

# **NORTH CAROLINA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE**



## **2020 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

September 1, 2020

Agriculture Commissioner – Steve Troxler – Chair  
Executive Director of the Wildlife Resources Commission – Gordon Myers – Vice Chair  
Chief Deputy Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources – D. Reid Wilson – Secretary  
Assistant Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs – Ariel Aponte  
Dean of the College of Natural Resources at NC State University – Dr. Myron Floyd  
Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership – Chester Lowder

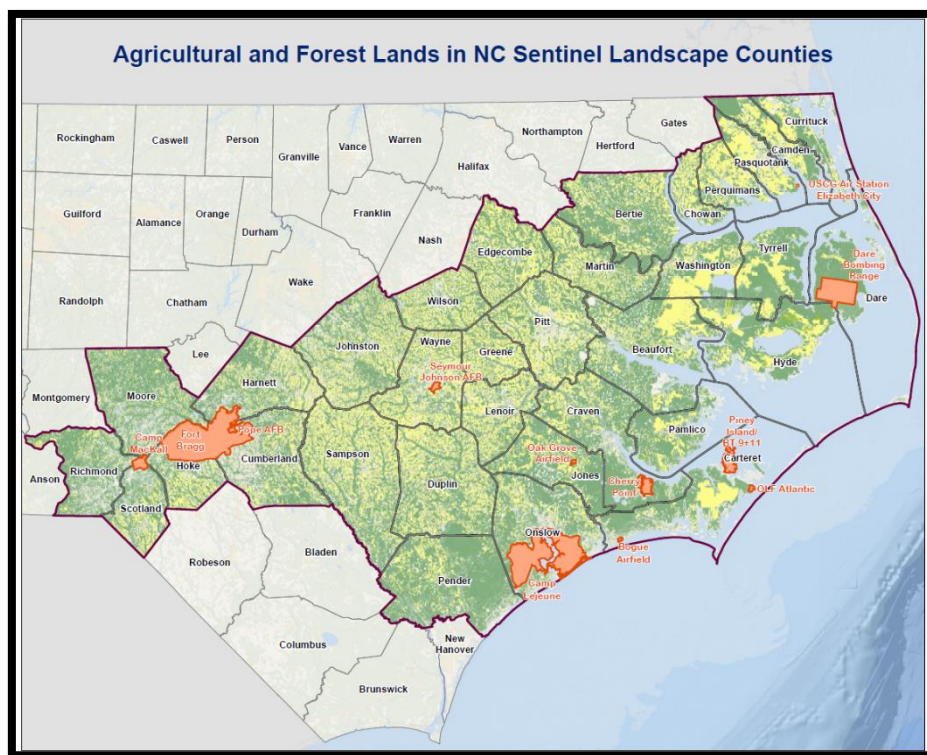
Pursuant to Section 3.19.(f) of Senate Bill 131 / S.L. 2017-10 ... The Committee shall report on its activities conducted to implement this section, including any findings, recommendations, and legislative proposals, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and the Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission beginning September 1, 2017, and annually thereafter, until such time as the Committee completes its work.

## Table of Contents

What are Sentinel Landscapes?	3
Purpose of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee	4
Committee Members	5
N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Report	6-11
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Report	12-13
N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Report	14-15
College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University Report	16-18
N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report	19-21
Meeting Summaries	22-31

## What are Sentinel Landscapes?

*The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape benefits agriculture, forestry, wildlife, and the military*



- In 2016, the federal government designated 33 North Carolina counties as a Sentinel Landscape. The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape is one of seven Sentinel Landscapes designated by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior.
- The partnership aims to strengthen farms, ranches and forests, while conserving habitat and natural resources and protecting vital training grounds for military installations.
- North Carolina is the only state to have multiple military branches, military installations and counties named as part of the designation.
- Regions with increasing commercial and residential development affect agriculture, forestry, wildlife and the military in similar ways, as development limits training abilities for the military and reduces viable farmland, forests, and natural areas.
- Agriculture and the military are the top two economic sectors in North Carolina. The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape leverages partnerships between military installations, federal departments, state agencies, local governments and nonprofit partners that support North Carolina's top two economic sectors.

## Purpose of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee



- Pursuant to state law, the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee will:
  - Coordinate the overlapping priority areas in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations, as that term is defined in G.S. 143-215.115, or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense.
  - Assist landowners in improving their land to benefit their operations and enhance wildlife habitats while furthering the State's vested economic interest in preserving, maintaining, and sustaining land uses that are compatible with military activities at major military installations and National Guard facilities.
  - Develop and implement programs and strategies that:
    - o Protect working lands in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense,
    - o Address restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, and
    - o Forestall incompatible development in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense.

## Committee Members

<b>North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee</b>	
Chair – Steve Troxler	Commissioner of Agriculture
Vice Chair – Gordon Myers	Executive Director of the Wildlife Resources Commission
Secretary – Reid Wilson	Chief Deputy Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources
Ariel Aponte	Assistant Secretary of the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
Dr. Myron Floyd	Dean of the College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University
Chester Lowder	Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership

<b>North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Support Staff from NCDA&amp;CS</b>	
David Smith	Chief Deputy Commissioner
Dewitt Hardee	Farmland Preservation Program Director
Laura Brookshire	Farmland Preservation Document Specialist
Evan Davis	Farmland Preservation Assistant Director
Tina Hlabse	General Counsel
Veronica Jamison	Farmland Preservation Office Manager
Jonathan Lanier	Assistant General Counsel
Janine McLawhorn	Paralegal

## **N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Report**

### **NCDA&CS joins USDA and Air Force for historic conservation partnership**

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Air Force to record five conservation easements in eastern North Carolina. This marks the first-ever easements to use funding from these three sources at the state and federal levels, and a first for a streamlined approach to conservation restrictions.

"This project represents a new level of coordination between state and federal agencies, and protects land that benefits us all," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "Agriculture is North Carolina's biggest industry followed by the military, and it is more important than ever that we work to protect the farmland that produces our food and fiber and maintains our military readiness."

Conservation easements set restrictions on uses of land to help preserve it and prevent overdevelopment. Previous easements with multiple funding sources would have each signatory's restrictions recorded separately, requiring landowners to consult each agency individually to keep track of their obligations.

The five new easements, the last of which was recorded on Jan 8, 2020, use a "common template" in which all partners agree on a single list of restrictions in order to simplify the process. These easements received some funding from the 2016 Southern Sentinel Landscapes Conservation Project through the USDA NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

"The Natural Resources Conservation Service uses the Farm Bill's Agricultural Land Easement Program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to secure conservation easements within the project's scope," said Timothy Beard, USDA NRCS State Conservationist. "The Agricultural Land Easement Program helps landowners and other entities protect, restore and enhance wetlands, grasslands and working farms through conservation easements. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that help expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns."

The five easements recorded by the Working Lands Trust include one in Hyde County and four in Tyrrell County and total 2,029 acres. All five easements are located beneath airspace important to the mission of Seymour Johnson Air Force base in Goldsboro. These easements protect Air Force training operations and reduces the potential of incompatible land uses.

### N.C. Military Affairs Commission Memorandum of Understanding

In a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the N.C. Military Affairs Commission, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is contracted to use a portion of the funds and will subcontract the remainder to the College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University and the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to support activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSSL). The total funding amount is \$300,000 over three years.

