



**Finance and Administration Committee**  
**September 28, 2021**  
**12:00 pm, Online**

**Action Item**

FAC-2          Three College Observatory Ground Lease & Nature Preserve Dedication

**Background Information**

The UNCG Physics and Astronomy Program oversees Three College Observatory in rural Alamance County and desires to keep the surrounding property (approximately 60 acres of forest, subject to survey) undeveloped and “dark” to optimize use of the observatory telescope. In addition, the University desires to have the property (State-owned and allocated to UNCG) monitored routinely for trespassing, encroachments and other illegal activities, and Alamance County desires to utilize the undeveloped portion of the property to construct hiking trails connecting to the adjacent Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area. Phase I of this area opened to the public in 2020.

Alamance County has agreed to lease the undeveloped portion of the property under a 30-year lease (maximum term allowed by the State) at a cost of \$1 per year for this purpose in exchange for surveying the property, marking the boundaries, routinely monitoring the property to enforce the rules, and managing it for conservation and passive recreational purposes under an approved management plan. The University proposes the cost of the lease to a local government entity at a rate below market value justified by the exchange for property management and monitoring services. The terms of the lease will include the following key provisions:

- Either party may terminate with one year’s written notice
- Alamance Co. will be prohibited from erecting or placing any lighting on the property
- All improvements, including trail locations, will require approval by UNCG and other applicable State agencies
- Alamance Co. must abide by the conditions of a nature preserve dedication, serve as a “secondary custodian” of the property and manage it according to an approved management plan

Furthermore, North Carolina General Statute 143B-135.264 provides for dedication of State-owned lands as nature preserves with approval from the Council of State. The proposed dedication would make allowances for the University to continue operating the observatory. This includes using and maintaining the access road and periodically cutting or pruning the vegetation surrounding the observatory compound, so it does not impede the telescope’s view. Dedication of the property as a nature preserve will ensure dark skies and allow the property to become a component of the surrounding Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area.

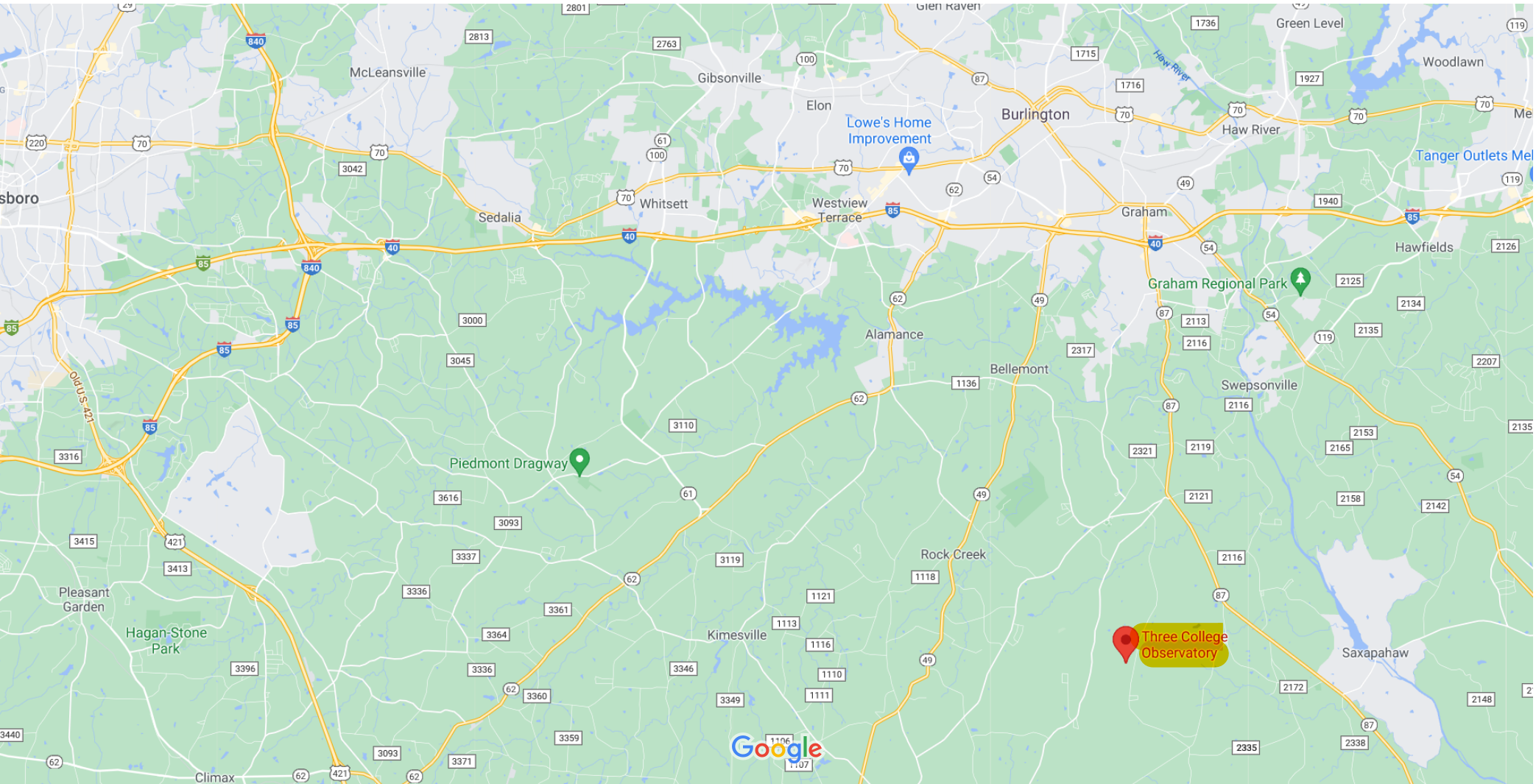
This item was approved by the University Space and Property Review Committee (USPRC) on August 16, 2021.

