

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2003**

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**HOUSE BILL 516
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/10/03
Senate State Government, Local Government, and Veterans' Affairs Committee
Substitute Adopted 6/11/03**

Short Title: Certain Municipalities Clear-Cutting.

(Local)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 17, 2003

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITIES OF ROCKINGHAM AND STATESVILLE
2 AND THE TOWN OF SMITHFIELD TO LIMIT THE CLEAR-CUTTING OF
3 TREES IN BUFFER ZONES PRIOR TO DEVELOPMENT.
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5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.(a)** A municipality may adopt ordinances to regulate the
7 removal and preservation of existing trees and shrubs prior to development within a
8 perimeter buffer zone of up to 50 feet along public roadways and property boundaries
9 adjacent to developed properties and up to 25 feet along property boundaries adjacent to
10 undeveloped properties.

11 **SECTION 1.(b)** Ordinances adopted pursuant to this act shall:

- 12 (1) Provide that the required buffer area shall not exceed twenty percent
13 (20%) of the area of the tract, net of public road rights-of-way, and any
14 required conservation easements.
15 (2) Provide that buffer zones that adjoin public roadways shall be
16 measured from the edge of the public road right-of-way.
17 (3) Provide that tracts of two acres or less, net of public road
18 rights-of-way, that are zoned for single-family residential use are
19 exempt from the requirements of the ordinances.
20 (4) Provide that the ordinances are limited to situations where
21 undeveloped property is planned or zoned in accordance with adopted
22 municipal plans and zoning regulations.
23 (5) Provide that a survey of individual trees is not required.
24 (6) Include reasonable provisions for access onto and within the subject
25 property.
26 (7) Exclude normal forestry activities on property taxed under the
27 present-use value standard or conducted pursuant to a forestry

1 management plan prepared or approved by a forester registered
2 pursuant to Chapter 89B of the General Statutes. However, for such
3 properties, a municipality may deny a building permit or refuse to
4 approve a site or subdivision plan for a period of three years following
5 completion of the harvest if all or substantially all of the perimeter
6 buffer trees that should have been protected were removed from the
7 tract of land for which the permit or plan approval is sought. A
8 municipality may deny a permit or refuse to approve a site or
9 subdivision plan for a period of two years if the owner replants the
10 buffer area within 120 days of harvest with plant material that is
11 consistent with buffer areas required under the municipality's
12 ordinances.

13 **SECTION 2.** Before adopting an ordinance authorized by Section 1 of this
14 act, the governing board of the municipality shall hold a public hearing on the proposed
15 ordinance. Notice of the public hearing shall be given in accordance with G.S.
16 160A-364.

17 **SECTION 3.** Nothing in this act shall be construed to limit or be limited by
18 any other existing laws or ordinances.

19 **SECTION 4.** This act shall apply only to the Cities of Rockingham and
20 Statesville and the Town of Smithfield and to property located within the Cities' and
21 Town's corporate limits and extraterritorial planning jurisdiction under Article 19 of
22 Chapter 160A of the General Statutes.

23 **SECTION 5.** This act becomes effective January 1, 2004.