Below is a general description of the activities and current expenditures and balances:

Purpose	Expenditures	Balance
Three positions within the NCDA&CS dedicated to outreach, technical assistance, legal services, and administrative support for Sentinel Landscape programs.	\$37,177.60	\$112,822.40
NCSU will expand coordination and improve shared communication to sustain linking military readiness, inclusion of working lands, and conservation through publications and landowner outreach.	\$34,096.92	\$45,903.08
North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation will expand outreach efforts at the community level in the 33-county area of ENCSSL. The Foundation, in partnership with local conservation districts and the N.C. Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Association), will facilitate five landowner outreach meetings and five community meetings.	\$32,671.42	\$37,328.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$103,945.94</b>	<b>\$196,054.06</b>

Activities conducted under the MOU by the College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University and the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership are found in their respective reports in this document.

The North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, under the MOU, is to conduct outreach activities at the county level. The purpose is to enable a broader swath of landowners and community leaders to learn about Sentinel Landscapes and what the national designation means. The Partnership has struggled with how to “sell the Sentinel Landscapes Program” to community leaders such as county commissioners. These conservation efforts *are part of a collaborative Partnership*, not a single program, making it very difficult to define in a tangible way. The Foundation is undertaking a two-pronged approach to this issue; 1) educate the general public on conservation programs and tools available, and 2) engage community leaders to determine their needs related to future program development.



## Geographic Focus Areas of the Project

*Areas were selected by our military partners*

Army + Ft. Bragg: Moore (Hoke invite)

Air Force Seymour Johnson Base + Dare County Bombing Range: Hyde & Washington

US Marine Corps / MCIEAST: Craven & Jones

## Process

**Landowner Outreach Meetings:** Provide a history of the ECNSL, introduce conservation programs, and conduct “*Conservation Speed Dating*” where landowners connect with local program contacts. The conservation toolbox shows non-engaged landowners how the programs fits with management objectives, motivating landowners to take action.

**Community Leadership Roundtables:** Engage agriculture and forestry leaders at the county level in a discussion on “What is a Sentinel Landscape”. Leaders define local needs and how they want to engage. The process provides counties profiles defining levels of interest, engagement and recommendations for future program development.

**Resources:** The Foundation conducted online research on each county and drafted a county profile. The Foundation contracted with local conservation districts to be hosts, provided a guidance document, template invitations and agendas, set up online registration, arranged the conservation agency showcase, conducted the roundtable discussions, provided the outreach presentation. N.C. State University provided the Conserving Working Lands resource manual. Conservation Districts invited landowners and roundtable leaders. Other agencies that helped with outreach include ADFPTF, Cooperative Extension, NCDA&CS Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Department of Commerce - Prosperity Zones, NCDMVA, Farm Bureau Federation, Farm Credits, USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, N.C. Forest Service, Forestry Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NCWRC, and Wild Turkey Federation.

Date and Location of Meetings	12.6.2019 Moore County	1.24.2020 Hyde County	1.28.2020 Jones County	2.4.2020 Washington County	2.26.2020 Craven County
Outreach Meeting Attendees	15 attendees	30+ attendees	15 attendees	15 attendees	2 attendees
Leadership Roundtable	3 row crop 2 livestock 1 forester 0 consultant 2 business 4 county 0 municipality 0 state 0 federal 1 military	2 row crop 0 livestock 2 foresters 1 consultant 1 business 5 county 0 municipality 1 state 0 federal 0 military	0 row crop 3 livestock 0 foresters 2 consultants 1 business 8 county 2 municipality 0 state 0 federal 1 military	3 row crop 0 livestock 2 foresters 0 consultants 3 businesses 4 county 0 municipality 1 state 0 federal 0 military	2 row crop 2 livestock 2 foresters 0 consultants 1 business 6 county 0 municipality 1 state 1 federal 0 military



## Issues Identified

*Project partners main observation was the lack of adequate resources on a variety of fronts that limit community resources and the lack of economic drivers that provide a higher quality of life.*

- Development and loss of productive farmland and forest tracts, smaller farm sizes versus farm consolidation
- Absentee landowners and land not being actively managed
- Drainage and the need for water management; requested feasibility studies
- Saltwater intrusion (Hyde Co already has acres no longer productive) and the need for saltwater exclusion measures.
- Conservation's historic focus is water quality, practices that address down east issues, specifically water management.
- Communication gaps at all levels, specifically around how state and federal lands are managed
- Lack of timber markets, resources for assisting with forest re-establishment, need for flood tolerant species
- Transportation infrastructure's inability to deal with rising waters / more frequent floods, such as under sized culverts
- Conservation partner's inability to describe the profitability of conservation adoption, such as cover crops and no-till.

## Opportunities

Communities demonstrated a willingness to work collectively on issues. They frequently referenced that you can't do water management at the farm level, action needs to be taken at the community to regional level. Leaders expressed a willingness to revisit issues around federal and state land management. Leaders overwhelmingly noted that what we are doing is not working and we need to pivot, especially moving to a proactive approach to lessen the impacts of natural disaster. Facilitators noted a high value placed on a down east rural way of life, but communities need adequate resources to maintain a quality of life.

## Future Potential

The military training mission depends heavily on the vitality of working lands. ENCSL is primed to be a test case for landscape scale approaches to Working Lands Resilience, via flood mitigation through conservation practices, increasing on-farm profits with soil health management systems, and continued exploration of plant and tree varieties that can adapt to changing climate conditions. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, two issues have risen daylighted; Rural Broadband Access and Regional Food Markets. Both aspects are needed across ENCSL. Increasing internet connectivity through 5G opens up precision agriculture technologies while improving quality education access to all communities, including the bases. We can build on the work of NCDA&CS Got to Be NC efforts and expand horizontal integration of our food systems while staying watchful for emerging markets that will open as climate conditions change.

## Priority Parcels in the ENCSL

The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund has been working extensively to engage willing landowners to place farms and forests under option for conservation easements and move priority parcels under contract. After contracting, funding partners work with qualified easement-holding entities, like county governments and nonprofit land trusts, to record conservation easements.

To date, the ADFP Trust Fund has recorded **2,877 acres** of conservation easements in military priority zones with funding from the armed services.

Beyond this recorded conservation easements, the ADFP Trust Fund is currently working with landowners to conserve and preserve **53,952 acres** in the ENCSL

The ADFP Trust Fund has contracted **15,823 acres** of privately-owned farms and forests determined by military partners to be in areas vital to the training mission of the armed services. The total project value for these conservation easement contracts total nearly \$30 million. The ADFP Trust Fund leveraged \$17 million in federal funds for these projects.

Through the work of ADFP Trust Fund field staff, the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, and other partners, there are **38,129 acres** of privately-owned farms and forests under option for conservation easements in the ENCSL.

## North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes High Priority Protect Program (NCSLHPPP) for 2018

The state was awarded \$5.6 million through the USDA NRCS RCPP. In the first round of projects, these conservation easement projects total **5,019 acres** and are funded through the ADFP Trust Fund, SJAFB, Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST), and USDA.

