres¶
- o → Warneke, 6689-Abercrombie, 1.63-acres¶
- o → Romero, 6701 Abercrombie, 2.21 acres¶
- o → Lee, 6035 Yellow-Creek, .86 acres.¶

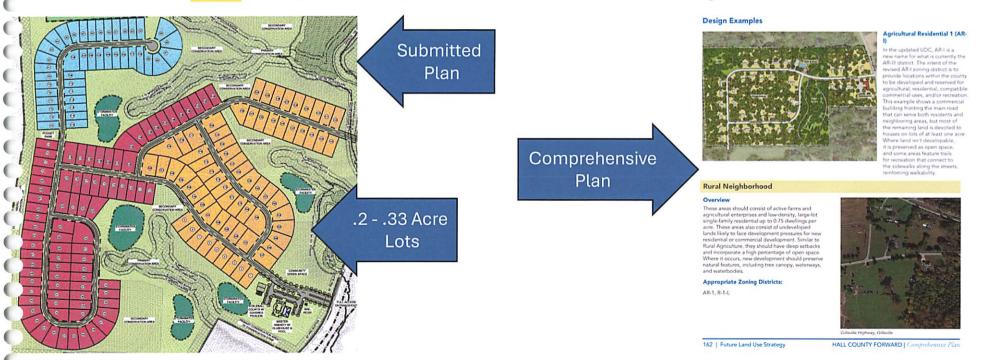
Souther, 6212 Bent Tree Cove, 10.5 acres Souther, 6216 Bent Tree Cove, 3.84 acres Mulder, 6200 Bent Tree Cove, 4.35 acres McClain, 6190 Bent Tree Cove, 1.15 acres White 6144 Yellow Creek, 4.42 acres Cochran, 6126 Yellow Creek, 35.77 acres Et alia – 4.66, 40.56, 1.5, 2.58, 3.01, 1.77, 2.15, 7.10, 1.09, 2.50, 13.4 acres respectively

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land use designation is Rural Neighborhood with a Greenspace overlay, [page 175 Comp Plan].

"The intent of this future land use designation is that these areas should consist of active farms and agricultural enterprises and low-density, large-lot single-family residential up to 0.75 dwellings per acre. Similar to rural agriculture, they should have deep setbacks and incorporate a high percentage of open space." Furthermore, this region is classified as Wetlands (Comp Plan pp 89, 90, 91) and the Yellow Creek itself is the last remaining clean, unimpaired headwaters and watershed in the Chestatee region (EPA), so mitigating nonpoint ource pollution and stormwater/surface runoff from perhaps ~200+/- disturbed acres should be a major consideration for conditions.

The development application (below left) has an overall proposed density of 0.75 dwelling units per acre.

There is NO "overall" verbiage in the Comprehensive Plan or the UDC for Rural Neighborhood, AR-1, R1-L or PRD.



Two YouTube videos, shot in 2019 and 2025, document the enduring rural reality and rural character of Yellow Creek. These videos were also provided to the BOCC as part of prior community actions in opposition to inappropriate zoning and development requests. (the links are live in the pdf, and PowerPoint when in slideshow)



The rural reality of west Hall County, GA

March 2025 - 6 years after the 2019 Murrayville/Yellow Creek Rd video. Rural Hall County GA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik-RHugrAWM&t=18s

The 2019 journey down Yellow Creek starts at the 6:02 mark.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BobU\_11v1tU

The 2025 journey down Yellow Creek starts at the 6:56 mark, trip slowed by increased traffic.

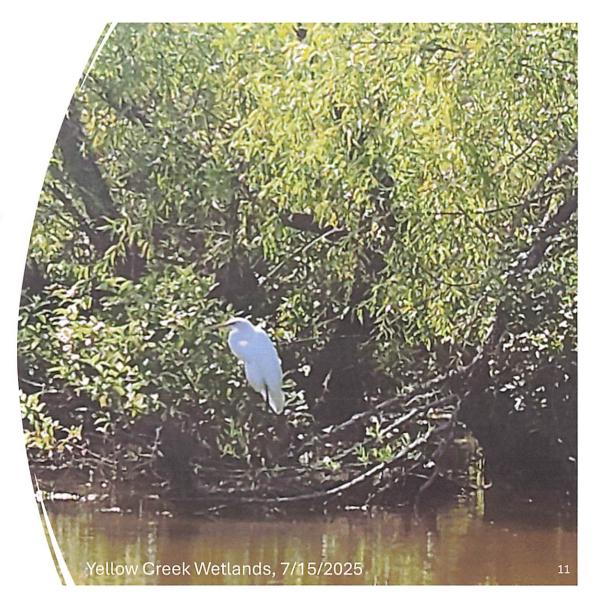
Google/YouTube doesn't work well with ad blockers, and works best in Chrome.

