NORTH CAROLINA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE



2025 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

September 1, 2025

Agriculture Commissioner – Steve Troxler – Chair
Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission – Kyle Briggs – Vice Chair
Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Jeff Michael – Secretary
Installation Coordinator, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs – Rick Long
Dean of the College of Natural Resources at N.C. State University – Dr. Myron Floyd
Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership – Chester Lowder
State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation – Jeremy Goodwin

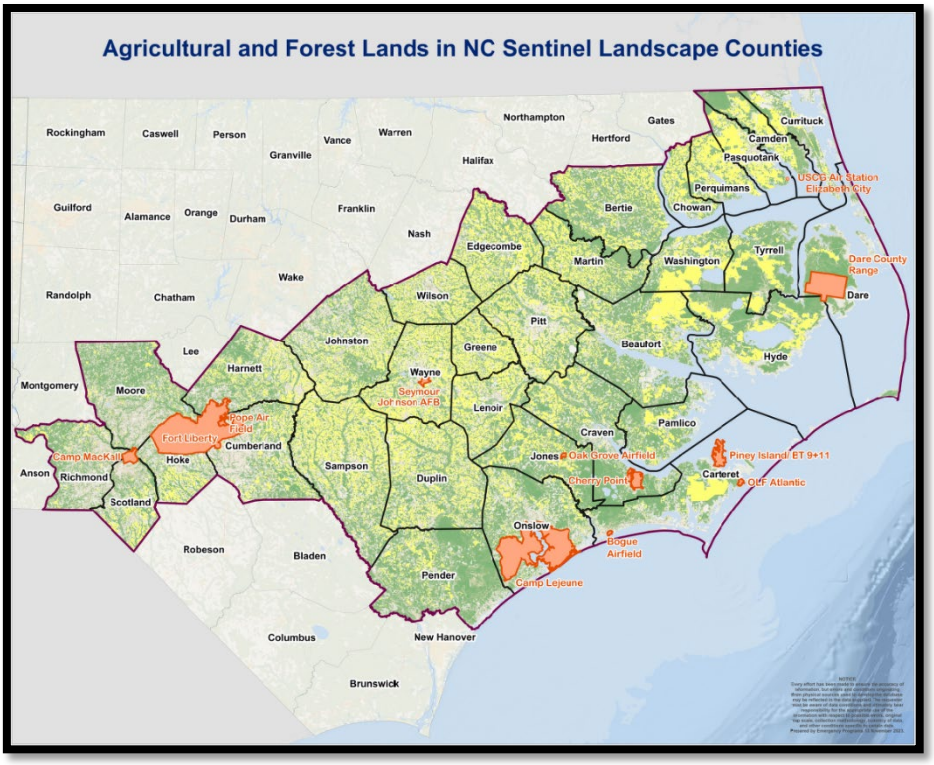
Pursuant to Section 3.19.(f) of Senate Bill 131 / S.L. 2017-10 … The Committee shall report on its activities conducted to implement this section, including any findings, recommendations, and legislative proposals, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and the Agriculture and Forestry Awareness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

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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 17 Sentinel Landscapes designated by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior.

- The national Sentinel Landscape Partnership is committed to empowering private landowners, strengthening military readiness, preserving natural resources, supporting agricultural productivity, and increasing access to outdoor recreation.

- 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:
    - 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,
    - Address restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, and
    - 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

North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee	
Chair – Steve Troxler	Commissioner of Agriculture
Vice Chair – Kyle Briggs	Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Secretary – Jeff Michael	Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Rick Long	Installation Coordinator, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans 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
Jeremy Goodwin	State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation

North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Support Staff from NCDA&CS	
David Smith	Chief Deputy Commissioner
Evan Davis	Farmland Preservation Director
Corey Hoilman	Farmland Preservation Assistant Director
Jonathan Lanier	General Counsel
Mark Pfanstiehl	Paralegal
Janine McLawhorn	Paralegal
Nancy Richardson	Paralegal Assistant
Weston McCorkle	Agricultural Programs Specialist
Veronica Jamison	Farmland Preservation Office Manager
Anita Kennedy	Farmland Preservation Coordinator
Sabrina Shaffer	Farmland Preservation Monitoring and Stewardship Coordinator
Allison Rodriguez	Farmland Preservation Budget Administrator
Kelsey Pearce	Farmland Preservation Grant Specialist
Ashton Bachman	Farmland Preservation Specialist

N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Report

NCDA&CS Military Partnership Agricultural Conservation Easements since July 2016

Since the establishment of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape in July 2016, the NCDA&CS Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF) has partnered with the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy to record conservation easements. NCDA&CS and the military services provided funds for easement purchases and transactional costs to permanently protect working farms and forests in military training priority zones. In some cases, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided additional funds for easement purchases.

Military Partner	Acres Conserved	Easements Recorded	Counties
USAF-SJAFB	10,905.494	20	Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington
USN/MCIEAST	3,982.161	7	Pamlico, Jones
Total	**14,887.655**	**27**	**6**

The Working Lands Trust (WLT) worked with landowners, private partners, and contractors, along with local, state, and federal staff, to complete the projects. WLT is the easement holder for these conservation easements.

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 Working Lands Trust and the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to support activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL).

New subcontracts were issued with an effective date of July 1, 2024. Once a new ENCSL Coordinator is named, funding from the MOU is available for that position.

Priority Parcels in the ENCSL

The ADFPTF 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.

The ADFPTF has contracted **1,629.21 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 overall project value for these conservation easement contracts totals nearly $3.7 million. The ADFPTF leveraged nearly $2.6 million in federal funds for these projects.

Military Partnership Contracts

The following contracts are funded through the military services and the ADFPTF. These conservation easement projects total **1,629.21 acres**.

SJAFB Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	SJAFB Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Washington	WLT	1,164.08	$766,225.00	$766,255.00	$1,455,000.00	$2,987,450.00
Totals		**1,164.08**	**$766,225.00**	**$766,255.00**	**$1,455,000.00**	**$2,987,450.00**

MCIEAST Priority Area

County	Grant Recipient	Acres	MCIEAST Funds	ADFPTF Funds	USDA Funds	Total Project Value
Onslow	WLT	465.13	$353,425.00	$341,225.00	-	$694,650.00
Totals		**465.13**	**$353,425.00**	**$341,225.00**	**-**	**$694,650.00**

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Report

Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP)

The Bear Garden and Stones Creek RASP projects completed project Year 7 and had a successful field evaluation in October with representatives from Department of Defense and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

In October and November, 173 acres of chemical site prep was completed on Stones Creek, and 223 acres of longleaf pine and native understory planting was initialized and will be completed in the early weeks of December, respectively. Holly Shelter game land had about 470 acres of prescribed fire.

The Bear Garden project had a saw crew actively working on a 105-acre mechanical timber stand improvement project. Once completed, crews will move to a 100-acre unit at Stones Creek. A timber sale at Bear Garden tract of 211 acres with a combination of clearcut and thinning will release in the near future.

Technical Guidance (missing June-July 2024)
Operations program staff continue to work within the NCSL focal area to expand private lands conservation. From *August 2024 through May 2025*, staff reported meetings with 35 private landowners within the NCSL focal area. These site visits resulted in management guidance being provided for 12,018 acres. This guidance targets the enhancement of habitat for various Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Staff continue to work with private landowners to address other wildlife-oriented concerns and provide guidance for the Wildlife Conservation Land Program.

County	Number of Site Visits	Acres Impacted
Edgecombe	5	1,232
Harnett	1	22
Hyde	4	9,160
Johnston	13	788
Martin	3	306
Moore	4	288
Washington	1	26
Wilson	1	47
Bertie	1	110
Sampson	1	9
Total	**34**	**11,968**

Operations' program staff also finalized two Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreements (WHCA) within the NCSL focal area during 2024. These agreements are required for landowners to sign up for property tax deferment through the Wildlife Conservation Land

Program (WCLP). These two agreements resulted in a total of 53.5 acres being enrolled in WCLP for the 2025 tax year.

Fieldwork with Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Coastal Plain Crayfish Distribution – Agency biologists are working with N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, West Liberty University, and Georgia Southern University on a multi-state project looking at genetic diversity and distribution of Coastal Plain crayfishes. In May 2025, staff started surveys throughout the Eastern N.C. Sentinel Landscape. The main objectives are to evaluate the taxonomic and conservation status of the crayfish within the Coastal Plain with emphasis on the genus Procambarus. These crayfish are found predominately in the Coastal Plain and over 40% of them are SGCN in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Along with determining distribution and gaining taxonomic clarity, threats including land use change, pollution, and invasive species will be identified. Field collections are currently underway and will conclude in 2026. At the completion of the project, we will have a better understanding of the status of crayfish in the Coastal Plain and threats impacting them in these states. This information will help inform management and conservation practices moving forward for these historically understudied species.

Bridle Shiner – Agency biologists conducted Bridle Shiner (Notropis bifrenatus) surveys in Pasquotank, Camden, and Martin counties. The species has a very small, fragmented range in North Carolina based on current collections. The primary objectives were to identify suitable Bridle Shiner habitat and determine if the species occurs in the Pasquotank and North rivers as well as Conaby Creek. Surveys resulted in no Bridle Shiner collected although other SGCN species were found including the Banded Sunfish (Enneacanthus obesus).

Dwarf Wedgemussel – Agency biologists continue to monitor propagated dwarf wedgemussel (Alasmidonta heterodon) in Swift Creek in Johnston County. To enhance the existing population, 250 of the federally endangered mussel were released in 2022.

Atlantic Pigtoe – Agency biologists conducted snorkel surveys in the Tar River in Edgecombe County for the federally-threatened Atlantic pigtoe (Fusconaia masoni) to determine current abundance and distribution in the lower Tar River. This species as well as several other SGCN species including green floater (Lasmigina subviridis), tidewater mucket (Atlanticoncha ochracea), and eastern pondmussel (Sagittunio nasutus) were found to still be occupying this reach of river.