### SJAFB Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	SJAFB Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Tyrrell	WLT	395.05	\$333,364.20	\$333,364.20	\$605,977.50	\$1,272,705.90
Tyrrell	WLT	694.50	\$232,853.12	\$232,853.12	\$416,700.00	\$882,406.24
Tyrrell	WLT	505.10	\$172,507.44	\$172,507.44	\$303,060.00	\$648,074.87
Tyrrell	WLT	637.70	\$214,755.79	\$214,755.79	\$382,620.00	\$812,131.57
Tyrrell	WLT	2,530.43	\$2,371,475.82	\$2,371,475.82	\$3,680,591.04	\$8,432,542.69
<b>Totals</b>		<b>4,762.78</b>	<b>\$3,324,956.37</b>	<b>\$3,324,956.37</b>	<b>\$5,388,948.54</b>	<b>\$12,038,861.28</b>

### MCIEAST Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	MCIEAST Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Jones	WLT	162.78	\$78,957.54	\$78,957.54	\$126,891.46	\$284,806.54
Jones	WLT	63.10	\$31,679.61	\$31,679.61	\$37,860.00	\$101,219.21
<b>Totals</b>		<b>225.88</b>	<b>\$110,637.15</b>	<b>\$110,637.15</b>	<b>\$164,751.46</b>	<b>\$386,025.75</b>

## Military Partnership Contracts

The following contracts are funded through the military services and the ADFP Trust Fund. These conservation easement projects total **10,835 acres**.

### SJAFB Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	SJAFB Funds	ADFPTF Funds	Landowner Donation	Total Project Value
Tyrrell	WLT	2,530.43	\$2,371,475.82	\$2,371,475.82	-	\$4,742,951.65
Bertie	WLT	110.00	\$133,472.91	\$133,472.91	-	\$266,945.82
Hyde	WLT	291.60	\$191,963.13	\$191,963.13	-	\$383,926.27
Washington	WLT	408.00	\$418,573.42	\$418,573.42	-	\$837,146.84
Washington	WLT	405.00	\$383,814.15	\$383,814.15	-	\$767,628.29
Washington	WLT	737.24	\$1,018,489.00	\$1,018,489.00	-	\$2,036,978.00
Washington	WLT	679.17	\$719,209.00	\$719,209.00	-	\$1,438,418.00
Tyrrell	WLT	1,865.00	\$1,165,291.98	\$46,291.98	\$1,119,000.00	\$2,330,583.95
<b>Totals</b>		<b>7,026.44</b>	<b>\$6,402,289.41</b>	<b>\$5,283,289.41</b>	<b>\$1,119,000.00</b>	<b>\$12,804,578.82</b>

### MCIEAST Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	MCIEAST Funds	ADFPTF Funds	Landowner Donation	Total Project Value
Pamlico	WLT	110.50	\$28,664.24	\$28,664.24	-	\$57,328.48
Pamlico	WLT	1,030.50	\$649,348.37	\$649,348.37	-	\$1,298,696.75
Pamlico	WLT	552.00	\$353,050.00	\$353,050.00		\$706,100.00
Pamlico	WLT	599.00	\$382,125.00	\$382,125.00		\$764,250.00
Pamlico	WLT	14.58	\$20,594.00	\$20,594.00		\$41,188.00
Pamlico	WLT	1308.00	\$820,723.00	\$820,723.00		\$1,641,446.00
Jones	WLT	54.98	\$84,903.56	\$84,903.56	-	\$169,807.12
Jones	WLT	139.00	\$97,562.49	\$97,562.49	-	\$195,124.97
<b>Totals</b>		<b>3,808.56</b>	<b>\$2,436,970.66</b>	<b>\$2,436,970.66</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,873,941.32</b>

## North Carolina Forest Service

Through leveraged funding and resources from the U.S. Forest Service and North Carolina Forest Service, the ENCSL was able to recognize 2,392 forest landowners for their demonstrated commitment to managing and maintaining forestland and provide 368 acres of prescribed burning services to recognized landowners who were unable to obtain other forms of financial assistance.

## N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Report

### Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP)

The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP) partnership has continued, promoting multi-agency collaboration. Along with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, which leads the management effort, the partnership includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Marine Corps Installations East at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, the U.S. Department of the Navy and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Mid-Atlantic.

The Marine Corps and the Office of the Secretary of Defense funded a perpetual endowment fund, which is managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, to cover the costs of RCW management on the game lands. The Wildlife Commission is conducting short and long-term management activities to establish and conserve longleaf pine forest habitat essential for RCW recovery. Commission biologists are managing the properties to RCW habitat standards in order to establish 60 active RCW clusters off base. The Marine Corps will continue its RCW conservation and recovery efforts on base as well.

The RASP program is well underway, with several notable accomplishments between September 2019 and August 2020:

- 1,600 acres of restoration timber harvests completed and/or in progress
- 500 acres of longleaf and native grass restoration
- 1,700 acres of prescribed fire conducted
- 3 miles of road upgrades to facilitate future timber restoration projects

### Technical Guidance Spotlight: The Green Growth Toolbox

WRC staff continue to provide ongoing technical support across the ENC Sentinel Landscape for private landowners and entities including local governments. Through tools such as the Green Growth Toolbox (GGT), WRC staff are bringing smart growth opportunities to communities across the Sentinel Landscape that help ensure conservation, local development, and military priorities are accomplished. WRC staff are also providing private landowners with guidance on how to manage lands for conservation priorities that help secure compatible land use throughout the landscape for our military partners.

#### Green Growth Toolbox (GGT) Outcomes in the ENCSL

Communities & Organizations engaged:

- Moore County

- Pender County
- Towns of Aberdeen
- Pinehurst
- Holly Springs
- Carthage, and other communities in the Fort Bragg training area.
- The Fort Bragg Regional Land Use Advisory Commission (RLUAC) is crafting plans and ordinances that incorporate GGT information and recommendations, and which support military training for many local governments around Fort Bragg.

#### Ordinance updates

- Pender County adopted an update to their Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that strongly ties rezoning approvals to their comprehensive plan, which supports wildlife habitat conservation and connectivity. The density of development on a site must exclude 50 percent of the area comprised of Areas of Environmental Concern, floodplains and wetlands and only limited development is allowed in these areas. A USACE permit is required to receive a building permit from the County.
- The Town of Aberdeen Unified Development Ordinance now requires Low Impact Development.
- Pinehurst received technical guidance for their Tree Protection Ordinance.

#### Comprehensive Plans

- Pinehurst adopted a comprehensive plan that integrates priority wildlife habitat conservation.

#### Additional GGT Outreach

- A GGT workshop for Moore County was held in October 2019 (30 attendees) and was attended by Moore County, Cumberland County, Pinehurst, Hope Mills, Fuquay-Varina, Southern Pines, Carthage, and planning / engineering consulting firms that serve these communities.
- The Town of Hope Mills sent many land use decision-makers to the GGT workshop and have since passed a Resolution of Support for using the GGT in planning.
- A group of climate change resiliency experts are working with WRC staff to update resiliency information in the GGT.

## N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Report

The Division of Land and Water Stewardship is part of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Division includes two programs focused on preserving North Carolina's unique environment – the Land and Water Fund (also known as the Clean Water Management Trust Fund) and the Natural Heritage Program. Both programs have contributed significantly to the Sentinel Landscape effort.