As a professional courtesy, please recognize

**Chuck Andrews** 

as the next speaker.

Yellow Creek wetlands and unimpaired watershed/headwaters at risk; Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 et seq.)



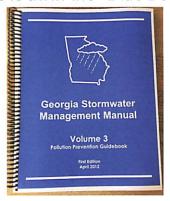
As mentioned before, Yellow Creek is the last clean, unimpaired headwater/watershed area of Lake Lanier in the Chestatee region. Per the EPA, and per the GA EPD [Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (**O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 et seq.**)] \*ANY\* land disturbance within 200' of a State Waterbody requires:

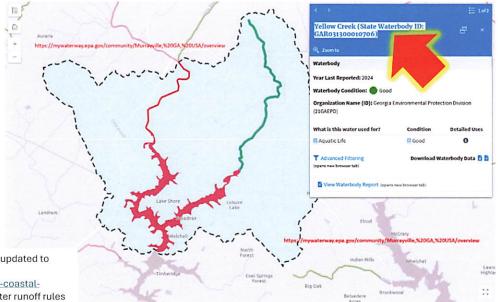
- An LDP (Land Disturbance Permit),
  - An Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollution Control (ES&PC) plan with BMPs, (best management practices which include silt fences), and
- A filed NOI (Notice of Intent) ...

which apparently were not in place prior to cutting in the ~10' wide soil testing road with a dozer, exposing bare earth. (see Appendix B)

Note well shortly after the road was cut, we filed a complaint with the GA EPD due to substantial 'mud' observed in the Yellow Creek subsequent to a rain shower. Per SOPs, that complaint was referred to the County, as the LIA. 25 days after our complaint was filed, a County inspector visited the site and "could not find evidence that sediment was escaping the site, but he did note that mulch / vegetation [grass] should be added to stabilize any disturbed areas." That remediation is not yet scheduled.

### This is all in the "Blue Book"





nttps://cdn.atlantaregional.org/wp-content/uploads/gsmm-whatsnew-final.pdf updated to focus on stormwater runoff

nttps://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/storm-water/georgia-epd-coastal-tormwater-supplement-stormwater 
update covers the specifics of stormwater runoff rules due to increasing adverse effects (from development) of runoff and the ensuing runoff pollution.

# in case there's any doubt ...

O.C.G.A. 12-7-1 The Erosion and Sedimentation Act of 1975 as Amended

### HISTORY

Georgia's Erosion and Sedimentation Act was passed in 1975 and became effective in 1977. It has been amended several times; in 1980, 1985, 1989, 1994, 1995 and 2000. The 1994 and 1995 amendments were significant in that the emphasis is now on Best Management Practices (BMPs) instead of water quality.

### **AGENCIES**

This law specifically defines the duties of four separate and distinct agencies:

- 1. Local Issuing Authority (LIA).
- The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).
- The State Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SSWCC).

Unnamed, but critically important to the program, is the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

# LAND-DISTURBING ACTIVITIES

The Law defines a land-disturbing activity as:

"Any land change which may result in soil erosion from water or wind and the movement of sediments into State Water or onto lands within the State including, but not limited to clearing, dredging, grading, excavating, transporting, and filling."

# Page 125

Field Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control

Fourth Edition 2002

Soil testing or roads cut for soil testing are NOT an exempted land-disturbing activity, especially within 200' of State Waters (Yellow Creek is a State Waterbody)
OCGA § 12-7-17. Exemptions

# EXEMPTED LAND-DISTURBING ACTIVITIES

The Law contains certain exemptions. Permits for land-disturbing activities are not required for the following:

- Surface mining.
- Granite quarrying.
- Minor land-disturbing activities such as home gardens, home landscaping, etc.

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- Construction of single-family residences for or by the owner.
- Agricultural Practices.
- Forestry Practices.
- Projects of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
  - Projects of 1.1 acre or less (if not within 200' of State Waters).
- Construction or maintenance projects by the Department of Transportation, the Georgia Highway Authority, or Georgia Tollway Authority and road construction and maintenance projects by counties and cities.
- Any LDA by an EMC or municipal electrical system or public utility regulated by the Public Service Commission.
- 11. Public Water System Reservoirs

Although permits are not required, exemptions 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11 must meet certain minimum requirements of the Law.

