

**07 NCAC 13H .0202 CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY**

(a) For an area to qualify as a Natural Heritage Area and be eligible for registration or dedication, the Natural Heritage Program staff shall determine that the area possesses one or more of the following natural values:

- (1) a habitat for individual species of plants or animals that are in danger of or threatened by extirpation;
- (2) a rare terrestrial natural community;
- (3) a rare aquatic community;
- (4) features that illustrate geologic processes or the history of the earth;
- (5) unique or unusual ecological types; or
- (6) biological or ecological phenomena of significance.

(b) Upon meeting one of the criteria in Paragraph (a) of this Rule, the Natural Heritage Program staff shall evaluate an area with respect to the following factors:

- (1) the presence of ecological values represented in previously registered Natural Heritage Areas;
- (2) the natural diversity of the area;
- (3) the quality and viability of the environmental features including self-sufficiency of the ecosystem when managed and degree of vulnerability to disturbances and intrusions;
- (4) the extent to which past disturbances or land uses have altered natural communities. An area may be considered even if it shows evidence of past disturbance or land use;
- (5) the ability to be managed to protect and maintain ecological features in a natural condition, and a buffer area, as set forth in Rule .0304 of this Subchapter, to ensure protection. A buffer zone, where possible, shall follow defensible boundaries and help protect the site against adverse effects from use and development of adjacent land. The buffer zone may be included in the designated area but need not itself possess any eligibility criteria as set forth in this Rule;
- (6) compatibility of protective management practices with current use practices on adjacent lands; and
- (7) scientific and educational value.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 143B-135.256; 143B-135.258;  
Eff. April 4, 1979;  
Amended Eff. January 1, 1986;  
Readopted Eff. March 1, 2017;  
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