Tar and Neuse River Basin freshwater mussel surveys – Agency biologists are collaborating with NCSU to conduct water quality research and habitat monitoring to improve the survival, growth, reproduction, and long-term health of mussels and other aquatic organisms in the Tar and Neuse river basins. Twenty water quality monitoring sites are located in these two river basins including Pitt, Edgecombe, Greene, Johnston, and Wilson counties. A robust monitoring strategy designed to measure surface and pore

water, as well as sediment and stream morphological characteristics important for the reintroduction and restoration of priority species (Dwarf Wedgemussel, Yellow Lance, Atlantic Pigtoe, Tar River Spinymussel, Carolina Madtom, and Neuse River Waterdog) was initiated in June 2024 and will span the next eight years. Sampling timeline is as follows: surface waters will be collected monthly, pore water and ground water collected quarterly, and biological, habitat, and sediment surveys will be conducted annually. This data will inform conservation decisions for priority species on where augmentations and reintroductions should occur, and where habitat conservation should be prioritized.

Sandhills Chub – Through a multi-year Competitive State and Tribal Wildlife Grant received in 2022, NCWRC and SCDNR are continuing efforts on Fort Bragg/Camp Mackall targeted at Sandhills Chub in collaboration with the Department of Defense and Coastal Carolina University (CCU). There is no new data to share for this reporting period, but data analyses are being evaluated and genetics information is being processed. The students have collected a large amount of great data, which is expected to help us meet the project goals. The Sandhills chub (Semotilus lumbee) is an imperiled headwater fish that is geographically restricted in the Sandhills ecoregion in North and South Carolina and is an SGCN in both states. This project is focused on filling knowledge gaps to support future conservation efforts.

Land Acquisition

NCWRC added an additional 179 acres to Bertie County Game Land through Gaskins Swamp Acquisition in a cost share with N.C. Land and Water fund, ENVIVA Forest Conservation Fund, and North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant. The acquisition is the combination of 4 tracts adjacent to Windsor Boating Access Area and borders 1 mile of the Cashie River. The property is primarily cypress-gum floodplain forests and tidal swamp forests. The southern portion lies in the N.C. Natural Heritage Program's Cashie River Swamp Natural Area. The tract falls in the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture – South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative – Southeastern Coastal Plain Focus Area for waterfowl. Acquisition would protect the mature cypress-gum swamps from future timber harvest benefiting cavity nesters and a suite of neotropical migrants.

Angola Bay & Holly Shelter Game Land Resilience – Pender County

The Commission began partnering in 2023 with The Nature Conservancy on an Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund grant from NFWF to complete 7,500 acres of hydrologic restoration on Angola Bay Game Land in Pender County. This project intends to enhance pocosin wetland habitat and provide community flood resilience benefits to downstream communities (Burgaw, Castle Hayne, and Wilmington). The project is a two-phase project and is in the final stages of the roughly 7,500-acre Angola Bay Peatland Restoration Project. Phase 2 road raising has been completed.

A similar resiliency restoration effort in partnership with The Nature Conservancy involves Holly Shelter game land. Agency staff have initiated the biological monitoring project for the Holly Shelter Peatland Restoration by developing trails and deploying 15 acoustic recorders programmed to record both acoustic and ultrasonic recordings. This effort is the

initial step in gathering pre-restoration biological data prior to implementing the Holly Shelter Peatland Restoration. During this timeframe, we have also been monitoring the 39 clusters of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on Holly Shelter for nesting success.

Partners for Green Growth

- **Pender County** has been awarded a Partners for Green Growth (PGG) agreement to develop a preferred development guide and model ordinances to aid in incorporating wildlife conservation into the county's land use and development planning. The County's kick-off meeting was held in July 2024. Staff has provided technical assistance to identify critical habitat to be incorporated into planning efforts. The funding will be used to evaluate the county's current regulations related to open space, conservation incentives and ordinances, outreach to landowners/developers/staff, and the drafting of a preferred development guide. The overall project goal is to provide county planners with a decision-making resource during the review of proposed development.
- **Harnett County** - Staff have provided technical guidance to the County on their comprehensive plan update, including a recommendation to include a military corridor buffer on the county's future land use map and comprehensive plan update. This corridor would set the stage for future efforts to ensure any proposed development remains in conservation and agricultural uses and deters uses incompatible with the military mission.
- Staff are engaging landowners within the **Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape** to share land management techniques that benefit wildlife resources including outreach specifically to landowners and participating in local agriculture working groups.
- Staff continue to work with local communities to share GGT techniques that inform planning and site design activities. Some communities include **Southern Pines** and **Brunswick County**. Additionally, staff have been engaging **M/I Homes** similarly on methods to incorporate GGT into their planning and site design activities.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Climate Resiliency Strategy Report

Agency recently developed its first climate resilience strategy. This strategy captures and elaborates on how our agency contributes to the state's climate resilience goals through the conservation and restoration of our natural lands. The strategy also identifies goals to protect and/or plan for anticipated changes to habitats and species' distributions to ensure our management practices are resilient. This strategy will be updated, as needed, and incorporated into the 2025 N.C. Wildlife Action Plan revision.

N.C. Wildlife Action Plan

NCWRC is responsible for facilitating and implementing the N.C. Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), a comprehensive wildlife resource conservation blueprint. The Plan's next revision is due by September 30, 2025 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A public comment period will be opened in June through July 5, 2025 and circulated on our website at ncwildlife.gov/Plan.

- The Plan identifies fish, wildlife and plant species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), as well as research and management priorities for other species. It describes 40 types of

aquatic, wetland and terrestrial natural communities that provide habitats important to SGCN and other priority species.

- North Carolina's SWAP also includes updates and information about the numerous programs and efforts by partners and collaborators who support North Carolina's conservation priorities. The NCWRC is working collaboratively with various partners, organizations, stakeholders and interested citizens who are providing input during the revision process.
- The draft 2025 plan includes updates from the 2015 plan with new research, biological knowledge and survey findings, plus improved conservation actions targeted at resiliency and a stronger understanding of impacts from changing weather patterns.
- To be eligible for federal matching grants, states are required to create a SWAP and to conduct a 10-year mandatory comprehensive review and update to their plan. NCWRC published North Carolina's first SWAP in 2005.

N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) is home to several divisions and programs that support the mission of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partnership, including the N.C. Division of Parks & Recreation and the N.C. Division of Land & Water Stewardship (home to the N.C. Land and Water Fund and the N.C. Natural Heritage Program). In addition to the work of these divisions, DNCR is engaged in several cross-agency initiatives that contribute to the ENCSL mission through land protection and land use planning strategies throughout Eastern North Carolina.

N.C. DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION

The N.C. Division of Parks & Recreation (NCDPR) manages more than 262,000 acres of iconic landscape within North Carolina's 35 state parks, four state recreation areas and dozens of state trails and natural areas. It administers the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (including its local grants program), the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund, a state trails system, North Carolina Natural and Scenic Rivers and more, all with a mission dedicated to conservation, recreation and education. The state parks system welcomes more than 19 million visitors annually.

While NCDPR maintains an active land acquisition program to expand its holdings in strategically important areas for recreation and natural resources conservation, it did not complete any such acquisitions in the ENCSL counties over the past year.

N.C. DIVISION OF LAND & WATER STEWARDSHIP

The Division of Land and Water Stewardship includes two programs focused on preserving North Carolina's unique environment – the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and the Natural Heritage Program. Both programs have contributed significantly to the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape partnership.

North Carolina Land and Water Fund Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2024-August 2025)

North Carolina's Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) 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. NCLWF awards grants to non-profit 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 October 2024, NCLWF awarded $18,156,979 to purchase property in fee or conservation easements on 3,432 acres in the ENCSL counties. Project

details are listed below. When a project would directly benefit a particular installation, that is noted in the "installation" column.

County	Organization	Project Name	Installation	Acres	Award Total
Carteret	N.C. Coastal Land Trust	NCCLT - Weyerhaeuser Tract Phase 3 - Newport River	MCAS Cherry Point	897	$845,641
Carteret	N.C. Coastal Federation	NCCF - Kirmeyer Tracts - North River Wetlands Preserve		8	$103,868
Currituck	Corolla Wild Horse Fund	CWHF - Middle Tracts - Currituck Banks Wildlife Corridor		16	$283,055
Dare	Town of Nags Head	Nags Head - Municipal Tracts - Nags Head Woods Ecological Preserve		261	$4,000,000
Harnett	N.C. Div of Parks and Recreation	NCDPR - Avents Creek - Raven Rock State Park		273	$3,078,750
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	TLC - Rose Dairy Tract - Black Creek	USAF Seymour Johnson	309	$1,733,461
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	TLC - Lowgrounds - Neuse River	USAF Seymour Johnson	602	$1,076,345
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	TLC - Little River Forest		70	$229,650
Moore	N.C. Div of Parks and Recreation	NCDPR - Ives Tracts - Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve	U.S. Army Fort Liberty	306	$3,250,000
Onslow	The Nature Conservancy	TNC - Ramsey and Sharpe Tracts - Horse Swamp Preserve	USMC Camp Lejeune	89	$123,452
Pender	N.C. Coastal Land Trust	NCCLT - South Topsail Beach - Lea-Hutaff Island NA	USMC Camp Lejeune	147	$3,325,600

Tyrrell	N.C. Coastal Land Trust	NCCLT - Upper Tar Landing Tract - Scuppernong River Swamp Forest NA	USAF Seymour Johnson	454	$107,157
			Totals	**3,432**	**$18,156,979**

Natural Heritage Program Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2024-August 2025)

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.

NCNHP encourages conservation and stewardship of natural areas through creation of Dedicated Nature Preserves (DNP) and Registered Heritage Areas (RHA) under the Nature Preserves Act (GS 143B-135.250-.272). Dedicated Nature Preserves are permanently protected through a legally binding agreement with DNCR to manage the land for conservation of its natural heritage resources. State-owned land can only be removed from dedication upon approval of the Governor and the Council of State. Registered Heritage Areas are agreements between the NCNHP and the landowner recognizing the natural heritage value of the land or water. Owners of Registered Heritage Areas sign a voluntary agreement with DNCR demonstrating their commitment to protecting the natural heritage resources of their property. These landowners may receive help with biological surveys and management recommendations.

During the past year, NCNHP has continued to lead the selection and nomination for registration or dedication of natural areas. Two new Dedicated Nature Preserves and two expanded Dedicated Nature Preserves added 2,252 acres of permanently protected land within the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape from September 2024 - August 2025. Five new Registered Heritage Areas protecting a total of 1,480 acres were established, all with the same private landowner. The table below shows the new Dedicated and Registered Nature Preserves.

County	Nature Preserve Name	Partner Agency	Note
Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Scotland	Sandhills Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	Dedicated Nature Preserve amended (1,921 acres added to 6,210-acre nature preserve).
Hyde, Tyrrell	Emily and Richardson Preyer Buckridge Coastal Reserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	N.C. Division of Coastal Management	Dedicated Nature Preserve amended (255 acres added to 28,981-acre nature preserve)
Johnston	Neuse River Floodplain Dedicated Nature Preserve	N.C. Department of Adult Correction	New Dedicated Nature Preserve (22 acres)
Moore, Montgomery	Samarcand Drowning Creek Dedicated Nature Preserve	N.C. Department of Public Safety	New Dedicated Nature Preserve (55 acres)
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Brown-North) Registered Heritage Area	Private Landowner	Registered Heritage Area (130 acres)
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Curriewoods LLC) Registered Heritage Area	Private Landowner	Registered Heritage Area (147 acres)
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Debernia North III) Registered Heritage Area	Private Landowner	Registered Heritage Area (120 acres)
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Debernia and Amy North) Registered Heritage Area	Private Landowner	Registered Heritage Area (47 acres)
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Wolfe Timber LLC) Registered Heritage Area	Private Landowner	Registered Heritage Area (1,036 acres)

The table below shows natural heritage surveys conducted by NCNHP to assist with land conservation activities in the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape during September 2024 - August 2025. Approximately 6,752 acres were surveyed by NCNHP staff in the

Sentinel Landscape area during this timeframe. Natural areas are listed in alphabetical order by county. Permission to visit the sites was granted by landowners and land managers.

County	Natural Area	Partner Agency
Beaufort	Broad Creek Marshes and Swamps	Weyerhaeuser
Beaufort	Voice of America Game Land	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Carteret	Hoop Pole Creek Preserve	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	Silver Dollar Road Nature Park	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	Spooner Creek Nature Park	Morehead City
Currituck	Currituck Banks Wildlife Corridor	Currituck Wild Horse Fund
Currituck	Powells Point - Albemarle Sound	N.C. Coastal Land Trust
Dare	Dare County Pocosin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dare	Kitty Hawk Woods	Town of Kitty Hawk
Dare	Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve	The Nature Conservancy
Duplin	Reedy Island	Private Landowner
Harnett	Cape Fear River Tributary	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Harnett	Raven Rock State Park	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Hyde	Ocracoke Island	National Park Service
Johnston	Neuse River Lowgrounds	Mountains-to-Sea Trail
Johnston	Richardson Bridge Bottomlands	Triangle Land Conservancy
Johnston	Selma Heath Bluff	Johnston County Parks and Open Space
Onslow	Horse Swamp	The Nature Conservancy
Onslow	Turkey Creek	N.C. Coastal Federation
Pender	Black River	Friends of Black River
Pender	Holly Shelter	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, The Nature Conservancy

County	Natural Area	Partner Agency
Pitt	Otter Creek	East Carolina University
Richmond	Rocky Ford Branch	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Sampson	Pondberry Bay	N.C. Plant Conservation Program

N.C. State University College of Natural Resources Report

Industry and Economic Development
CNR continues to be a crucial support system for North Carolina's major industries – forestry, wood products, and tourism – which together contribute over **$95 billion** to the state's annual economy. The following activities highlight some of the work being carried out in support of industry and economic development:

- The **Innovation in Mass Timber Solutions Conference**, hosted in partnership with the Colleges of Engineering and Design, brought together industry and academia to promote the use of mass timber as a sustainable building material.
- The **Leveraging Direct-to-Consumer Marketing and Tourism** project, funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, provided new income stream opportunities for commercial fishers and marine aquaculture producers by creating fact sheets and marketing materials.
- The **Salinity Monitoring for Oyster Growers** project, a multi-college collaboration, is developing critical tools for the oyster industry after conducting needs assessments with 14 growers. Initial findings were shared with 30 coastal scientists at the N.C. Sea Grant Coastal Conference.

Education, Training, and Outreach
CNR Extension programs reach individuals and professionals across the state through a variety of educational initiatives. The following educational events are highlighted to demonstrate our efforts over the reporting period:

- Fourteen in-person and virtual education events on wildfire risks, the ecological role of fire, and prescribed fire application were attended by **271 individuals**.
- The **N.C. Bradford Pear Bounty** program, in collaboration with multiple partners, distributed more than **600 native trees** and reached over **250,000 people online**, increasing awareness of the invasive Callery pear.
- N.C. State Extension partnered with organizations like the N.C. Tree Farm Program to host **seven webinars** for landowners and stakeholders. The webinars covered a range of topics, including site selection, small woodlot management, and bottomland hardwood forests. In direct response to Hurricane Helene, Extension also hosted webinars providing critical resources and information for affected landowners and farmers. Here is a list of the webinars:
    - Managing the right species on the right site: Part 1 - Site selection – October 10, 2024
    - Managing the right species on the right site: Part 2 - Site selection – October 17, 2024
    - Helene Response Resources for Farmers and Farm Workers – October 24, 2024
    - Timber Tax: Capturing Loss from Hurricane Helene and other Landowner Issues and Considerations – October 30, 2024
    - Overview of Bottomland Hardwood Forests – November 21, 2024
    - Small Woodlot Management: Overcoming Challenges – March 6, 2025
    - Living with Fire in North Carolina – June 5, 2025

Research and Innovation
The CNR research portfolio saw significant growth, with a **5.9% increase in the number of awards** and a remarkable **252% increase in the average award amount** over the past year. This

growth is highlighted by several large, competitive grants that underscore the impact of the college's research:

- A **$7.4 million** grant from USDA is funding a project to accelerate genetic improvement of fir trees, led by Justin Whitehill.
- A **$1.4 million** award from the U.S. Department of Energy will support a new approach to decarbonizing the pulp and paper industry, led by Sunkyu Park.
- The U.S. Forest Service provided **$599,268** for an assessment of upland oak hickory forests in the Southern Appalachians following Hurricane Helene, led by Jodi Forrester.

Academic Programs

The CNR academic program experienced a **3.5% increase in undergraduate enrollment**, a trend bolstered by the success of key student programs. These programs include:

- The **Environmental First Year (ENVFY) Program**, which saw a remarkable **69% increase in enrollments**, with future partnerships poised to drive further growth.
- The **Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE)** continues to invest in collaborative research.
- The **I-GROUP** interdisciplinary internship program, launched in 2025, has already generated significant student interest with over **80 applicants for its initial cohort**.

Publications

CNR produced several Extension publications that may be of interest to landowners and professionals. These publications provide landowners and professionals with sound, research-based information to help them make informed decisions, enabling them to effectively manage, enhance, and enjoy their forest and natural resources.

- **FloodWise Nature-Based Solutions Management Roadmap.** This roadmap outlines nature-based solutions (NBS) for flood mitigation in rural communities, particularly focusing on North Carolina's Coastal Plain. It provides a step-by-step guide for landowners to plan, implement, and monitor ten identified NBS, including cover cropping, hardpan breakup, and wetland restoration. The document also details the cost-benefit analysis and potential financial incentives for each solution, aiming to enhance disaster resilience through improved land management for water retention and storage.
- **Mass Timber Products: Innovative Wood-Based Building Materials.** This publication discusses the use of mass timber as sustainable building material. It explores the different types of mass timber products and outlines their environmental, economic, and construction benefits, while also addressing the challenges to their wider adoption.
- **Economic Contribution of the Forest Sector in North Carolina, 2023.** Amidst high inflation and increased economic activity, the forest sector in North Carolina continued to surge, with a total economic size of greater than **$40.5 billion** in 2022. The North Carolina forest sector was down **5%** from the record high in 2022.
- **Heirs' Property in North Carolina: What Is It and Why Should I Care?** This publication defines heirs' property as land passed down without a will, leading to complex ownership among family members. It outlines the significant challenges associated with this ownership structure, such as the difficulty in securing loans and managing the property. The document serves as a crucial resource for North Carolina residents, offering guidance on how to resolve these issues and protect their family's land.

Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report

Established through a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Department of the Interior (USDOI) in 2013, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership works to streamline the delivery of federal voluntary landowner assistance in areas around military installations and ranges, areas where funding permanent conservation or offsetting costs associated with preserving or enhancing natural resources could advance the collective objectives of all three Departments. In doing so, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership reduces internal resource constraints and magnifies the impact of taxpayer dollars. Administered by a Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC), which is composed of leadership from all participating agencies, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership defines sentinel landscapes as areas in which natural lands are well suited to protect defense facilities from land use that is incompatible with the military's mission. In accordance with that definition, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's FCC designates sentinel landscapes in areas across the country where an established local partnership has demonstrated their alignment with, and readiness to advance, the Partnership's goals with the support of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership.
The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL) received its designation by the Sentinel Landscape Partnership's FCC in 2016. Spanning 11 million acres across a 33-county region in North Carolina's Coastal Plain and Sandhills, the Landscape is anchored by seven military installations and ranges - Fort Bragg Army Base/Camp Mackall, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the Dare County Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune/Marine Corps Air Station New River, and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. In the year following its federal designation, the North Carolina General Assembly established the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee (Article 61A § 106-747) with a charge of coordinating among relevant state departments and agencies to develop and implement additional programs to protect working lands in support of military readiness. Since its inception, the federal and state agencies, non-profit, and for-profit organizations that comprise the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership have worked collaboratively to conserve hundreds of thousands of acres of land through easement or acquisition, enroll more than two million acres in some form of voluntary landowner assistance programming, and advance countless initiatives in furtherance of Sentinel Landscapes priorities.

ENCSL Partnership: Funding Committed and Acreage Protected and Enrolled

In May 2025, the ENCSL Partnership completed the FY2024 (Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2024) Sentinel Landscapes Partnership data call summarizing the following quantitative ENCSL Partnership metrics: funding committed, acres protected, and acres enrolled. In FY2024, ENCSL Partnership partners committed or secured $23.2 million in state funding, $3.1 million in private funding, and $1.5 million in U.S. Department of Interior funding (Fig. 1). Additionally, ENCSL Partnership partners protected 11,740 acres of land through acquisition or easement, while also enrolling 61,356 acres of land in some form of cost share. Finally, ENCSL Partnership Partners directly engaged over 170,000 landowners, a newly captured ENCSL Partnership metric, through landowner outreach events in FY2024.

These accomplishments bring the total funding committed or secured by ENCSL Partnership partners since its designation in 2016 to $306.2 million and the acreage protected to 233,792. Importantly, finalized 2024 funding contributions and acreage protected/enrolled data for U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture partners are forthcoming and, once included, will provide a full picture of the accomplishments of the ENCSL Partnership in 2024.

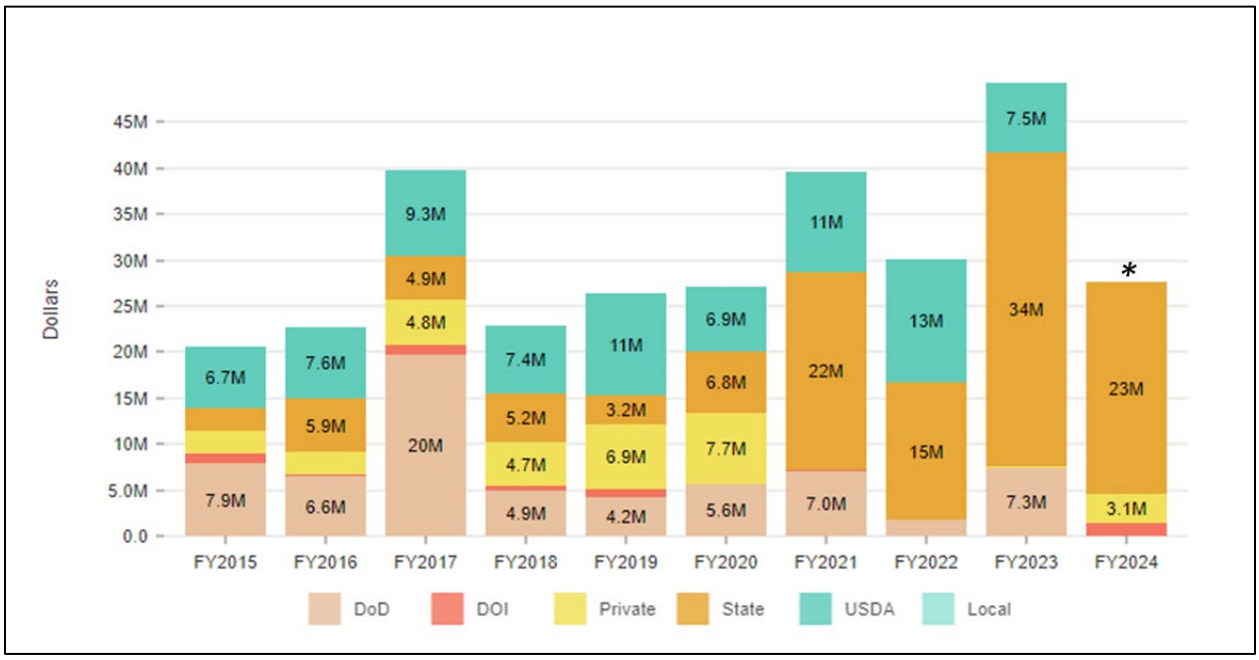


*Figure 1. Committed funding by ENCSL Partnership partner organization or group of partners by year. *DOD and USDA data for FY2024 is yet to be incorporated. Source: Sentinel Landscapes Partnership*

ENCSL Partnership Meetings

Partnership Meetings (In-person, with virtual option): September 25, 2024; October 25, 2024; January 22, 2025; March 19, 2025; May 21, 2025; July 23, 2025.

ENCSL Partnership Strategic Plan 2025-2029

A full draft of the *ENCSL Partnership Strategic Plan 2025-2029* was finalized in late 2024. The plan includes ENCSL-wide goals, as well as regionally-specific strategies and actions to advance those goals. Those regions reflect the priority geographies of the three military services represented in the ENCSL Partnership. As part of the ENCSL Partnership's strategic plan development process, military installation partners collaborated to develop a unified ranking system of lands within the ENCSL geography based on the likelihood for projects in any given area to deliver direct and/or indirect military mission sustainment benefits (Fig. 2). Specifically, installation partners from Fort Bragg, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base/Dare County Range, and Marine Corps Installations EAST (MCB Camp Lejeune/New River and MCAS Cherry Point) co-developed a three-tiered prioritization

framework, identifying areas where partner activities have direct benefits to military installation resilience/mission sustainment and where installation support for pursuit of DOD funding for project is most likely (Tier 1), areas considered lower priority than Tier 1 because of less direct benefit to the military installation, but where the military installation may support the pursuit of DOD funding for projects (Tier 2), and areas where partner activities are likeliest to deliver primarily indirect benefits to military installation resilience/mission sustainment and there is potential for an installation letter of support but support for pursuit of DOD funding for the project is unlikely (Tier 3).

A near-final draft of the strategic plan has been fully vetted by the Partnership and, on August 6, 2025, N.C. Sentinel Landscape Committee members or their designees met for a workshopping session to conduct a final review of the plan. A vote by the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Committee, which serves as the ENCSL Partnership's Local Coordinating Committee (LCC), to formally approve the *ENCSL Partnership Strategic Plan 2025-2029* is on the agenda for their quarterly meeting on September 16, 2025.

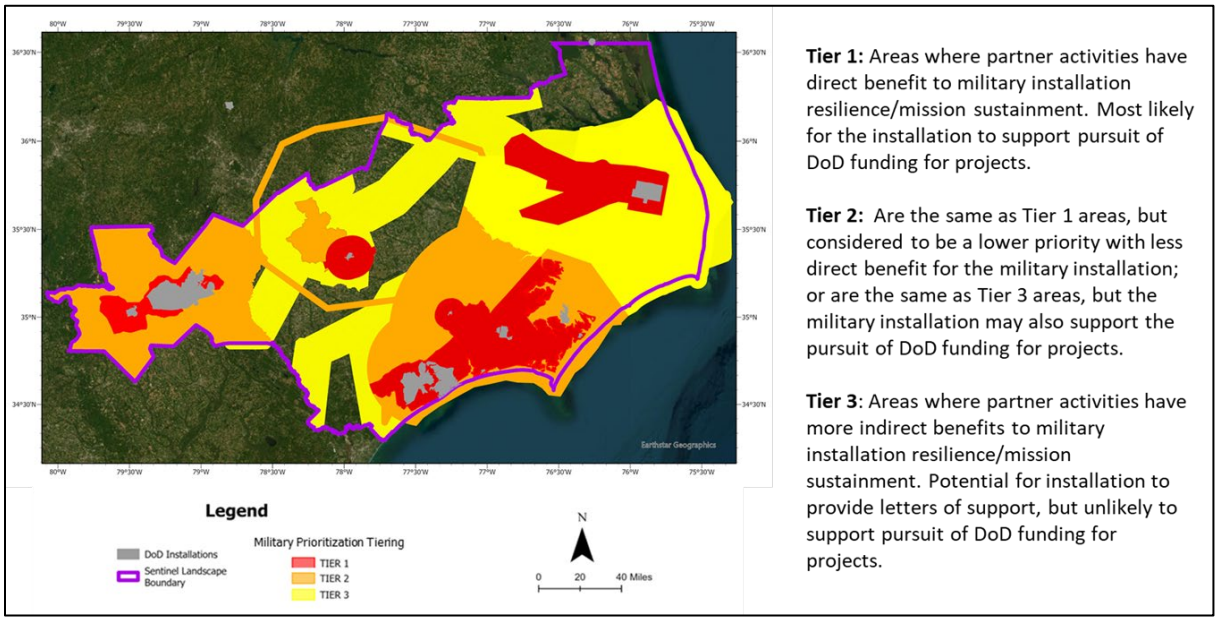


Figure 2. Map of combined military partners' priority tiering of geographies across the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape. Source: ENCSL Partnership – Strategic Plan 2025-2029

ENCSL Partnership Partner Project Highlights

Anchor Installations

Fort Bragg/Camp Mackall [U.S. Army]

- For FY2025, Fort Bragg's two Cooperative Agreements achieved substantial conservation gains through the REPI Program, securing five tracts of land totaling more than 860 acres through fee-simple acquisitions and conservation easements.
- Key successes included the acquisition of the BTG Pactual tracts (407 acres) and the transfer of Paint Hill Farm (305 acres) to North Carolina State Parks, enabling the expansion of Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve – a key step in protecting critical habitat, safeguarding biodiversity, expanding public recreation opportunities all while protecting the overall mission readiness of Fort Bragg.
- N.C. State Parks purchased Paint Hill Farm from The Nature Conservancy on June 25, 2025.
- Program stewardship efforts were equally impactful. Over 8,500 acres of longleaf pine habitat were managed through prescribed burning to reduce wildfire risk, improve forest health, and sustain native species. Additionally, 56 acres of native groundcover were planted, further enhancing ecosystem resilience.



Longleaf pine habitat on Paint Hill Farm. Image Credit: Ana Risano.

Seymour Johnson Air Force Base

- The Neuse River, which runs along the west side of the installation's boundary, has been rapidly eroding and threatens the installation's fence line security and key service roads needed to access the airfield. From 2007 to 2017, roughly seven feet of bank erosion occurred, with the erosion rate increasing to 12 feet between 2017 and 2021. This erosion has resulted in unprecedented river levels and faster flow rates that threaten existing infrastructure along the riverbanks. Seymour Johnson Air Force Base is collaborating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and University of Georgia's Defense Community Resilience Program to identify and design a shoreline stabilization solution to address this vulnerability and to conduct a broader watershed study to identify ways to mitigate erosive riverine forcing.
- Seymour Johnson Air Force Base supported the City of Goldboro's successful application to the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation's Installation Readiness program for a flood mitigation feasibility study for the city's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The WWTP's location within the Neuse River floodplain presents vulnerable conditions during hurricanes and other large-scale flooding events, as the elements needed to ensure the ongoing operation of wastewater treatment systems become susceptible to damages and – potentially – system

failure. The study will analyze the feasibility of strategies to mitigate flood vulnerabilities of the WWTP.

- Seymour Johnson Air Force Base supported the development of a REPI Challenge pre-proposal by Pantheon Regeneration, in partnership with Duke University and USFWS, to rewet nearly 14,000 acres of drained and ditched peatlands in close proximity to the Dare County Range. The proposal was invited back for a full proposal. The project will dramatically reduce the risk of wildfire in a priority geography for Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the Dare County Range.

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune/Marine Corps Air Station New River

- Partnered with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to successfully execute an easement to protect the Ramsey tract (78.92 acres) and adjacent Sharpe tract (3.52 acres) on November 20, 2024. This encroachment protection acquisition (Onslow County) will prevent incompatible development of this property in perpetuity and limit use or development that would be incompatible with the mission of USMC installations in North Carolina. Easement to the Department of the Navy (DON) over the combined 82.44 acres will add the acreage to the Horse Swamp Preserve just north of Camp Lejeune. FY23 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds were used for the DON cost share.
- Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune/Marine Corps Air Station New River partnered with Onslow County and the City of Jacksonville to develop a proposal to DOD's Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation's Installation Readiness program for a Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR). The MIRR will analyze external threats and vulnerabilities to the installation, develop strategies to mitigate these vulnerabilities, and identify the resources needed to implement strategies assuring the continuity of Department of Defense and installation mission capabilities.

Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

- Partnered with Working Lands Trust to successfully execute three easements in support of the ADFP REPI program on July 29, 2025. The purpose of the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Encroachment Partnering Agreement is to conserve farmland and limit use or development that would be incompatible with the mission of USMC Installations in North Carolina. The three easement areas; Area A, Area B, and Area C, known collectively as the "McCotter Phase 2.5" Project consists of ten (10) individual parcels and totals 1,568.43 acres of land located in Pamlico County, near the vicinity of MCAS Cherry Point. The Navy and North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) provided funding for this project, and Working Lands Trust will hold a perpetual easement over the entire property.

- Partnered with N.C. Coastal Land Trust (NCCLT) to successfully execute an easement to protect 593.27 acres in Carteret County on November 1, 2024. This project will prevent incompatible development and protect the mission of USMC Installations in North Carolina. NCCLT conveyed a Restrictive Easement to the Department of Navy (DON) preventing development incompatible with the military mission in perpetuity. The DON cost share was provided with FY23 Readiness & Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds. In accordance with a grant from the North Carolina Land & Water Fund, NCCLT also conveyed a Conservation Easement over the same property to the State of North Carolina.



McCotter Promised Land Opportunity Zone (PLOZ) Farm Easement, the largest conglomerate of agricultural conservation easements funded with state and federal funds under one landowner in the history of North Carolina. Credit: Working Lands Trust

Private Partners

North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF)

- Odum 18.5-acre conservation easement purchased by NCLWF from NCCF on Queens Creek near Hammocks Beach State Park valued at $560,000.
- Newport River Watershed Preserve Phase 1 transfer from N.C. Coastal Land Trust to NCCF, 1,436.9 acres, value of $4,746,000, for hydrologic restoration and stewardship by NCCF.
- Newport River Watershed Preserve Phase II transfer from N.C. Coastal Land Trust to NCCF, 593.27 acres, $1,666,593 value, for hydrologic restoration and stewardship by NCCF.
- North Topsail Beach Fee-Simple acquisition gift, 67 acres valued at $1,655,000, given to NCCF for stewardship and conservation.

- Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point – through this National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant, a 2,029-ft. granite living shoreline was constructed along the Neuse River shoreline of MCAS Cherry Point. Construction of the living shoreline was completed in March 2025, and the area landward of these structures was planted with 23,300 plugs of salt marsh plants in May 2025. This project complements two larger living shoreline segments (totaling 9,719 ft.) that were built separately by MCAS Cherry Point with other funds including DOD Hurricane Florence Emergency Funds, and the N.C. Land and Water Fund. The entire 11,748 ft. (2.3-mile) living shoreline extends from Slocum Creek on the western side of the air station property to Hancock Creek on the eastern side.



A section of living shoreline being installed to mitigation erosion along Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point's Neuse River shoreline. Credit: TD Eure Marine Construction.

- Additional living shorelines completed, advancing both ENCSL Partnership and South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative goals: Black Duck Island 2,100 ft.; N.C. Aquarium Pine Knoll Shores: 4,214 ft.; Fort Macon State Park: 2,302 ft./68,844 plants; Sugarloaf Island: 2,302 ft.; Hammocks Beach State Park Mainland and Jones Island: 3,600 ft.
- In-process: Newport River Watershed Preserve Phase III, 897 acres of land to be purchased and then transferred by the N.C. Coastal Land Trust to NCCF for hydrologic restoration and conservation stewardship.
- In-process: Newport River Watershed Preserve Phase IV, 462.83 acres of salt marsh to be transferred by the N.C. Coastal Land Trust to NCCF for long-term stewardship and habitat restoration.
- In-process: North River Wetland Preserve and Mountain to Sea Trail. 787 acres in the process of being purchased by NCCF for hydrologic restoration, stewardship, and to establish a route for the Mountain to Sea Trail. Closing anticipated this fall. Supported by NCLWF, State Parks, and the Navy (REPI).
- In-process: Secured NFWF funding for restoration designs on Phases 1-3 at the Newport River Preserve and the Mountains to Sea Trail Tract. Survey and conceptual designs have been completed to date. Other funding for the Newport River tracts comes from Restore America's Estuaries National Estuarine Partnership and NCLWF Flood Risk Reduction grants.

- In-process: Thomas Creek, North River, Carteret County, 165-acre waterfront property on the Scenic Byway to be transferred to NCCF from the Conservation Fund for stewardship. Property is being purchased and given to the Fund with funding support by the NCLWF.
- In-process: Alligator River 1,550-acre waterfront acreage on Highway 64 near the Alligator River Bridge being transferred from the Conservation Fund to NCCF for stewardship. Land is valued at $760,000.
- In-process: Turkey Creek property near Stump Sound in Onslow County (approximately 102 acres with nearly 10,000 linear feet of waterfront) to be donated to NCCF by property owner with a value of about $2 million for conservation. Proposal pending with NCLWF to cover transactional costs to secure the donation (survey, closing costs, etc.).
- In-process: Worked with NRCS to move forward the $16.86 million Hyde County RCPP grant which includes about 1,000 acres of wetland restoration, drainage improvements in Fairfield Drainage District, agricultural cost-share for drainage management, oyster restoration cost-share, and a living shoreline to protect the Swan Quarter dike.
- In-process: Drafting an NRCS National Water Quality Initiative assessment for the lower Chowan River.
- In-process: Conditional award of EPA Section 319 Grant for stormwater retrofit and living shoreline installation in partnership with WRC at Turkey Creek Boating Access Area.
- In-process: Swan Quarter harbor, 4,670 ft. total with 397 ft. completed already through cost share, CCAP, and EEG funds.
- In-process: NCCF working on design and permitting of four living shoreline projects funded through NFWF to reduce coastal hazard risks and restore estuarine habitat adjacent to critical Department of Defense (DOD) infrastructure in Eastern North Carolina. Onslow County: (1) Marine Corps Air Station New River, and (2) Camp Lejeune (two projects); Carteret County: Dredge spoil island adjacent to Bogue Auxiliary Landing Field. Three projects along the New River extend for 2,650 linear feet and the Bogue Airfield site will extend 2,200 linear feet. These projects will stabilize 4,850 linear feet of shoreline at Marine Corps Air Station New River, Camp Lejeune, and Bogue Auxiliary Landing Field, protecting air traffic control facilities, command centers, and training infrastructure from storm surge, sea level rise, and erosion
- In-process: NCCF is currently working to advance South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) and ENCSL Partnership goals with funding provided by NFWF and SECU through a project entitled: Building Capacity for Community and Ecosystem Resilience in Underserved Coastal Communities. This project includes identifying, prioritizing, and advancing nature-based solution projects that protect and enhance existing or conserve potential future salt marsh habitat. Identified five

underserved communities in ENCSL priority geographies to help build community and ecosystem resilience. The five communities selected include Cape Hatteras in Dare County, mainland Hyde County, northern Tyrrell County, and the North River and Merrimon communities in Carteret County. Conducting community engagement to help identify at least five NBS projects.

- The NCCF was awarded $30 million through an historic $421 million EPA Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant to the Atlantic Conservation Coalition (N.C., S.C., VA, MD) to restore and protect around 600 acres of high-carbon coastal habitats. As NCCF works to identify priority areas, military readiness co-benefits will be incorporated into decision-making.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

- In the past year, The Nature Conservancy purchased the 305-acre Ives/Paint Hill tract in Moore County and sold it to N.C. State Parks for inclusion in Weymouth Woods State Natural Area. This property protects rare wildlife and plant species as well as important geological resources, and helps to buffer Fort Bragg. TNC also purchased the 123-acre Shutt tract in Richmond County. This property protects rare species and will enhance management activities and military training on the adjacent Sandhills Game Land. The Shutt tract will be transferred to N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) in 2026. The Fort Bragg REPI program and the N.C. Land and Water Fund helped to fund both of these acquisitions.
- The Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune REPI program supported TNC in the fee simple purchase of the 79-acre Ramsey tract and adjacent 3.5-acre Sharpe tract in Onslow County, adding to TNC's Horse Swamp preserve near Camp Lejeune.
- TNC acquired the 303-acre Rodman North property in Beaufort County which will be transferred to NCWRC to expand Van Swamp Game Land. This site has potential for hydrological restoration to restore peat soils. TNC also acquired the 2,727-acre Light Ground Pocosin property in Pamlico County that will eventually be transferred to NCWRC to expand Light Ground Pocosin Game Land. This property protects peatland and wetland habitats.
- In the past year, TNC transferred several properties to the State, including the 233-acre Blackmon tract, 192-acre Perry 1 tract and 610-acre Perry 2 tract to NCWRC Suggs Mill Pond Game Land.
- TNC manages its preserves and supports partners to restore and enhance longleaf pine and other habitats. Over the last year TNC led or supported 14,939 acres of controlled burning, helped to manage 440 acres of wildfire, and planted 56 acres of native groundcover within the ENCSL. 1,104 acres of the controlled burns were aided by the use of an aerial ignition drone purchased through a REPI Challenge grant.
- In April 2025, TNC completed a 7,500-acre pocosin peatland restoration project at Angola Bay Game Land in partnership with NCWRC, supported with over $5 million of NFWF (NOAA/USFWS), NCLWF, Arbor Day Foundation, private donor, and in-kind matching funds. The installation of 37 water control structures and targeted raising of low vulnerable sections of the site's public access roads has enabled the

rewetting of the grid drained portion of Angola Bay's peat dome. Ongoing management to reverse drained conditions across the site will reduce catastrophic fire risk, provide approximately 1.6 billion gallons of stormwater storage capacity, and enhance flood resilience of lowland communities in the Northeast Cape Fear basin. The 1,215 acres of prior loblolly pine plantation within the project area was reforested with Atlantic white cedar, bald cypress, pond cypress, and buttonbush using novel planting arrangements to optimize wildlife habitat benefits and biological diversity.



Installation of water control structures on Angola Bay Game Land. Credit: The Nature Conservancy

- Over the past year, TNC worked with partners to gather information to understand the root causes of declining base flows in Drowning Creek and flood events in the Lower Little River. This project is funded in part through REPI Challenge and will inform installation resilience for Camp Mackall and Fort Bragg. Preliminary results will be shared in the fall of 2025.

Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC)

- TLC has been working to conserve wild and working lands in SJAFB's Tier 2 Priority Area in eastern Johnston County, which has the potential to enhance the military installation's resilience to flooding and ensure existing and future land use is compatible with the mission.
- The following properties were conserved in the SJAFB's Tier 2 Priority Area of Johnston County:
    - Rose Dairy: TLC closed on this 311-acre property on the Neuse River just south of Smithfield on December 30th, 2024, and is working to deed a conservation easement to the State of North Carolina via the N.C. Land and Water Fund and then transfer the property to Johnston County for long-term ownership. The property will become Johnston County's first public nature preserve operated by the county, and will one day provide public access for trails (including the Mountains-to-Sea Trail), a boat launch, and other recreational amenities.
    - Buffalo Creek Conservation Corridor: TLC closed on these ten conservation easements covering 397 acres on March 25th, 2025. These properties are located on Buffalo Creek, just east of Wilson's Mills, and add to an existing block of conserved farmland and working

forests that now total over 2,000 acres. The protection of this land will help to preserve the agricultural heritage of this area, while also protecting water quality in Buffalo Creek and rich wildlife habitat in its floodplain forests.

- Selma MST Connector: TLC closed on this 91-acre property on March 28th, 2025 and immediately transferred it to the Town of Selma to become a future town park and site of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail/East Coast Greenway. This property is located on the Neuse River, just two miles from downtown Selma, and will one day provide a gateway connecting Selma to these regional trail networks. TLC also supported the Town of Selma in applying for a $500,000 grant from the Great Trails State Program, which was awarded and will provide funding for recreational improvements such as a parking lot, trail work, and signage.

- Projects in Process:
  - Lowgrounds Swamp: TLC has a purchase contract and secured funding from the N.C. Land and Water Fund to acquire 602 acres in the Neuse River Lowgrounds, which we expect to close in 2026. This property is along the planned route of the future Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and will preserve a significant area of floodplain along the Neuse River that helps to absorb stormwater during extreme rain events and reduce downstream flooding.



Neuse River Lowgrounds, an extraordinary wilderness of the Southeast. Credit: Triangle Land Conservancy.

  - Neuse Islands: TLC has a purchase contract, some secured funding from Johnston County, and pending proposals with the N.C. Land and Water Fund and REPI to acquire 799 acres in the Neuse River Lowgrounds. This property protects mature forest that is part of the Richardson Bridge Natural Heritage Area, and contains 10 miles of existing trails.
  - Lowgrounds Farmland: TLC met with landowners who own over 1,300 acres of farmland in the Neuse River Lowgrounds, and who are

interested in pursuing conservation easements on many of their properties. TLC intends to pursue these easements in phases, and is in the process of applying for state and federal funding to acquire an easement on a 461-acre farm as a first phase.

- Landowner outreach: TLC staff attended an information session on conservation easements hosted by the Johnston County Soil and Water Conservation District on July 29th. This workshop was attended by over 40 Johnston County landowners, and TLC had a table to hand out information on land conservation options and speak with interested landowners.

Working Lands Trust (WLT)

- Closed McCotter 2 easement: McCotter Promised Land Opportunity Zone (PLOZ) Farm Easement, permanently conserving an additional 1,568 acres of prime farmland and working forest in Pamlico County, making it the second-largest agricultural easement secured in conjunction with state and federal partners. With the previous phase – closed in 2023 – protecting 1,200 acres, the total acreage now safeguarded under the McCotter PLOZ Farm Easement stands at a historic 2,768 acres, making it the largest conglomerate of agricultural conservation easements funded with state and federal funds under one landowner in the history of North Carolina.
- Jenkins Farm closing: This Jones County farm is 199 acres and protects vital agriculture, livestock, timber, and timber resources. It also falls within MCIEAST priority areas.
- In Process: Futral Farm. This 465-acre farm in Onslow County has been extensively managed for forestry resources, contains vital agricultural lands, and is within the MCIEAST/Navy priority area. Expected closing before Sept. 30th.
- In Process: Washington County Agriculture Easement. This is a 1,164-acre easement with a large agricultural operation and is in USAF Priority Zone Tier 1.

Meeting Summaries

Third Quarter: September 10, 2024, 1:30 PM – 2:18 PM

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- Rick Long, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Will Summer, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- David Harris, State Roadside Environmental Engineer, NCDOT

Other Attendees: Doug Taggart, Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Evan Davis, Allison Rodriguez, Mark Pfanstiehl, Steve Woodson, Scott Shoulars, Alisa Davis, Chris Baillie, Mitch Peele, Ryan Manning, Anita Kennedy, Nancy Richardson, Mikey Fulk, Richard Reich, Kelsey Pearce, Cameron Dawson, Bill Edwards, Bill Ross, Tom Potter, Jimmy Johnson, Weston McCorkle, Kevin Johnson, Christian Vose, Edward Oliver, Edward Davis, Neil Oakley, Denise Evans, Will Robinson, and Veronica Jamison.

Reading of Ethics Reminder: Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

The minutes for the June 11 meeting were presented for approval. Rick Long made the motion, and Will Summer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He said that the six current open military contracts with Working Lands Trust total nearly 3,000 acres, five of which are MCIEAST projects, and the other project is an Air Force-partnered easement. He provided the statistics behind the 23 military partnership agricultural conservation easements recorded since July 2016. Twenty Air Force easements and three MCIEAST easements have been recorded in six ENCSL counties, preserving over 13,000 acres. Davis reviewed the easement purchase funding summary for completed military partnership agricultural conservation easements. The total to date of state, REPI and USDA funds plus the amount of landowner donation toward easement purchase value is $28,309,105.57. He reviewed the pre-proposal submitted on April 4 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge 2024 requesting $2 million in grant funding, and the pending Johnston County submission to the Natural Resource Conservation Service for an Air Force-focused RCPP proposal that will ask for $12 million.

Rick Long presented for the N.C. Department of Military Affairs. He spoke on the military defense memorandum of understanding for veterans in the state to help with veterans' services. He mentioned that Doug Taggart with the department is working heavily with state agencies on the defense of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base operations, and Dr. Bailey is working through the MAC. He also spoke on a petroleum leak the EPA is working to control at Buxton Naval Facility. He spoke on the upcoming defense program with no applications in at this time. He spoke on upcoming events including the Saving the Bases event on October 14, the military flight training conference in San Antonio, Texas from October 28 – 30, and Operation Green Light that shows support for service members in the week preceding the Veterans Day holiday on November 11.

Will Summer presented for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He spoke on the North Carolina Land and Water Fund awards that will provide $45 million to protect natural areas, waterways, historic sites and military buffers. He said they are to meet October 1 and 2 to review the funds that are to protect over 13,750 acres for public and recreational uses. He reported on the North Carolina Land and Water Fund grants, which will provide buffers for military installations and training areas, awarding $7.4 million and protecting over 1,350 acres near MCAS Cherry Point, Fort Liberty and Camp Lejeune.

Lisa Davis gave the report for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. She spoke about the Long Leaf Bear Garden, affecting 56 landowners and 481 acres. She mentioned the Green Growth Habitat in Pender County, the French Broad River Partnership, and the ongoing project with Pocosin Lakes Refuge Hydrology Restoration.

Chester Lowder briefly reported on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership by mentioning projects he had been working on before turning it over to Chris Baillie to add more on the Partnership's recent efforts that he said have been working well.

Chris Baillie, interim partnership coordinator, delivered the ENCSL Partnership updates. He presented ENCSL partner accomplishments to date going back to FY2015. Funding committed by all partners totaled $263.7 million, protecting 213,246 acres and enrolling over 1,518,995 acres in cost share. He spoke about a pilot program and the possibility of Sentinel Landscape Committee representatives meeting as a small group prior to the regular quarterly meeting. He presented the program review priority areas – the governance structure, strategic planning, and coordination capacity and resourcing. For the review of the ENCSL Local Coordinating Committee, he discussed the plan review process and timeline, ENCSL LCC meeting coordination, the possibility of additional membership, and the establishment of a workgroup.

David Harris presented for the N.C. Department of Transportation. He said he had nothing to report at this time that would affect anyone in the group.

Cameron Dawson presented the legislative update. He reported on the Farm Act passed on June 27, spoke on House Bill 10, and said the legislature will be back in session on October 9. The law was updated to include N.C. Department of Transportation and N.C. Sentinel Landscapes Partnership as voting members of the NCSLC, the ENCSL Coordinator and a representative from the Department of Defense REPI were added as non-voting ex-officio members, made the Commissioner of Agriculture as chair of the committee, provided the ability to add voting or non-voting members, and gave the committee the ability to add federal agencies or military installations as voting or non-voting members.

David Smith asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Bill Ross said he wanted to say well done to all involved.

Rick Long made the motion to adjourn, and Chester Lowder seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:18 PM.

Fourth Quarter: December 9, 2024, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- Rick Long, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Shannon Deaton attended for Cameron Ingram, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources
- Dewitt Hardee attended for Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

Other Attendees: Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Chris Baillie, Mikey Fulk, Mark Pfanstiehl, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, Cameron Dawson, Allison Rodriguez, Anita Kennedy, Sabrina Shaffer, Evan Davis, Will Summers, Weston McCorkle, Marty Korenek

Reading of Ethics Reminder: Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

The minutes from the September 10, 2024, meeting were presented for approval. Rick Long made the motion, and Cameron Ingram seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He mentioned there are six open military projects at this time, all with Working Lands Trust, totaling nearly 3,000 acres. Five projects are MCIEAST projects, and the other project is an Air Force project. Farmland Preservation Division plans to add one more MCIEAST project in Q1 and intends to close a couple of the MCIEAST projects in late Q1 or early Q2. He provided an update on completed military easements since 2016, which includes preserving over 13,000 acres in six ENCSL counties. Davis also gave an update for the current MOU with the NCMAC and shared that to date $24,209.50 of the $267,339.60 for the year had been spent. Both subgrantees are expected to submit requests for payments shortly to move some more of these funds and continue their efforts in the ENCSL area. Davis announced that NCDA&CS had received a Natural Resource Conservation Service RCPP award for $12.5 million for the Lumber River Basin, as well as announcing that Johnston Soil and Water Conservation District received an award for $15 million. Finally, Davis shared that NCDA&CS submitted a proposal to be a speaker at 2025 Southeast Land Conservation Conference from March 26-28 and has been accepted to present on farmland preservation efforts in North Carolina and the Southeast, and how NCDA&CS collaborates with federal partners and successfully leverages community partnerships and multi-level support.

Rick Long presented for the N.C. Department of Military Affairs. He spoke about transitioning to a new governor and the potential for change in agency head. They recently signed a new Intergovernmental Agreement with DOT. A new NFWF grant was approved, thanks was given to Chris Bailee for his work on that. There is also a new DOD SkillBridge program working with OSHR, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce available. There will be an NCMAC Defense Summit on spouse resilience in Cary from April 28-30.

Jeff Michael presented for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and spoke about the upcoming transition as well. He mentioned Misty Franklin with the National Heritage Foundation has worked on updating the working lands report, as well as working on a climate pollution reduction grant looking at conservation and restoration in four states, including a $10 million expansion of state parks, and lots of other exciting progress being made. He turned it over to Will Summers to present more about the North Carolina Land and Water Fund – in 2024 they awarded $45.4 million in grants with 13,750 acres protected, including 2,900 acres to be added to N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission game lands, 3,400 acres to N.C. State Parks and 5,900 acres in local parks and preserves. They have awarded $17.6 million on over 2,800 acres to protect the military mission near MCAS Cherry Point, Fort Liberty, Camp Lejune and Seymore Johnson Air Force Base. Additionally, the conservation tax credit is coming back and details are being worked out regarding the administrative code and how the program will be run at NCDNCR. At this time, it is not believed to be first-come, first-served, but instead if the request exceeds allotment it will be prorated. The question was asked about how the state credit will work with the federal tax credit, and it is believed that they will stand alone at this time.

Cameron Ingram gave the report for the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, with the update of a new director, Kyle Briggs, who will transition to the role Jan. 1, 2025. They are in Year 3 of the America the Beautiful project and making good progress. As of October 25, there is a new Wildlife Action Plan, and coming in January there will be a new conservation tool that has been worked on by the SE Climate Adaptation staff with an interactive aquatics layer. There has also been an internal assessment of "missed opportunities" with military bases and the commission is looking for ways to make these connections.

Dr. Myron Floyd gave an update for N.C. State University. They are holding a Forestry Landowner Outreach Summit in Duplin County on January 29 at the Cooperative Extension office. The link to sign up will be shared. There is also a landowner webinar on succession planning beginning January 22 and happening every Wednesday until February 19. Hosts include Purdue University, N.C. State University, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, and Southern Rural Development Center. Finally, rapid response proposals related to Helene are being submitted to USDA to help landowners.

Dewitt Hardee was in attendance for Chester Lowder on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He mentioned that there was an additional RCPP grant awarded in the Sentinel Landscape area for $15 million, with $12 million of that for easement acquisition, and that was through partnership with Johnston Soil and Water Conservation, Working Lands Trust, and the Black Family Land Trust. He then turned it over to Chris Baillie to discuss the Partnership's recent efforts.

Chris Baillie gave an update on the ENCSL Partnership. He presented on upcoming meetings, partner updates and administrative items. Two meetings occurred since the last Sentinel Landscape Committee meeting – one in September and another in October to talk about the strategic plan, workgroup developments and a landowner outreach program proposal. Near-term partnership needs and what the coordinator position may look like moving forward were also mentioned. For partner updates, he said there is $100 million in funding available through IRA with a few projects being focused on in North Carolina, including a Croatan National Forest initiative for $5 million: $2.5 million for fire recovery, doubling eligible fire acreage, $1 million for education and public engagement, and $1.5 million for training and capacity building. As previously mentioned, there were 15 USDA NRCS applications for the state of North Carolina and three were awarded, two of those being in the ENCSL area – the NCDA&CS award and the Johnston County award. During the Climate and Conservation Summit hosted by DOD and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, $1.9 million was earmarked for eight pilot ideas and five or six of those were chosen to be piloted in the ENCSL region. Full proposals are due in January for this program. Finally, the 2024 National Coastal Resilience Fund awarded three projects in the ENCSL area for a total of $3.9 million in funding. Working Lands Trust was highlighted as a great partner to the Sentinel Landscape partnership, and WLT Director Mikey Fulk was in attendance to acknowledge the compliment and thanked the partnership for being such a good partner for the land trust.

On the administrative front for the Partnership, Baillie mentioned that it would be good prior to the next meeting to have a morning work session for members to handle some of the administrative items. He targeted early- to mid-February for that meeting and discussions. Jeff Michael spoke up and reminded the group that with the transition to a new governor there may be new faces at the table, so it would be good to give those folks a chance to get up to speed. In the interim, from the Partnership's perspective they really need feedback on the coordinator/coordination team annual workplan, review and approval of the strategic plan (this would require a vote), and input on what kind of workgroups to stand up, with the current thoughts being Communication, Exploratory Legislative Priorities and Working Lands & Strategic Collaborations workgroups.

There was no representative from the N.C. Department of Transportation at this meeting.

Additional business items included filling current vacant ex-officio seats and voting on the strategic plan.

Evan Davis mentioned that Jimmy Johnson retires at the end of the year, has been a great partner to the ENCSL partnership, and will be missed. However, after thanking Davis for the kind words Johnson told the committee that his retirement would be delayed thanks to a paperwork issue, so he would get to stick around a while longer.

David Smith asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Hearing none, Dewitt Hardee made the motion to adjourn, and Rick Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.

First Quarter: February 25, 2025, 1:30 PM – 2:31 PM

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- Rick Long, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Shannon Deaton attended for Kyle Briggs, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- Jeremy Goodwin, State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation

Other Attendees: Corey Hoilman, Chris Baillie, Mikey Fulk, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, Cameron Dawson, Allison Rodriguez, Anita Kennedy, Sabrina Shaffer, Will Summers, Bill Edwards, Dewitt Hardee, Steve Woodson, Tristan Reynolds, Christian Vose, Will Robinson

Online: Carmen Lombardo, Denise Evans, Jaime Simon, Gwen Abernathy, Kevin Johnson, Lisa Shealy, Addie L. Thornton

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Evan is taking parental leave through April 9, and hopes were expressed that he enjoys his time away.

The minutes from the December 9, 2024, meeting were presented for approval. Rick Long made the motion, and Cameron Ingram seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Corey Hoilman presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He mentioned there are six open military projects at this time, all with Working Lands Trust, totaling nearly 3,000 acres. Five projects are MCIEAST projects, and the other project is an Air Force project. He provided an update on completed military easements since 2016, which includes preserving over 13,000 acres in six ENCSL counties. The total spent on all of these projects for easement purchase is just over $28 million. Hoilman also gave an update for the current MOU with the NCMAC and shared that to date $73,472.68 of the $267,339.60 for the year had been spent.

David Smith asked if we should be worried about our federal partnerships moving forward, and those funds being at risk. Rick Long stated that for now they had been advised to continue on with business as usual. Jamie Simon made comments that the REPI program has put forth what an 8% reduction in funding would look like, but said the new Assistant Director is familiar with the program which is encouraging.

Rick Long presented for the N.C. Department of Military Affairs. He discussed trying to get meetings scheduled at the installations to discuss how to set up a new program. For the Military Child of the Year event, the semifinalist event will be held soon and there will be an event on April 25 to celebrate the 11 participants from NC. He said they are working with N.C. DHHS to figure out the best way to get adequate military childcare benefits. He said they are also working to give the incoming secretary, Jocelyn Mitnaul Mallette, a view of all the installations in N.C. Chris Baillie gave a shoutout to Military and Veterans Affairs for their efforts in standing up new programs in N.C., some that are similar to those the VA already has.

Jeff Michael presented for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He highlighted the work of Will Summers and his group with the N.C. Land and Water Fund. He said he wanted to highlight two projects that just closed in ENCSL counties: N.C. Coastal Land Trust's Hoggard's Mill tract in Bertie County and the Weyerhaeuser tract in Carteret County. The deadline for their next application cycle is March 1, he said they look forward

to reviewing new applications, and especially those in the Sentinel Landscape. He said they have a new secretary as well, Pam Cashwell, who is no stranger to state government. He said they are excited to have her, as she already understands a lot of the work they do.

Shannon Deaton gave the report for the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission. Similar to Land and Water, she said they are working with the community and private landowners and trying to meet with them to discuss tax breaks and work on wildlife conservation plans. They have talked with 11 landowners since the last meeting. Two wildlife habitat conservation agreements were put in place in 2024, and they are actively trying to find new interested landowners. She said they are working with the Department of Defense and at least one other group to protect a chub species that is unique to this area. They have also been working with Harnett County with their Green-growth Toolbox to actively working on updating their Wildlife Action Plans which must be updated every 10 years. There will be future endeavors in U.S. Congress for funding. America the Beautiful funds were released the previous Friday, and they have been told they were not part of the funding freeze so year two funds are a go. Personnel-wise, Deaton said they have a new director, Kyle Briggs, who has been with NCWRC for most of his career. He has moved up through the ranks and has been the agency's deputy director for almost a decade, leading to a smooth transition. The division chief for inland fisheries, Christian Waters, was moved into the deputy position in the last few weeks.

No one presented on behalf of N.C. State University.

Chester Lowder presented on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He thanked Dewitt Hardee for standing in for him last meeting, and Steve Woodson for helping to set up the Landscape meeting at the N.C. Farm Bureau main office in January. Chester also mentioned Chris Baillie and all of his work.

Chris Baillie highlighted a few closings with the NCLWF that had been mentioned earlier. The A-P NBS Accelerator Pilot proposal was suggested to rescope the project – funding availability may be reduced so they want to front load things for the FY25 budget. The Nature Conservancy submitted a proposal to the Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund for $2.6 million that would increase knowledge in the communities about prescribed burns, help conduct some prescribed burns, see longleaf habitats enhanced, and longleaf pines planted. They have worked on the resubmission of some FEMA projects along with military installations.

Baillie discussed ENCSL administrative items – on subcommittees, there was discussion about what would be the best use of people's time, and it was settled on two that the committee would like to submit for approval – the Policy and Appropriations Subcommittee and the Communications Subcommittee. A motion to establish those two subcommittees by Chester Lowder and seconded by Jeff Michael. The motion was approved unanimously. Baillie said he will move forward with contacting those interested in serving on those committees.

Baillie said the strategic plan has gone through a few revisions and is in the final version, so he would like to provide that for review prior to the next committee meeting, and then will call for a vote and formally adopt the plan prior to the meeting. Feedback to Baillie will need to be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the meeting. At the last Partnership meeting, there was a recommendation to send the Stein Administration a memo detailing the purpose of this group, and highlighting the accomplishments that have taken place thus far.

Shannon Deaton added there is a proposed SERPAS principals meeting that will be hosted in Raleigh on April 24 and 25, and since there is usually a statement from the governor during that conference it would be good to go ahead and get some information on the group in front of him. David Smith asked Deaton if she could draft a letter with the appropriate talking points.

Jeremy Goodwin presented for the N.C. Department of Transportation. He said he has only recently taken over for David Harris, and having been on the job for about three weeks he's just getting caught up.

No additional business items were presented today.

Will Robinson with the Nature Conservancy said he wanted to thank DNCR and the Department of Agriculture for their work in these spaces, and asked others to please put in good words for the REPI programs as they could. He said Rep. Murphy was leading a bill (HB 1083) that would have an impact on Sentinel Landscapes. It would provide an exclusion from capital gains if you sell the land for REPI purposes, and Robinson said it has good bipartisan support. Senator Budd is leading the efforts on the Senate side.

David Smith mentioned that as farmers are in dire need and times are hard, they are more willing to sell out both land-wise and equipment-wise, and there is very little incentive any longer for the developer to even offer the best price. Chester Lowder gave personal anecdotes as well.

Mikey Fulk gave her thanks to all the partners for their hard work and the partnerships that have been developed. She said that Working Lands Trust is working very closely with the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water, and is now even working with Soil and Water districts at the county level.

David Smith asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Hearing none, Chester Lowder made the motion to adjourn, and Cameron Ingram seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:31 PM.

Second Quarter: June 9, 2025, 1:00 PM – 2:28 PM

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, NCDA&CS
- Rick Long, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Shannon Deaton attended for Kyle Briggs, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

Other Attendees: In-person – Corey Hoilman, Chris Baillie, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, Cameron Dawson, Joe Austin, Veronica Jamison, Anita Kennedy, Reva Orr, Sabrina Shaffer, Ryan Manning, Will Summers, Bill Edwards, Dewitt Hardee, Steve Woodson, Tristan Reynolds, Christian Vose, Ashton Bachman, and Will Robinson; Online – Carmen Lombardo, Jacob Boyd, Denise Evans, Jaime Simon, Gwen Abernathy, Kevin Johnson, Lisa Shealy, Addie L. Thornton

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The minutes from the February 25 meeting were presented for approval. Jeff Michael made the motion, and Rick Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Corey Hoilman presented the report for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He said he was filling in for Division Director Evan Davis who was under the weather. Hoilman reviewed all four open military contracts – Boyd, Futral, Jenkins, and McCotter II –with Working Lands Trust, totaling 3,414.74 acres. He also informed the committee that the two contracts for Small Farm 1 and 2 in Jones County had been withdrawn at the landowner's request. He reviewed recorded military partnership conservation easements since 2016 – 20 USAF easements conserving over 10,900 acres in Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington counties, and three Navy/USMC easements in Jones and Pamlico counties conserving over 2,300 acres. He also presented a summary of the funds from each of the partners that have been used to protect these properties, bringing the total easement value $28,309,105.57, and he broke down spending to date through the MOU with NCMAC.

Rick Long presented for the N.C. Department of Military Affairs. He discussed the possibility of the elimination of the MAC through the state budget process, but said he was hopeful that the funding for the MOU would continue. He said his organization is working

with N.C. DHHS and DOD on a dual licensing process for in-home certified childcare for military employees, with a goal of allowing caregivers to begin providing services quicker.

Jeff Michael presented for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He highlighted the work of Will Summers and his group with the N.C. Land and Water Fund. He reviewed their grant application summary, saying that NCLWF received $132.7 million in requests for 2025 grants. He said 138 applications were received, with 89 of those for land acquisition, 31 for restorations, five for innovative stormwaters, and 13 for planning. He reported that 29 applications are within ENCSL counties, the associated requests total $18.2 million, and would preserve roughly 3,000 acres. Michael said final funding determinations will be made in October. Summer said the division had received over $26 million in funding through personalized license plates sales, and also reported on the upcoming possible House Bill 74 that would give a tax credit for donation of a conservation easement.

Shannon Deaton gave the report for the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission. Similar to Land and Water, she reported on the Recovery and Sustainment Program, including the Bear Garden timber stand improvement project, and said that once crews are done there they will move to the new Stones Creek project. The Holly Shelter Game Land has undergone 470 acres of prescribed burning. Deaton said the operational program staff with NCWRC's Wildlife Management Division continue to work within the ENCSL focal area to expand private lands conservation. From February through May 2025, staff reported meeting 17 private landowners within the ENCSL, and she said this will result in the management of 10,490 acres. She also discussed their ongoing partnership with the N.C. Museum of Natural Science, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, West Liberty University and Georgia Southern University on a multi-state crayfish project to manage the understudied species. She reported on the land acquisition adding 179 acres to Bertie County Game Lands, and adding four tracts adjacent to the Windsor Boating Access area which border the Cashie River that falls in the N.C. Natural Heritage Program Cashie River Area. She also reported on the Angola Bay Game Land in Pender County. This project is onto the second phase, and when finalized it is expected to result in 7,500 acres of peatland restoration. The next plan of action for N.C. Wildlife will be due on September 30, 2025. Deaton said there is a public comment period open till July 5. She also reported on the federal funding matching grants required to create a SWAP and to conduct a 10-year mandatory comprehensive review.

Dr. Myron Floyd gave his report for the NCSU of Natural College Resources. He reported that there is new leadership on campus with the selection of Kevin Howell as the new chancellor, effective May 5. Floyd said Howell brings two decades of leadership to the role. Floyd also reported that Natural Resources just launched their Climate and Sustainability Academy, and that N.C. State will be facing a $14.8 million reduction in federal research grant funding.

Chester Lowder presented on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He reported on an ecosystem tax rollback tied to the loss of lands in the Piedmont region near interstate highways. He reported on a cost-share program meeting with 170 landowners in attendance, and also recognized Chris Baillie for all of his collaboration work and getting the committee together.

Chris Baillie presented his ENCSL updates. He reported on grant proposals submitted, near-term submissions and the near-term priorities. He said there are six active proposals currently. He reported on a project between N.C. State and the City of Goldsboro, and on a submission from Camp Lejeune, MCAS New River, Onslow County and the City of Jacksonville, hopefully to receive funding in September. He reported on administrative items within the ENCSL, including the strategic plan draft and the next REPI Challenge deadline approaching on July 3. Baillie said that the top priority is Avon Park. He also said he wants to start quarterly N.C. Sentinel Landscapes meetings, and he hopes to host virtual sessions to get quarterly reports and updates.

Jeremy Goodwin with the N.C. Department of Transportation was not present.

Reva Orr with Working Lands Trust made a presentation about her organization. Founded in 2013, WLT is a non -profit 501(c)(3) with a mission to conserve working lands throughout the state, with a focus on preserving N.C. farms and forests and helping with military readiness projects. They are currently in partnership with NCDA&CS, USDA and the military on numerous active projects. She reported that since their founding they have preserved 17,489 acres on 33 properties.

Jacob Boyd, the Director of the N.C. Coastal Federation, gave a presentation to the group. He gave an overview of the Salt Marsh Program, which aims to improve coastal health with focuses on salt marshes, oyster health, water quality and marine debris. He reported the Salt Marsh Program broke up into N.C. Salt March Action Plan, South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative Living Shorelines and the Blue Carbon Initiative. He said the main goal is to minimize the loss of acreage through 2050 and beyond. He spoke on some Living Shoreline projects for 2025. He reported that the MCAS Cherry Point shoreline was completed in March. He also spoke about the initial shoreline along MCAS New River and Camp Lejeune, and the dredge spoil island adjacent to Bogue Airfield. Boyd said all are ENCSL priority geographies to help build community and improve our ecosystem. He also reported on the EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, which will fund $421 million to fight carbon emissions and enhanced carbon. The area affected includes North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. He reported that the N.C. Coastal Federation has awarded $30 million to restore and protect carbon coastal habitats.

David Smith asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Hearing none, Chester Lowder made the motion to adjourn, and Dr. Myron Floyd seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 PM.

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