### Clean Water Management Trust Fund Sentinel Landscape (September 2019-August 2020)

North Carolina's Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) was established by the General Assembly in 1996 as a non-regulatory organization with a focus on protecting and restoring the State's land and water resources. CWMTF awards grants to nonprofit and governmental organizations to protect land for natural, historical and cultural benefit, limit encroachment on military installations and provide match for federal funds that buffer military installation, restore degraded streams, and develop and improve stormwater treatment technology.

At its funding meeting in September 2019, Clean Water Management Trust Fund awarded \$2,614,853 to purchase fee simple or conservation easements on over 1,600 acres in the ENCSL that limit encroachment to training routes or directly buffer military installations. Project details are listed below.

County	Installation	Grant Recipient	Acres	CWMTF Funds	REPI Funds
Carteret	MCIE - Bogue Landing Field	Town of Cedar Point	49	\$1,011,756	\$0
Tyrrell	Seymour Johnson Air Force Base – Dare Co Bombing Range	NC Div. of Coastal Management	260	\$159,870	\$109,065
Bertie	Seymour Johnson Air Force Base – Dare Co Bombing Range	NC Coastal Land Trust	299	\$350,258	\$539,742
Northampton	MCIE flight path	The Nature Conservancy	603	\$515,291	\$0
Columbus	MCIE flight path	The Nature Conservancy	410	\$302,678	\$0

### Natural Heritage Program Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2019-August 2020)

North Carolina's Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) conducts biological surveys of natural lands and maintains an inventory of rare species and high-quality examples of natural communities. Many of these inventories are conducted in cooperation with partners who are interested in setting aside land for conservation, a land use which is compatible with maintaining the military mission footprint in North Carolina. The table below shows natural heritage surveys conducted by NCNHP to provide assistance with land conservation activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape during **September 2019-August 2020**. Natural areas are listed in alphabetical order by county. Permission to visit the sites was received from landowners and land managers.

Natural Area	Partner Agency	County
Atlantic Natural Area	The Conservation Fund	Carteret
Fort Macon	NC Division of Parks and Recreation	Carteret
Stella White Oak River Marshes	White Oak River Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America	Carteret
Neuse River Game Land addition	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	Craven
Manchester Sandhills	NC Division of Parks and Recreation	Cumberland
Godwin Cape Fear Bluffs	NC DNCR State Historic Sites	Cumberland
Cape Fear River Bluffs	Bluff Presbyterian Church	Cumberland
Wright Brothers Dune Barrens	National Park Service	Dare
McFarland Sandhills	The Nature Conservancy	Hoke
Stancils Chapel Pine Flatwoods	Private landowner	Johnston
Buffalo Creek Private Land	Three Rivers Land Trust	Moore
Eastwood Plant Conservation Preserve	NCDA&CS Plant Conservation Program	Moore
Fort Bragg (central section)	Three Rivers Land Trust	Moore
Juniper Swamp and Savannas	The Nature Conservancy	Onslow
Sidbury Road Savanna	NC Botanical Garden	Pender
Holly Shelter Game Land	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, The Nature Conservancy	Pender
Upper Black River Bottomlands	The Nature Conservancy	Sampson
Lumber River/Drowning Creek Flatwoods and Swamp	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Scotland
East Dismal Swamp	NCDA Research Station	Washington



## **College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University Report**

### **A: Sentinel Landscapes Resource Programming in Support of Military Readiness for Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST)**

- 1) Provide administrative and facilitation support to project titled: Sentinel Landscapes Resource Programming in Support of Military Readiness for Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST)
  - a) provide project administration.
  - b) provide facilitation consultation to N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation County Leadership Roundtables and Landowner Outreach sessions.
  - c) provide consultation to project focused on building working relationships between local governance and the N.C. Sentinel Landscape.
  - d) develop proposal for virtual landowner outreach and engagement in a 5-county area

### **B. Facilitation and Coordination of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership**

- 1) With funding support from the N.C. Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
  - a) provide monthly facilitation and coordination support to the Coordinating Committee of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership.
  - b) provide presentations regarding the purpose, authority, and impacts of the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership and N.C. Sentinel Landscape Committee to interested parties on request (conducted 5 presentations to interested audiences).
  - c) provide facilitation and coordination support of the REPI Challenge grant between interested parties.
- 2) With funding support from the U.S. Endowment for Forest and Communities
  - a) coordinate meetings of the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership (Nov 7, Mar 23, Jun 17, Sept 10, Nov 12).
  - b) maintain and expand the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership MOU
  - c) attend meetings with the Federal Coordinating Committee and other Sentinel Landscape Coordinators to examine national and state-level goals, and innovative strategies that link military readiness with working lands of farms and forests, and conservation efforts.
  - d) attend national workshop provided directly for the Sentinel Landscapes Program Coordinators to build knowledge in fiscal acumen and grant development, evaluation and strategic planning, and provide workshops on the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnerships, The workshop orientate Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators to national efforts that promoting the Sentinel Landscape nationwide.
  - e) facilitate, support and encourage new program development within the Partnership of the N.C. Eastern Sentinel Landscape: Example - Building

Capacity for Forest Management within the ECNSL.

- f) analyze and collect data driven reports that can be provided to the national Sentinel Landscape Program office. Example: landowner outreach opportunities being conducted by the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership in order to facilitate challenges of facilitating programming efforts.
- g) revised and develop the 2020 Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership Strategic Plan
- h) ensure 2019 annual accomplishments of the Partnership are collected and presented to reflect the efforts of all the Partners, including 2019 key impacts and success stories. The 2020 Sentinel Landscape Accomplishment Report is located here:  
[https://sentinellandscapes.org/media/xxbcmxe5/accomplishments\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://sentinellandscapes.org/media/xxbcmxe5/accomplishments_report_2020.pdf)

**C. Coordinate and facilitate the project known as Spaces Between the Bases: The North Carolina Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships**

- 1) Project designed to integrates common goals and objectives from various organizations that will result in a Conservation Blueprint for North Carolina. Project is a partnership between U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NC State University, the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership, and other interested parties. Completion of the project is expected in 2021.

**D. Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS)**

- 1) SERPPAS Principals and Steering Committee Meetings
  - a) contributed to the implementation of the 2018- 2020 SERPPAS Strategic Plan through prioritized work group actions and further development of the SERPPAS Good Map actions. The SERPPAS Good Map is a regional approach to identify critical areas (threat and opportunities) for immediate and long-term strategic approaches and in order to make smart decisions of mutual and multiple benefit for all partners.
  - b) Sentinel Landscape Working Group: Mary Lou Addor coordinates the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership and along with the other two Sentinel Landscape Coordinators, contributes to the SERPPAS Sentinel Landscape Working Group and coordination of action items for implementation.
  - c) Prescribe Fire Working Group: Jen Fawcett coordinates the SERPPAS Prescribed Fire Working Group, and Laurel Kays helps with that regional effort. This team coordinates actions items for implementation to meet the goals of the SERPPAS Prescribed Fire Strategy and supports Learn & Burn field days for landowners through an online video course for prescribed burn training.