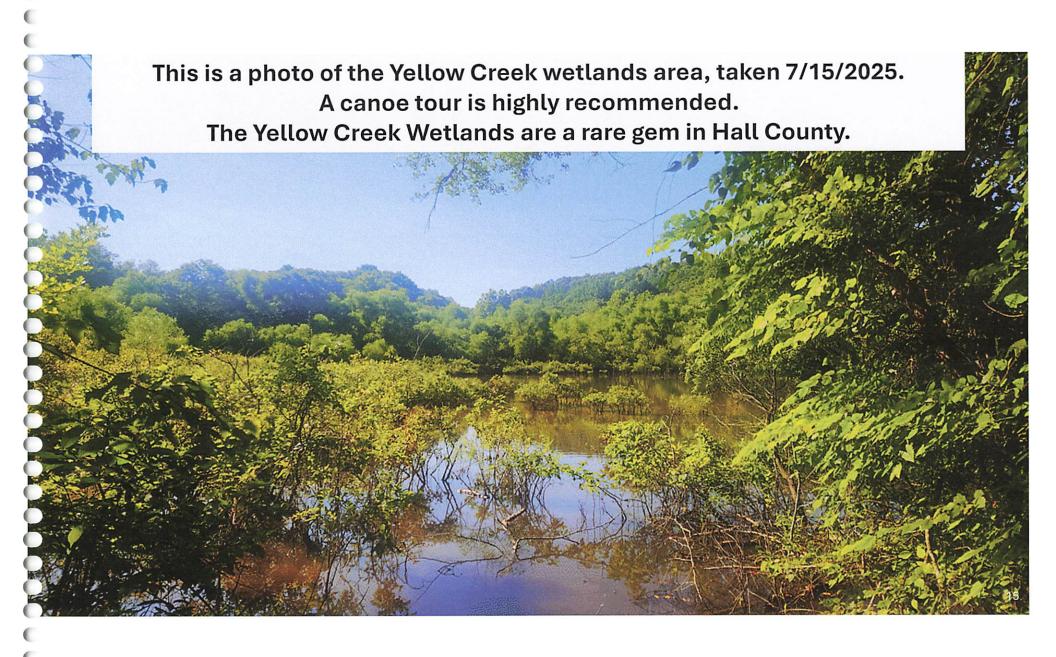
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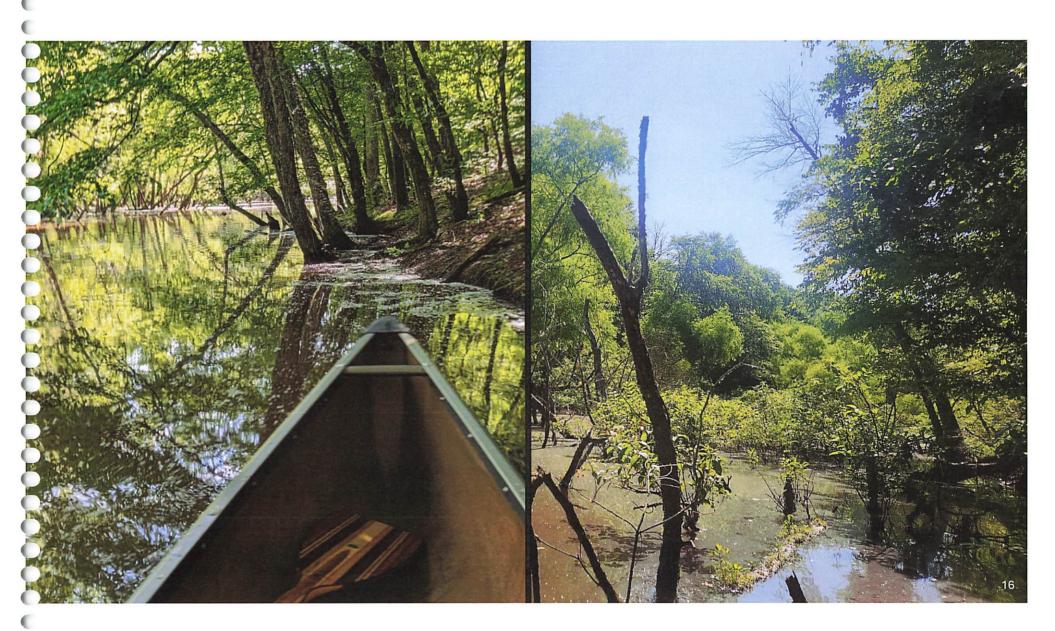
The Comprehensive Plan, the EPA & EPD and the photos make it clear Yellow Creek really is a wetlands worthy of protection.

Numerous additional hi-res photos are available on request.



Wetlands Protection County-wide, as delineated by Ordinance: Yes. Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under National Wetlands Wetlands Typical provisions: normal circumstances do support, Inventory; a prevalence of vegetation typically especially Uses associated with adapted for life in saturated soil prominent in the contaminants are Murrayville/Sardis conditions. prohibited. Area. Local development permit is required for regulated activity.