**Recommended Actions**

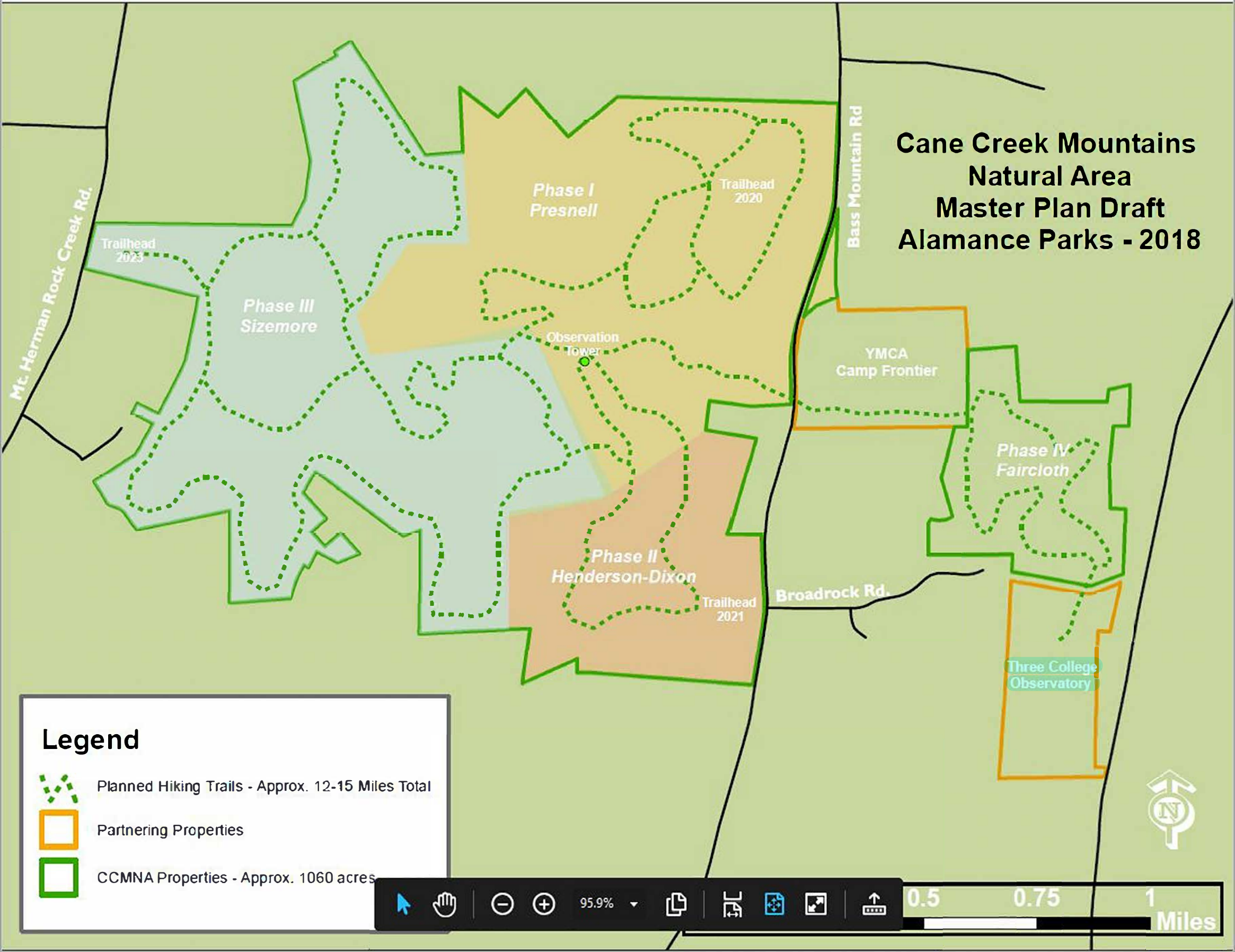
1. Approve the disposition by ground lease of approximately 60 acres of real property, excepting the developed areas, located at 5106 Thompson Mill Road, Graham, Alamance County, NC to Alamance County for a period of 30 years, in consideration for \$1.00.
2. Approve the dedication of approximately 60 acres of real property located at 5106 Thompson Mill Road, Graham, Alamance County, NC as a nature preserve under NCGS 143B-135.264 and authorize Alamance County as a Secondary Custodian of the property.






Robert J. Shea, Jr.  
Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration



# Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area Master Plan Draft Alamance Parks - 2018



### Legend

-  Planned Hiking Trails - Approx. 12-15 Miles Total
-  Partnering Properties
-  CCMNA Properties - Approx. 1060 acres

Navigation controls: arrow, hand, zoom in (+), zoom out (-), 95.9% zoom level, print, full screen, and share icons.

Scale bar: 0.5, 0.75, 1 Miles