**E. Current list of N.C. State University outreach efforts, partnerships, and projects that support the Military mission.**

1. N.C. State Extension Military Outreach connects to support children and youth impacted by deployment
2. N.C. State - Eastern NC Sentinel Landscapes - connects to support landscape scale management, linking military readiness, conservation, and natural and working lands.
3. N.C. State Military and Veteran Services
4. Military and Veterans Admission Online and Distance Education Outreach
5. Military Undergrad outreach

## N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report

In an era of increasingly complex threats, both natural and human-made, the definition of national security has evolved to recognize the significance of not only military capability and readiness, but also food security, water security, and environmental security. As a result, land-use challenges that defense, conservation, and agricultural actors once addressed unilaterally—such as land-use conversion or natural resource degradation—now call for more holistic, integrated solutions. To encourage strategic collaboration on these issues, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) to form the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.

Founded in 2013, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that works to advance common land-use objectives in high priority areas known as sentinel landscapes. **The Partnership's overarching goals are to strengthen military readiness, bolster agricultural and forestry productivity, conserve natural resources, and increase access to recreation.** The Partnership carries out its mission by connecting private landowners around military installations or ranges with government assistance programs that offset the cost of implementing sustainable management practices and conservation projects; the mission is carried out through its 7 Sentinel Landscapes.

The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape, the largest of the seven Sentinel Landscapes, is home to five key military installations and ranges: Fort Bragg, Dare County Bombing Range, Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Stations (MCAS) Cherry Point New River, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB). For years, North Carolinians from defense, agricultural, and conservation communities have carried out collaborative, locally grounded projects that promote sustainable land management. The 2016 Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape designation, which encompasses nearly 11 million acres across a 33-county region, was a natural progression in what has been a fruitful and positive history of cooperation.

**How is the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape addressing its overarching goals to strengthen military readiness, bolster agricultural and forestry productivity, conserve natural resources, and increase access to recreation?** The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership collaborates to identify priority programs that will help achieve its overarching goals.

Through the High Priority Protect Program managed by the N.C. Department of Agriculture, supporting working lands such as those focused on agriculture and agribusiness is a top priority for the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partners. Agriculture-agribusiness industries - food, fiber, and forestry - is North Carolina's primary industry at **\$92.7 billion (17% of NC GDP)**. Direct military spending is **\$11 billion (2% of NC GDP)**, though the total economic impact of all military activity in N.C. based on a **2015 N.C. study** has been calculated at \$66 billion (13% of NC GDP). Agricultural Conservation Easement funding help stand up the North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes High Priority Protect Program, a partnership between the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and other sentinel landscape partners. Through this program, agricultural, conservation, and defense stakeholders work with willing landowners to place easements on properties that defense communities have identified as high priority for protection.

In order to streamline the process to acquire a conservation easement, the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Program Trust Fund continues to collaborate with defense partners to develop a single easement template for the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape that can streamline resources from multiple sentinel landscape partners. The partners designed the template to reduce the anticipated easement acquisition timeline from 3-4 years to 1-2 years by having legal and logistical negotiations pre-approved by all potential funding resources.

Other Programs are focused directly on securing large tracts of conservation lands to provide strong buffers near installations and needed areas of training and habitat for wildlife. The work of the Coastal Land Trust, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission are examples of this effort. From the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Recovery and Sustainment Program Partnership (RASP) that is enhancing training flexibility at Camp Lejeune by conserving RCW habitats in the coastal region of North Carolina, to the Everett Creek Preserve in North Carolina that is based on restoring longleaf pine habitat through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and serves as a buffer to Camp Lejeune; both are testaments to the strong outcomes of Partnerships. The Everett Creek Preserve provides foraging and breeding habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers and continues to house a healthy population of Venus flytraps while providing environmental education needs for the adjacent school and the public during scheduled field trips. The RASP is emblematic of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's mission as it expands the landscape that is devoted to endangered species recovery while simultaneously strengthening the military's mission.

In addition to protecting land through conservation easements, Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partners have pursued opportunities to acknowledge private landowners for their stewardship practices and provided prescribed fire opportunities where landowners did not have the resources to implement these practices. Further, partners like the Tree Farm Program and the NC Forest Service ensured that membership to join the Tree Farm Program was cost effective in 2020-2025 by reducing overall cost by \$150. By landowners voluntarily implementing practices related to prescribed fire, wildlife restoration, and recreational management, these landowners have directly contributed to the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's mission.

A conservation footprint in North Carolina is being developed that will help identify lands that support wildlife, conservation, and military compatibility in the sentinel landscape. Sentinel landscape partners are working with the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability and partners from North Carolina to develop a geospatial map that identifies overlapping interests between the military, conservation, and working lands in the Southeast region. The map will provide a visual model that enables the sentinel landscape partners to prioritize resources in the region.

Strategic priorities over the next two years with the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership will focus on building resilience to climate change and extreme weather events. Climate challenges—such as recurrent flooding, droughts, and extreme wildfires—are multifaceted and long term. Collaboration among government agencies and between public and private entities is critical to building resilience to these risks. The partners will work to reduce the risk of extreme

wildfires by implementing hazardous fuel treatments and the use of prescribed management, the mitigation of coastal erosion and recurrent flooding by strengthening wetlands, beaches, and coral reefs; and reduce vulnerabilities to droughts through water conservation projects and land as flood catchments. In doing so, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership will strengthen military readiness by protecting against climate risks or extreme weather events that may negatively impact mission capabilities. These efforts will also support the long-term viability of agricultural and forestry operations and enhance wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities. In addition to building resilience, the Partnership is ramping up and expanding its landowner engagement program by engaging ALL of its partners who work with landowners and have incentive programs. The Partnership is placing strong emphasis on educating and engaging landowners about not simply about the resources available to them but the technical assistance that will allow the use of these practices in the long-term management of their properties.

## Meeting Summaries

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- **Sept 22, 2019 meeting** – The North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee met in the Hall of Fame Room at the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Committee members in attendance included Steve Troxler, Commissioner of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Dr. Myron Floyd, Dean of the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Gordon Myers, Executive Director of the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, Ariel Aponte, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Reid Wilson, Chief Deputy Secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and Chester Lowder, North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Representative. Others in attendance included David Smith, NCDA&CS Chief Deputy Commissioner, Dewitt Hardee, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Program Manager, Tina Hlabse, NCDA&CS General Counsel, Jonathan Lanier, NCDA&CS Assistant General Counsel, Janine McLawhorn, NCDA&CS Paralegal, Evan Davis, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Assistant Director, Veronica Jamison, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Office Manager, Laura Brookshire, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Document Specialist, Laura Killian, NCDA&CS Legislative Liaison, Bob Bardon, N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Mary Lou Addor, N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Michelle Lovejoy, Executive Director of the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, Will Best, N.C. Department of Commerce, Jessie Birkhead, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and Patrick Archibald.

Commissioner Troxler called on Dewitt Hardee to report for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS). Mr. Hardee discuss the Memorandum of Understanding between the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and the NCDA&CS. The \$150,000 MOU will subcontract \$35,000 to the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation and \$40,000 to the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources. The remaining balance will be used for NCDA&CS landowner outreach and conservation easement activities. With these funds, the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation is developing regional landowner outreach workshops and has one staff in the field working with landowners. The N.C. State University College of Natural Resources is working with interagency partners that are involved in Sentinel Landscape activities.