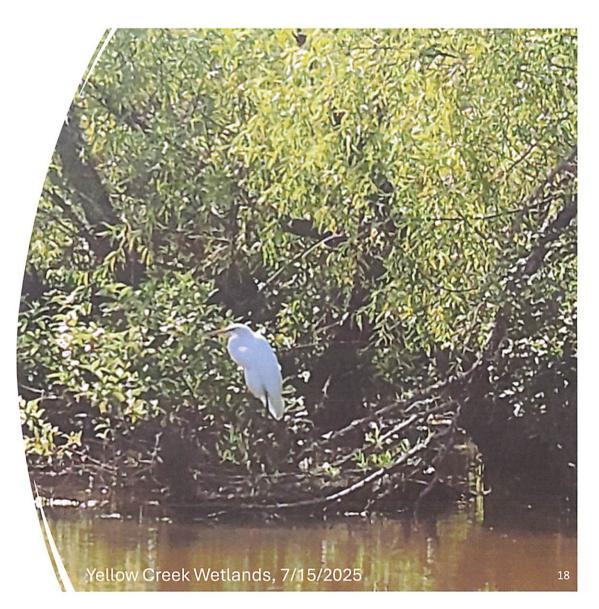


As a professional courtesy, please recognize

Dr. Courtney St. John-Wacker

as the final speaker.

Summary and Closing



The Comprehensive Plan, particularly the Character Areas and Future Land Use Strategy sections are unambiguous that the appropriate, compatible and consistent zoning for this property is as already defined in the Comprehensive Plan: AR-1, Rural Neighborhood with a Greenspace Overlay. Not PRD, and NOT R-1L.

This is especially immutable given the property encompasses the unimpaired headwaters and watershed of the Yellow Creek and its immediately downstream wetlands, with designation and protection noted in the Comprehensive Plan. (as Speaker 3, Chuck Andrews elaborated)

43 Citations in the Comprehensive Plan and UDC alone support the retention of AR-1, Rural Neighborhood, Greenspace Overlay, Wetlands Protection and preservation of our Rural Character; irrespective of supportive GA EPD, USACOE and US EPA direction and regulation.

- 1. O.C.G.A. § 36-66-1 5.1 and The Comprehensive Plan establish the authority and supremacy of the BOCC overall, and the supremacy of the Comprehensive Plan over the UDC.
  - One Citation, shown at right, p 156
  - 'The UDC tail does not wag the dog,' i.e. the UDC is in service to the Comprehensive Plan and the BOCC, not the reverse.
  - Additionally, Applicant did not own the property at the time of the original filing for rezoning, and there are therefore certain reductions to their standing in this matter.
- Maintaining Rural Character/ Consistency with nature of existing Community Development
  - . SIXTEEN Relevant Citations
  - pp 4,9,10,28,33,46,120,121,137,138,139,142,143,159,156,174
- Preserving and Protecting Wetlands/ Streams/ Natural Resources/ Greenspace
  - EIGHTEEN Relevant Citations
  - Pp 4, 9,17, 29, 60, 89, 90, 91, 101, 128, 142, 150, 160, 168, 175, 176, 216, 231
- 4. Foundational Nature of Community Input, which we continue to provide
  - Two Relevant Citations, Pp 9, 104
- 5. AR-1/ Rural Neighborhood with Greenspace Overlay restrictions is in place.
  - . SIX Relevant Citations
  - UDC, Sec 3.2, 4.2, 8.3, 8.3.4, 9.8.2, et al
- Plus, a score of other direct references to Community Input in the Comprehensive Plan

### **FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY**

### The Comprehensive Plan & **UDC** Connection

Hall County's Unified Development Code (UDC) zoning districts are guided by the Comprehensive Plan. A municipality's zoning ordinance is considered to be in accordance with the comprehensive plan if land use types and intensities are compatible with the goals, objectives, strategies, and land uses specified by the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning code should not be contradictory to the Comprehensive Plan nor prevent its implementation. This is important when property owners need to rezone their property to undertake new development. If the plan for a development does not line Plan, the County's planners and Board o Commissioners (BOC) have the authority to not grant the rezoning. The table on page 159 shows the UDC zoning districts that are most compatible with the future land uses outlined by this Comprehensive Plan.

156 | Future Land Use Strategy

HALL COUNTY FORWARD | Comprehensive Plan 19

The Cook development plan is not a bad plan but should be built in an area that supports it and is in fact consistent with the Comprehensive Plan – such as proximal to the identified development corridors along Highway 60 and the Sardis Connector, **NOT** an area slated to remain rural in character and reality.

When a development plan is submitted consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, we recommend the County require AR-1, Rural Neighborhood, Greenspace Overlay per the Comprehensive Plan, with appropriately large lots, in character with the 9.4-acre proximal lot size average, plus substantial dedicated greenspace, 100' streambed buffers (100' buffers are mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan) and limiting the number of homes; these actions taken to deliberately pre-empt storm runoff and pollution damage to an authentically sensitive and unimpaired aquatic wetlands area.

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P 137 Comprehensive Plan

# We and the Yellow Creek Community Thank You

