THE NORTH CAROLINA HORSE COUNCIL

NCHC Office

A Voice in Every County

Dear Commissioner Troxler,

The North Carolina Horse Council responded to the Legislative Study Questionnaire and stated that we believed the current management structure for the state's agricultural research stations should be maintained as it currently exists. The farmers and state equine owners benefit from the dual management system. The following reasons support this position.

- Academic Researcher's are often not challenged with acknowledging or actively monitoring the concerns of stakeholders or in this case farmers and agricultural consumers. The State Department of Agriculture can more appropriately provide the technical know-how for applying the research.
- Consumer accountability is best handled when the official is elected by the people to represent the people. By transferring the management responsibilities to the University System, this accountability is diluted.
- The University has in the past indicated their desire to reduce our state's agricultural research and diversify their interests. We do not support this position. The State Agricultural department has pledged to maintain our applied research stations and land and to ensure that they benefit all NC Farmers.
- As more and more people move into our state, it is extremely important to maintain our rural heritage and our agricultural life style. Farmland preservation has been supported by our legislature and selling off land that the state currently owns does not appear to support this mandate.
- For the equine industry, the agricultural stations have been a major part or our Industries emergency management plan. Closing stations and/or transferring ownership would hamper our efforts to respond. The hay shortage is a prime example of this situation. The Stations were utilized as distribution points across the state.
- No major problems can be sited as to why there is a need to change the current management plan. The University has struggled to fund the stations that they manage. Conversely, the State Department of Agriculture has effectively maintained and equipped the stations that they manage. Therefore, it would appear that the recommendation should be the exact opposite of the report.

In conclusion, we would ask that the recommendations of the Study Commission not be accepted. We would encourage the continuation of the current management plan. The partnership between our state land grant institutions and the State Department of Agriculture is recognized as a national model. Why change? Why now? And why deplete our necessary resources when we need these resources to help us protect and save our farms? We need additional quality research which can be effectively and efficiently applied in the field to help us be cost effective into the future.

Sincerely,

Bob Sanford, President
Sue Gray, Executive Director