There are 9,879 acres of farms and forests under contract for conservation easements in the U.S. Air Force priority region. These projects total over \$19 million. There are 1,680 acres of farms and forests in the U.S. Marine Corps Installation East priority region. These projects total over \$2 million. There are over 18,000 acres of farms and forests under option for conservation easement in the U.S. Air Force priority region and nearly 10,000 acres of farms and forests under option for conservation easement in the U.S. Marine Corps Installation East priority region.

Mr. Hardee reported that there is an additional \$500,000 for conservation easement acquisition being processed from the U.S. Air Force through a cooperative agreement with the NCDA&CS. Additionally, the funding freeze for the U.S. Army and their compatible use buffer activities has been lifted.



Evan Davis, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Assistant Director, announced that NCDA&CS is applying for conservation easement grant funds through the funding through the Environmental Enhancement Grant program through the N.C. Attorney General's Office. NCDA&CS submitted letters of intent for 17 projects. NCDA&CS received notice to move forward with the projects and will be submitting application by Sept 24, 2019.

Commissioner Troxler thanked the NCDA&CS staff for their efforts for farmland preservation while also simultaneously dealing with the hurricane relief efforts.

Commissioner Troxler called on Ariel Aponte for the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NCDMVA) report. NCDMVA and the N.C. Department of Commerce had a roundtable with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense in Washington, D.C.. The purpose of the visit was to develop communication between the Military Engagement Installation Assurance Site Clearinghouse and the State of North Carolina, discuss the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base compatible use program, and to discuss the State of North Carolina drone training efforts. North Carolina is leading the effort when it comes to other states and land use compatibility. A joint regional analysis will be conducted between North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia regarding ground and air training routes. NCDMVA will be traveling with Governor Roy Cooper and the N.C. Department of Transportation to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base to discuss upcoming infrastructure enhancements near the base.

David Smith asked if there was an update on the veterans' home facility near the N.C. fairgrounds, and Mr. Aponte said those efforts are still ongoing.

Commissioner Troxler called on Reid Wilson for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources report. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) grants totaled about \$28 million, with \$3.7 million of that going to 16 military-related projects totaling 7,100 acres. This year, the CWMTF received 115 applications totaling \$65 million. Six of those are military-related projects, totaling 1,700 acres and \$2.5 million in requests. Funding for the CWMTF is still being debated. If no agreement on the budget is reached, last year's recurring budget is \$13.1 million. A new law will change the name of the CWMTF to the Land and Water Fund. The change was made because it is less "clunky" and more descriptive of what they do. In the legislation, the fund will evaluate other potential criteria to factor into their scoring system, including existence of official conservation plans.

Mr. Wilson discussed the Natural Heritage Program. Last year, the program conducted natural heritage surveys on about 30 properties in the Sentinel Landscape region. Mr. Wilson predicts they will be asked to do approximately that many this year.

Commissioner Troxler called on Gordon Myers for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) report. They are continuing to progress with the Recovery and Sustainment Program in which they are partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, along with the Marines and Navy. The NCWRC is responsible for conducting short- and long-term management activities to establish and conserve long leaf pine forest habitat for red cockaded woodpecker recovery. To date, over 1,000 acres of restoration harvest has been completed, 90 acres of long leaf and native grass restoration, 1,400 acres of

prescribed fire conducted, and nine miles of road upgrades which are important to facilitate future restoration work. In June, NCWRC closed on the Salters Creek acquisition project, a 5,100-acre tract which includes multiple funding sources.

Mr. Myers said it is not exactly a Wildlife Commission project, but he wanted to bring attention to a project through the Southeast Regional Partnership Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) GoodMap. The GoodMap looks at how to integrate partner footprints into a broader map of the southeast. Their three major accomplishments were developing an improved GIS layer of the military mission footprint in the southeast, create and improve a fire tracking and recording system, and adding regionally important data layers that show conservation and military interests and incorporated those into the REPI interactive maps.

Commissioner Troxler called on Dr. Myron Floyd for the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources report. With funding support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, they coordinate monthly with the Federal Coordinating Committee and other Sentinel Landscape Coordinators about national and state level goals, innovative strategies that link military readiness with working farms and forests, and conservation. Dr. Mary Lou Addor attended the national workshop for Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators. The workshop served as an orientation for the seven Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators to aid their success and connection to the Sentinel Landscapes Federal Coordinating Committee (Departments of Defense, Interior, and Agriculture). A process was introduced to develop objectives and key results for the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership – at the national-, landscape-, and individual-level.

Dr. Floyd next spoke about the project known as Spaces Between the Bases: The North Carolina Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships. The project is designed to integrate common goals and objectives from various organizations that will result in a Conservation Blueprint for North Carolina. The project is a partnership between U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NC State University, the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership, and other interested parties.

Next there is the facilitation of the REPI Challenge Proposal: in partnership with the N.C. Department of Agriculture, the College will explore the possibilities of a REPI Challenge proposal for the 2020 request with MCIEAST, Seymour Johnson AFB, and other interested partners. The College will provide facilitation service of the REPI Challenge discussion and process on Aug 29 and another date to be determined.

Finally, there is another emerging project, Building Capacity for Natural Resources Management. Conservation Corps and Conservation Legacy is partnering with the College of Natural Resources to help pilot the development of a Prescribed Fire Crew. With priority recruitment to N.C. State undergraduate and graduate students and potentially community college students and other land grant institutions, the pilot program is designed to build competencies with emerging burn leaders for natural resource management. These developing fire crews would focus on Fire Management, Fire Monitoring and Education, and Other Land Stewardship Needs. Dewitt Hardee asked for elaboration of the Fire Management, Monitoring, and Education. Dr. Floyd said the students will be trained in aspects of leading prescribed fire,

they may or may not actually be practicing on the ground within the Sentinel Landscape, but they are learning and building the capacity to possibly be hired by the Forest Service and/or other organizations. Mr. Hardee raised the point that we do need more prescribed burning.

Commissioner Troxler recognized Chester Lowder for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership report. Mr. Lowder said they continue to be very active and developed a mission statement for the partnership. The mission statement is, "Sentinel Landscapes are landscape-scale areas; they are the working or natural lands that serve to protect and support the rural economy, the natural environment, outdoor recreation, and the national defense test and training mission of the military or state-owned National Guard installation or installations that anchor such landscapes."

There is one more meeting this year on Nov 7, at the Farm Bureau. The partnership does coordinating calls on a regular basis. There are calls scheduled for Sept 13, Oct 11, Nov 8, and Dec 13. The Aug 16 quarterly meeting focused on building connections with partners. They have had a strong partnership with NCDA&CS, NCWRC, and the N.C. State University College of Renewable Resources, but they need to develop other partnerships to help keep the program going forward. The N.C. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Forest Service were formally announced as partners at the August meeting.

A video was shown that was put together by the Federal Sentinel Lands Coordinating Committee. It was a ten minute video that presented an overview of Sentinel Landscape Partnerships.

Mr. Davis discussed the draft of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Annual Report. A hard copy of the newest draft included reports from N.C. State University and NCDA&CS. Mr. Davis said there was no feedback from other Committee agencies at this point but to provide changes to him as soon as possible. Mr. Hardee added to keep a record or summation of progress throughout the year.

