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Conservation Questionnaire for North Carolina Legislature Election 2026

QUESTIONS

- 1. Since the Neuse River basin and reservoirs like Smith Creek are important for our drinking water, what state policies or funding would you support to strengthen stream buffers and help towns like Wake Forest work with nearby areas (Raleigh, Rolesville, Franklin County) to protect shared green spaces?**

Response: Protecting our drinking water and green spaces must be a priority, particularly as our region continues to grow. This is a regional issue that does not stop in Wake Forest, and we are seeing these issues throughout Senate District 18, including Granville County, where many local residents do not even have access to clean drinking water.

I support giving local governments the tools they need to protect green spaces within their communities, including policies that expand and strengthen riparian buffers along our waterways. We also need greater state investment in infrastructure, including stormwater infrastructure and funding to help communities remediate and recover from natural disasters. Protecting our environment requires collaboration across jurisdictional lines, and I support partnerships among local governments, DEQ, and organizations like the Triangle Land Conservancy to preserve environmentally sensitive land and shared green spaces. Additionally, we need to fully fund DEQ so that it has the staff and resources necessary to protect our water, air, and natural resources. I will continue supporting strong partnerships between the state, DEQ, local governments, and conservation organizations to ensure that growth does not come at the expense of clean water or the green spaces that make our communities great places to live. As an example, the legislature must work with the Attorney General's office and DEQ to aggressively tackle PFAS monitoring and remediation while holding polluters accountable.

- 2. How can the state help towns and cities encourage or require low-impact development, like using permeable pavement, adding rain gardens, and preserving trees, while also keeping housing affordable and allowing for local flexibility?**

Response: I believe the state should give local governments more tools, not fewer, to manage growth responsibly. One of the significant constraints I observed while serving on the Wake Forest Board of Commissioners was how restrictive legislation from the state tied our hands to address these problems appropriately. Communities should have the flexibility to require or incentivize practices like permeable pavement, rain gardens, tree preservation, and other forms of low-impact development based on local conditions. The state can help by overturning overly-restrictive legislation that prevents municipalities from engaging in environmental protection. The state can also take steps to encourage these practices, including providing grants and incentives that offset some of the costs of these improvements rather than simply passing those costs on to homeowners and renters. Environmental

protection and housing affordability do not have to be competing goals. With thoughtful planning and state investment, we can build the housing we need while protecting the natural resources that make our communities desirable places to live.

3. What state tax breaks, grants, or rules would you support to help communities redevelop underused brownfield or greyfield sites instead of clearing forests at the edge of town?

Response: When discussing brownfield and greyfield sites, what we are really talking about is providing local municipalities the tools and opportunities to redevelop within their borders. I would support expanding incentives that make redevelopment of brownfields and greyfields more financially attractive than clearing undeveloped land. That includes grants to local governments for environmental assessment and remediation, tax incentives for qualifying redevelopment, and state assistance with infrastructure needed to return these properties to productive use. I also want DEQ to have adequate staffing and resources so that brownfield projects can move through the process efficiently while protecting public health. Redeveloping land where infrastructure already exists can create housing and economic opportunity while reducing pressure to clear forests and other undeveloped land.

4. HB 225 was a bill that would permit Wake Forest and Rolesville to down-zone property without the consent of all landowners. This authority could provide municipalities with an additional tool to protect environmentally sensitive areas. Do you support this policy change and, if so, what would you do to see a similar bill pass and be signed into law?

Response: Yes. I support HB 225 and believe local governments should have the authority to down-zone property when appropriate. When I served as a Wake Forest Commissioner, we struggled with the limitations created by the prohibition against down-zoning, which prevented us from utilizing key tools to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to reign in growth within our borders. Local elected officials are in the best position to understand their communities' land-use needs and should have the tools necessary to manage growth responsibly, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and plan for the future.

I would go further than HB 225. Rather than restoring this authority only to Wake Forest and Rolesville, I support restoring it to local governments across North Carolina. As a State Senator, I would work with legislators from both parties, local elected officials, and other stakeholders to build support for statewide legislation that restores this important local authority.