Commissioner Troxler called on Will Best from the N.C. Department of Commerce to report on the Dare County Range Complex Compatible Use grant. Going back to 1992 the Department of Commerce has participated in, conducted, or provided technical assistance to over six joint land use studies throughout North Carolina, including Camp Butner. They recently conducted and completed studies for the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and Dare County Range. They were recently awarded by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment, \$160,000 grant funds which the Department of Commerce will supply the match.

Public comments: Michelle Lovejoy (N.C. Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation) is working on pilot initiatives related to community and on-farm resilience. A group of them are going to Iowa to hopefully bring back some good ideas. The five counties chosen for community outreach meetings are: Washington, Hyde, Craven, Moore, and Jones. Those were all selected by our military partners. The NC Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

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**- Dec 5, 2019 meeting** - The North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee met in the Hall of Fame Room at the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Committee members in attendance included David Smith, Chief Deputy Commissioner of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Dr. Myron Floyd, Dean of the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Gordon Myers, Executive Director of the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, Ariel Aponte, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Reid Wilson, Chief Deputy Secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and Chester Lowder, North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Representative. Others in attendance included Zane Hedgecock, NCDA&CS Chief of Staff, Dewitt Hardee, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Program Manager, Tina Hlabse, NCDA&CS General Counsel, Jonathan Lanier, NCDA&CS Assistant General Counsel Janine McLawhorn, NCDA&CS Paralegal, Evan Davis, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Assistant Director, Veronica Jamison, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Office Manager, Laura Brookshire, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Document Specialist, Laura Kilian, NCDA&CS Legislative Liaison, Bob Bardon, N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Mary Lou Addor, N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, and Will Best, N.C. Department of Commerce.

Mr. Smith requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Aug 22, 2019 meeting. Dr. Mary Lou Addor had a correction to the minutes. The minutes were corrected. Mr. Gordon Myers moved to approve the minutes for Aug 22, 2019. Dr. Myron Floyd seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Smith called on Dewitt Hardee to report for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS). The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and United States Navy conservation easement template was sent to Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) on Oct 1, 2019. This template uses the existing ADFPTF-Navy conservation easement template and inserts USDA requirements and language.

Mr. Hardee discussed the North Carolina Military Affairs (NCMAC) Commission Memorandum of Understanding with NCDA&CS. The \$150,000 MOU is split between \$75,000 for ADFPTF staff activities within the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL), \$40,000 for N.C. State University and the coordination of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership, and \$35,000 for the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to conduct outreach meetings for landowners and conservation partners. The remaining balance of the MOU is \$124,449.56.

Mr. Hardee spoke about the 2016 USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant. There are five easements totaling 2,037 acres that are scheduled to be recorded in December 2019. These conservation easements will be the first in the nation that are in a common easement between two federal agencies and a state government.

Mr. Hardee discussed on-going activities in the ENCSL. The ADFPTF are working on 49,512 acres of privately-owned farms and forests in the ENCSL. Of these, 11,440 acres of farms and

forests are under contract for conservation easements. These were determined by military partners to be in areas vital to the training mission of the armed services. The total project value for these conservation easement contracts total \$24,578,283. These contracts will leverage \$15,624,077 in federal funds on these projects. There are 38,074.43 acres of privately-owned farms and forest under option for conservation easements.

Ariel Aponte provided the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NCDMVA) report. Mr. Aponte reported on the meeting he attended with Congressman David Price and members of the Council of State at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. Mr. Aponte said that NCDMVA is developing a task force that will work with the N.C. Department of Transportation to support the infrastructure needs of these military installations.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Aponte about the status of the veterans' retirement home. Mr. Aponte said they are working with the Department of Veterans Affairs for continued funding. Land preparation is complete and NCDMVA is working on construction of the home.

Reid Wilson provided the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) report. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) board met on Oct 13, 2019. The CWMTF received 115 applications in February, totaling \$65 million. Six of those are military-related projects, totaling 1,700 acres and \$2.5 million in proposed funding. Mr. Hardee asked Mr. Wilson if the CWMTF will provide funding for the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Challenge. Mr. Wilson said he will discuss with Mr. Hardee after the meeting.

Gordon Myers provided the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) report. NCWRC is progressing with the Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP) in which they are partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, along with the United States Marines and United States Navy. NCWRC is responsible for conducting short- and long-term management activities to establish and conserve long leaf pine forest habitat for red cockaded woodpecker recovery. NCWRC is looking to have a full-time employee the middle of next year for this project. NCWRC is still working on the logo for the landowner activities in the ENCSL. Mr. Myers announced that there will be a Project Healing Waters Veterans Fly Fishing event on Dec 16, 2019 from 9:00am until 1:00pm at the John E. Pechmann Fishing Education Center in Fayetteville.

Dr. Myron Floyd provided the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources report. Dr. Floyd thanked the committee for the funding from NCMAC to help with the facilitation and coordination of the N.C. Sentinel Landscapes Partnership. Dr. Mary Lou Addor is working to produce working lands publications for landowners and conservation partners. Additionally, there is the development of curriculum for training and workshops. With support from the U.S. Endowment for Forest and Communities, NCSU will coordinate monthly with the Federal Coordinating Committee and other Sentinel Landscape Coordinators about national and state level goals and discuss innovative strategies that link military readiness with working lands and conservation.

Chester Lowder provided the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership report. Mr. Lowder said they continue to be very active. The mission statement of the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership: Sentinel Landscapes are landscape-scale areas; they are the working or natural lands that serve to protect and support the rural economy, the natural environment, outdoor recreation, and the national defense and training mission of the military.

Evan Davis provided an update on upcoming grant projects. The USDA NRCS RCPP proposal, Preserving Upriver Farms to Reduce Flooding in N.C., was submitted on Dec 3, 2019. The 2020 REPI Challenge is under development. The pre-proposal is due Jan 24, 2020. All pre-proposal applicants will be notified regarding status of their proposal on Feb 21, 2020. If invited to submit a full proposal, it will be due Apr 24, 2020. Mr. Davis requested that involved entities provide letters of support for the REPI Challenge prior to the Jan 24, 2020 deadline.

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- **Mar 3, 2020 meeting** - The North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee met in the Hall of Fame Room at the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Committee members in attendance included David Smith, Chief Deputy Commissioner of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Dr. Bob Bardon, Designee of the Dean of the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Gordon Myers, Executive Director of the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, Ariel Aponte, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Reid Wilson, Chief Deputy Secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and Chester Lowder, North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Representative. Others in attendance included Dewitt Hardee, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Program Manager, Tina Hlabse, NCDA&CS General Counsel, Jonathan Lanier, NCDA&CS Assistant General Counsel, Janine McLawhorn, NCDA&CS Paralegal, Evan Davis, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Assistant Director, Laura Brookshire, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Document Specialist, Laura Kilian, NCDA&CS Legislative Liaison, Rodney Woolard, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Field Staff, Scott Shoulars, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Field Staff, Mary Lou Addor, N.C. State University College of Natural Resources, Phil Wallace, North Carolina Forest Service, Will Best, N.C. Department of Commerce, Mitch Peele, N.C. Farm Bureau Federation, Stacy Sereno, N.C. Farm Bureau Federation, and Joe Beckman.

Mr. Smith called on committee members to present their reports and updates.

Dewitt Hardee, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Director, gave an update on the 2016 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NCDA&CS partnered with USDA-NRCS and the U.S. Air Force to record five conservation easements in eastern North Carolina. This marks the first-ever easements to use funding from these three sources at the state and federal levels and a first for a streamlined approach to conservation restrictions. The five easements recorded by the Working Lands Trust include one in Hyde County and four in Tyrrell County. All five easements are located beneath airspace critical to the mission of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro. These easements protect Air Force training operations and reduce the potential of incompatible land uses.

Mr. Hardee provided an update on Farmland Preservation Division outreach. The division hosted a Farmland Preservation Forum on Feb 5, 2020, at the Southern Farm Show at the North Carolina State Fairground. Also, the division is hosting a series of Regional Farmland Preservation Workshops across the state. Two are completed, and four more are scheduled:

Feb 20 – Maxwell Regional Ag & Convention Center, 3114 Wayne Memorial Dr, Goldsboro, NC 27534

Feb 25 – Bob Martin Eastern Ag Center, 2900 NC-125, Williamston, NC 27892

Mar 5 – Iredell County Center, 444 Bristol Dr, Statesville, NC 28687

Mar 10 – Chatham County Ag Center, 1192 US-64 BUS, Pittsboro, NC 27312

Mar 17 – Owens Ag Center, 455 Caton Rd, Lumberton, NC 28360

Apr 1 – Virginia Boone Building, WNC Ag Center, 765 Boylston Hwy, Fletcher, NC 28732

The Workshops are free, but advanced registration is required. For more information and to register, go to [www.ncadfp.org](http://www.ncadfp.org).

Mr. Hardee also reviewed ongoing conservation easement projects in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENSCL). There are still funds available through the 2017 Department of Defense (DOD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program.

Since the Sheppard Farm is not moving forward due to the landowner's decision, Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST) has identified Spring Creek Farms in Pamlico County as the first conservation easement to be completed using the approved NCDA&CS and U.S. Navy easement template.

Most of the parcels for the 2018 USDA-NRCS RCPP submitted completed applications. The Alligator River application will be submitted this spring. Once eligibility is finalized, contracts and funding can be secured from USDA-NRCS.

Ariel Aponte provided an update from NCDMVA. There are several issues affecting military service members and veterans up for discussion in the North Carolina General Assembly. These include non-custodial agreements that protect the rights of deployed military service members, in-state tuition credits for military service members stationed in North Carolina, and tax exemptions for military retirees.

Mr. Aponte also reported on the upcoming North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) projects near military installations. The Slocum Road interchange near Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point is on schedule for completion in March 2020. The Havelock bypass construction is underway and will be completed in May 2024. Fayetteville's outer loop is on schedule and will be completed in 2024 or 2025.

Mr. Aponte provided updates about Fort Bragg. He is working with the N.C. State University College of Natural Resources on "Spaces Between the Bases" to create a plan to improve conservation efforts and reduce base encroachment.

Mr. Aponte spoke about DOD activities to combat the spread of coronavirus. He said that DOD is pulling back on training operations with South Korea, but exercise Cobra Gold in Thailand will continue. The military is executing plans to keep everyone safe.

Reid Wilson provided a report for NCDNCR. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund received five military-related easements, totaling \$2.4 million in grant funds. In total, there are 145 grant applications, and once a budget is passed, they will be able to determine how many projects will be funded.



Mr. Wilson spoke about NCDNCR preparing for the potential effects of coronavirus. NCDNCR is preparing virtual private networks and other technology so that most staff in Raleigh will be able to work from home. The department will coordinate with the plans outlined by the Governor.

Mr. Myers gave a report for NCWRC. He reviewed NCWRC's plans for teleworking and protocols for essential employees. NCWRC looks to ensure the health and safety of employees and fellow citizens.

Staff from NCWRC participated in the workshops held in the ENCSL by the Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation. Interested landowners were informed about Wildlife Conservation Lands Program, Wildlife Incentive Program, forester training, and other tools and programs.

Mr. Myers provided an update on the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Recovery and Sustainment Program Partnership (RASP). During the fall and winter, 615 acres of longleaf were planted, 440 acres of timber sold, 2.5 miles of road upgrades, and 870 acres of prescribed burns.

Green Growth Toolbox Projects included \$10,000 cost-share to the Town of Aberdeen and Carteret County. There are Green Growth Toolbox workshops planned for Pinehurst, Hope Mills, Fuquay-Varina, Southern Pines, and Carthage.

Bob Bardon provided a report for N.C. State University CNR. He spoke on the measures the university is taking for the coronavirus. N.C. State is suspending all international travel, and with spring break scheduled for next week, there is concern about students traveling home or to other locations, then returning to campus.

Dr. Bardon spoke about the coordinated approach to the "Spaces Between the Bases" project and the North Carolina Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness. There are partnerships between different conservation partners, including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership, NC State University CNR, and other interested parties. With the university, there are coordinated efforts for undergraduate military outreach, online military and veterans' admissions, and distance learning outreach.

Chester Lowder reported for the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership. There is a Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) meeting being held in Atlanta, GA, and Mr. Lowder will be traveling to it after this meeting. The 15th anniversary of SERPPAS will be held on May 11-13, 2020, in Beaufort, NC. The Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators meeting will be at Camp Ripley on June 1-4, 2020, and the Sustaining Military Readiness Conference will be held in San Antonio, Texas, on August 9-13, 2020.

Mr. Lowder stated the next N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership quarterly meeting would be March 23, 2–5 p.m. at the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation building. The tentative future dates in 2020 are as follows: Jun 17, Aug 27, and Nov 12. The Partnership is working with Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Marine Corps Installations East, and Fort Bragg to schedule field trips on the installations.

Mr. Lowder announced the 2020 N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership Coordinating Committee call dates: Mar 13, Apr 10, May 8, Jun 12, Jul 10, Aug 14, Sept 11, Oct 9, Nov 13, and Dec 11.

Mary Lou Addor reviewed the template landowner recognition letter that was initially drafted by Phil Wallace of the North Carolina Forest Service. Dr. Addor proposed that the Committee consider the letter and vote to accept the document as a tool for landowner recognition. Mr. Wilson moved to approve the letter, and Mr. Aponte seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lowder said he was retiring from the N.C. Farm Bureau Federation, but will still work with the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Some of his duties will go to Stacey Sereno. He

introduced her to the Committee. Ms. Sereno talked about her background as an attorney, and previous work experience with the United States House of Representative Agriculture Committee and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. Mr. Lowder said she would make a great addition to the N.C. Farm Bureau Federation and Sentinel Landscape program.

Evan Davis, NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation Assistant Director, provided a Partnership funding update. Through the N.C. Attorney General's Office Environmental Enhancement Grant (EEG) Program, NCDA&CS was awarded \$46,292 for the Wooten Farm Easement. The Wooten Farm is located in a priority zone for the Air Force in Tyrrell County. The DOD REPI Challenge pre-proposal was submitted on Jan 24, 2020, and was selected to submit a full proposal. An application to the USDA-NRCS RCPP of \$8,506,494 was submitted on Dec 3, 2019.

Mr. Smith asked if there was any more business before the Committee or public comments.

Mr. Hardee asked Will Best, NC Department of Commerce, if a template for the Joint Land-Use Study was approved for Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the Dare County Range. Mr. Best stated that it is under development.

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This report was prepared by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on behalf of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee.