NORTH CAROLINA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE



2026 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

September 1, 2026

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. Melissa Pasquinelli
Representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership – Chester Lowder
State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation – Jeremy Goodwin

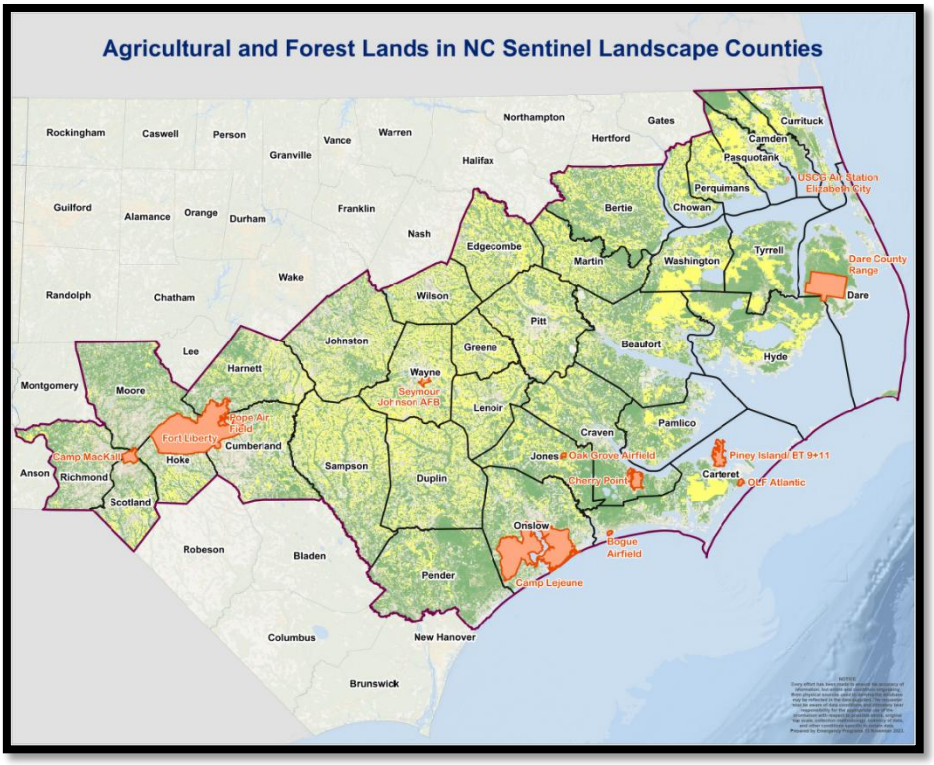
Pursuant to Section 3.19.(f) of Senate Bill 131 / S.L. 2017-10 … The Committee shall report on its activities conducted to implement this section, including any findings, recommendations, and legislative proposals, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission and the Agriculture and Forestry Awareness 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 20 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. Melissa Pasquinelli	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 Ex Officio Members	
Dr. Chris Baillie	Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Coordinator
Jaime Simon	United States Department of War Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program
Denise Evans	Seymour Johnson Air Force Base
Martin Korenek	Marine Corps Installations East

North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Support Staff from NCDA&CS	
David Smith	Chief Deputy Commissioner
Joe Austin	Southeastern Regional Farmland Preservation Field Staff
Edward Davis	South Central Regional Farmland Preservation Field Staff
Evan Davis	Farmland Preservation Director
Aubrey Hilton	Farmland Preservation Specialist
Corey Hoilman	Farmland Preservation Assistant Director
Veronica Jamison	Farmland Preservation Office Manager
Anita Kennedy	Farmland Preservation Coordinator
Jonathan Lanier	General Counsel
Janine McLawhorn	Farmland Preservation Paralegal
Weston McCorkle	Agricultural Programs Specialist
Michael Partin	North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Coordinator
Kelsey Pearce	Farmland Preservation Grant Specialist
Mark Pfanstiehl	Paralegal
Nancy Richardson	Farmland Preservation Paralegal Assistant
Allison Rodriguez	Farmland Preservation Budget Administrator
Sabrina Shaffer	Farmland Preservation Monitoring and Stewardship Coordinator
Laura Stewart	Farmland Preservation Specialist
Rodney Woolard	Northeastern Regional Farmland Preservation Field Staff

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	12,037.524	21	Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington
USN/MCIEAST	4,447.291	8	Pamlico, Onslow, Jones
Total	**16,484.815**	**29**	**7**

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).

Funding from the NCMAC supports a North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee Coordinator, who serves as the primary liaison and facilitator for the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee. The NCSLC Committee Coordinator connects diverse stakeholders, including military installations, government agencies, nonprofits, community organizations, private landowners, and representatives from commodity and interest groups.

Priority Parcels in the ENCSL

The ADFPTF has worked 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.

Outreach efforts from the WLT and the NCFSWC have also built a pipeline of interested landowners in the ENCSL.

At the time of publication, two partnership projects on privately owned farms and forests are under development.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Report

Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP)

During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, agency staff successfully applied prescribed fire to 3,201 acres within the Bear Garden property and Angola Bay Restoration site in Pender County. Staff have managed 197 acres within the Bear Garden property and Angola Bay Restoration site. One of the final timber sales on the Bear Garden property has been sold, including 211 acres of clearcut and 45 acres of thinning. Stones Creek Game Land in Onslow County was managed with 190 acres of mechanical timber stand improvement and 25 acres of prescribed fire.

The Angola Bay restoration project is in the final stages of completion, and 128 acres of longleaf pine was planted within the Bear Garden property. Roughly 90 acres were sprayed in preparation for planting native vegetation for winter season and 100 acres were planted in native understory species later in the fiscal year.

Additionally, RASP staff hosted the annual NFWF field tour to showcase the progress of both the Bear Garden and Stones Creek projects. NCWRC and The Nature Conservancy also hosted the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Cultural and Natural Resources for a field visit at the Angola Bay Restoration Site to showcase the project and discuss implementing similar projects in the future.

Technical Guidance

Agency staff continue to work within the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL) focal area to expand private lands conservation. During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, staff reported meetings with 49 private landowners within the ENCSL focal area. These site visits resulted in management guidance being provided for 4,112 acres. This guidance targets the enhancement of habitat for various Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Staff also assisted with coordinating outreach events, hosting around 85 participants and encouraging land stewardship within the ENCSL.

County	Number of Site Visits	Acres Impacted
Sampson	14	745
Johnston	14	1,048
Wilson	2	177
Bertie	2	400
Moore	2	90
Duplin	1	2
Edgecombe	1	385
Harnett	8	893
Scotland	3	152

Wayne	2	220
Total	**49**	**4,112**

Fieldwork with Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Numerous projects were conducted within ENCSL related to Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). The goal of these efforts is to ensure that populations of SGCN are conserved, and populations remain viable, preventing these species from being listed on the Federal endangered species list. Most of this work occurs within the ENCSL footprint, with additional work being completed in adjacent counties. Some of these projects have included amphibian and reptile surveys and monitoring, gopher frog headstart program partnering with the N.C. Zoo and N.C. Aquariums, the North Carolina Bird Atlas, waterbird surveys and monitoring for wood stork, piping plover, black rail, and other shorebirds, sea turtle nest monitoring, and the N.C. Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network.

Rare Coastal Fishes Surveys – Field surveys took place within Cumberland and Sampson counties to target Broadtail Madtoms, an undescribed species of catfish, through kick seining followed by seine hauls and dip netting. This technique allows us to target a range of species at each site, including Ironcolor Shiner, Taillight Shiner, Bluespotted Sunfish, Banded Sunfish, Blackbanded Sunfish, and Thinlip Chub. We were unsuccessful in collecting Broadtail Madtoms, but several of the other SGCN species were detected (Ironcolor Shiner, Taillight Shiner, and Thinlip Chub). The consistent presence and abundance of Ironcolor Shiner throughout these surveys is promising as this species had been absent or rare in nearly all recent surveys in the Cape Fear River Basin.



Figure 1. Thinlip Chub (*Cyprinella leptocheilus*; Top) and Taillight Shiner (*Notropis maculatus*; Bottom) from the South River. Photo credit: Langston Rimmer.

Coastal Crayfish Surveys – Funding for this project supports a multistate project to characterize crayfish distributions through the coastal plain of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia where focused survey efforts have not previously occurred. The project is meant to increase our knowledge about known species distributions and cryptic species found in the ENCSL. North Carolina surveys were conducted in the vicinity of New Bern to target coastal crayfish and several species were detected including, Croatan

Crayfish, White River Crayfish, invasive Red Swamp Crayfish, and the Devil Crayfish. This work expanded the narrow range for the Croatan Crayfish into a new HUC 10.

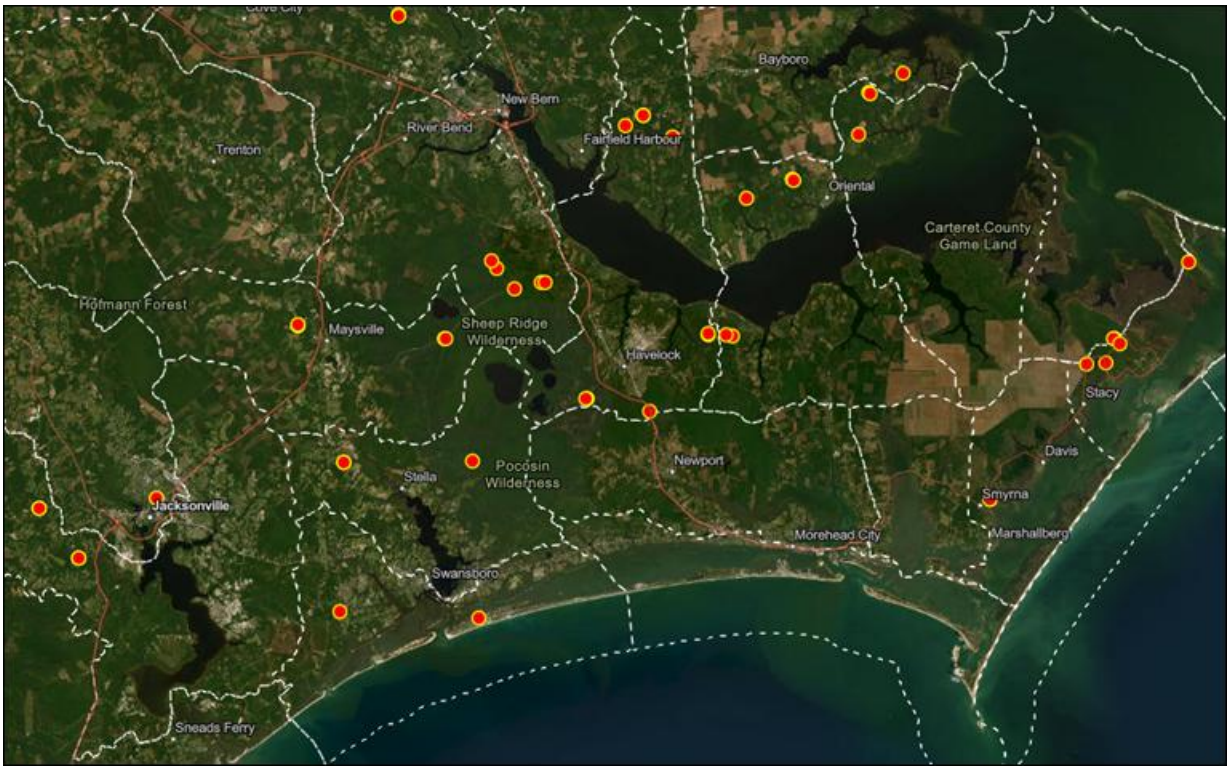


Figure 2 - Newly sampled crayfish locations in the Coastal Plain



Figure 3 - Croatan Crayfish (Procambarus plumimanus)

Aquatic Organism Passage Assessment

Through the work of a new 3-year time-limited biologist, a multi-year funded project is aimed at assessing barriers to aquatic organism passage in streams across eastern N.C. USFWS funding is supporting field assessments of culverts for aquatic organism passage in the Tar and Neuse river basins. Each culvert is photographed and assessed using a standardized scoring protocol developed by the Southeastern Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) and all data is uploaded into a larger SARP database. These data will help inform where barriers to both flow and animal passage are present on the landscape, which will in turn assist in identifying areas for remediation.

Since the start of culvert assessment work, 105 culverts have been assessed within six counties. Four Significant Barriers and two Severe Barriers were identified according to SARP's classification criteria (Figure 1).

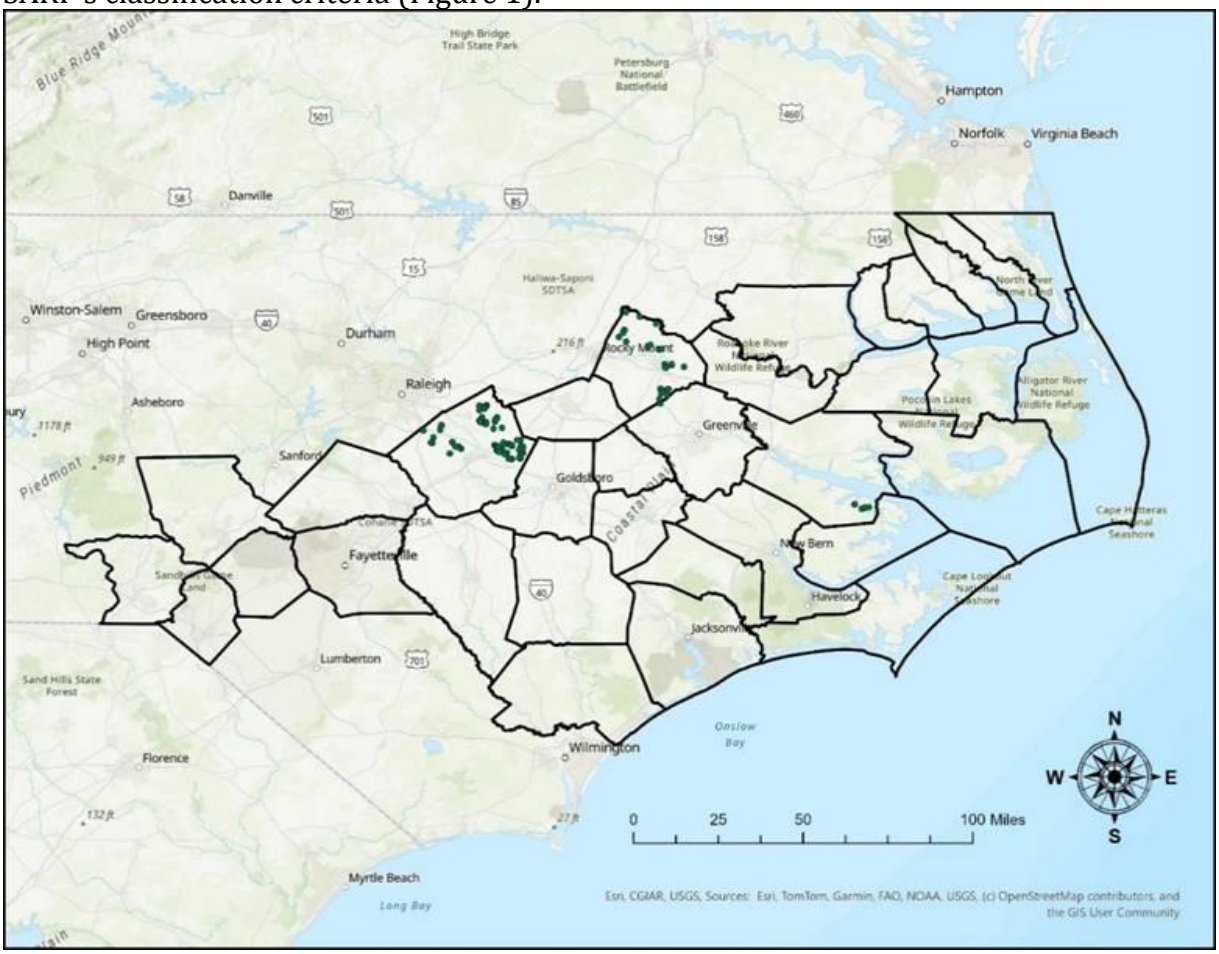


Figure 1. 90 culvert assessments within the ENCSL.


Figure 3. A perched box culvert in Johnston County.

Future work within the ENCSL will involve culvert assessments at both freshwater inland and tidal stream systems. Significant field time is planned for much of 2026 to visit road crossings of streams in the coastal plain, which will include work within the tidal systems. Funding for this project will extend into 2027 and receives support from the NFWF Coastal Resilience Program and Bipartisan Infrastructure federal funds focused on longleaf ecosystems across the Southeast Sentinel landscapes.

America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) Longleaf Pine Habitat Grant

NCWRC received a 4-year AERI grant for habitat restoration within Southeast Sentinel Landscapes (NC, GA, SC, FL) to benefit Reginal SGCN in coordination with SERPPAS (Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability) and SECAS (Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy). The funding supports restoration of RSGCN habitat across 4 southeast states through prescribed burns on public and private property, management and native understory plantings to improve habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species on 42,290 acres of longleaf pine habitat, and aquatic barrier assessments for passage.
This project is in the 2nd year of implementation, but compliance has just been finalized for all four (4) states. In North Carolina six (6) private landowners have expressed interest in having their tract enhanced with native understory plantings.

Land Acquisition

Four tracts of land have been acquired for wildlife conservation in four counties within ENCSL.

County	Tract	Acres
Beaufort	Mayo	95.5
Craven	Greens Thoroughfare	346.0
Camden	Plum Creek	300.0
Scotland	Jordan Timber	2,018.7

Green Growth Toolbox

A Green Growth Toolbox workshop was hosted in Greenville with 15 attendees. Workshops are tailored to support local government planning staff in conservation-based land use planning. Participants were introduced to conservation priorities of the coast, trained on conservation data resources, and provided examples of how conservation priorities can be integrated into their planning work. The workshop also included a field trip to the Tar River.

N.C. Wildlife Action Plan

NCWRC is responsible for facilitating and implementing the N.C. Wildlife Action Plan, a comprehensive wildlife resource conservation blueprint. A 10-year comprehensive revision was submitted of the 2025 N.C. State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in September 2025 and received approval in January 2026. The Plan identifies fish, wildlife and plant SGCN, as well as research and management priorities for other species.

- A draft 2025 Plan was circulated for public comment in June 2025 to media, partners, and the public. A summary of these comments will be included in Appendix 8 of the Plan.
- The agency received supporting letters of the SWAP from stakeholders such as Southern Environmental Law Center, N.C. Conservation Network, and the Pew Charitable Trust.
- The Plan identifies fish, wildlife and plant SGCN, as well as research and management priorities for other species. The draft 2025 Plan has 435 SGCN which is a slight drop from the 2015 Plan with 483 SGCN, which spotlights the work and effort toward wildlife conservation work over the last 10 years. Land snails are a new addition to the Plan.
- The 2025 SWAP describes 7 different conservation success stories to highlight implementation activities since 2015. These projects include activities related to Wood Stork downlisting, Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel, Magnificent Ramshorn, Gopher Frogs, Conservation Aquatic Center at Marion, NC, recovery of the Roanoke Logperch, and the implementation of a programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA)

and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for 21 aquatic species.

- NCWRC worked with the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) staff to update the Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) geodatabase for the 2025 SWAP. The analysis blends known population occurrences for species tracked by the N.C. Natural Heritage Program with ESRI spatial data for intact habitat cores and uses it to identify areas where conservation efforts will benefit the most species. NCWRC will be releasing spatial data sets for the COAs for each of the four ecoregions described in the SWAP.
- An online search tool that helps users find SWAP priority actions will be updated. The query function searches for survey, monitoring, research, management action, and program and partnership recommendations that are a priority for SGCN, habitats, and 11 threat categories described in the SWAP.

N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Report

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 (ENCSL) 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 265,000 acres of iconic landscape within North Carolina's 35 state parks, 25 state natural areas, 4 state recreation areas and 15 state trails. 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.

In May 2026, NCDPR added 334 acres of land to Raven Rock State Park in Harnett County. This acquisition was the second of three phases to add 752 total acres to the park. Acquisition of this property protects water quality along high-quality streams in an area at a high risk of development.

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 2025-August 2026)

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 2025, NCLWF awarded $7,832,529 to purchase property in fee or conservation easements on 2,031 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
Richmond	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	NCWRC - Shutt Tract - Rocky Ford Branch	US Army Fort Bragg	118	$187,100
Harnett	N.C. Div of Parks and Recreation	NCDPR - Mill Creek - Raven Rock State Park		334	$1,890,306
Onslow	N.C. Coastal Federation	NCCF - Turkey Creek Riparian Buffer	USMC Camp Lejeune	101	$112,615
Onslow	The Nature Conservancy	TNC - Thomas Tract - Horse Swamp	USMC Camp Lejeune	33	$69,554
Dare	Kill Devil Hills - Town of	Kill Devil Hills - Fresh Pond - Nags Head Woods		45	$1,570,735
Johnston	Triangle Land Conservancy	TLC - Neuse Islands Wilderness	USAF Seymour Johnson	799	$2,602,555
Carteret	N.C. Coastal Federation	NCCF - North River Headwaters	MCAS Cherry Point	268	$638,998
Pender	The Nature Conservancy	TNC - Saus Tract - Holly Shelter	USMC Camp Lejeune	218	$494,507
Pender	The Nature Conservancy	TNC - King Tract - Holly Shelter	USMC Camp Lejeune	115	$266,159
			Totals	**2,031**	**$7,832,529**

Natural Heritage Program Sentinel Landscapes Report (September 2025-August 2026)

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. One new Dedicated Nature Preserve and two expanded Dedicated Nature Preserves added 3,574 acres of permanently protected land within the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape from September 2025 - August 2026. There are no new registered heritage areas to report for this time period. The table below shows the new or expanded Dedicated 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 (108 acres added to 6,215-acre nature preserve).
Moore	Eastwood Plant Conservation Preserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Dedicated Nature Preserve amended (54 acres added to 441-acre nature preserve).
Bladen, Pender, Sampson	Black River Preserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	The Nature Conservancy	New Dedicated Nature Preserve (3,412 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 2025 - August 2026. Around 33,694 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, and supplemental funding support for field surveys was provided by Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and The Nature Conservancy.

County	**Natural Area**	**Partner Agency**
Beaufort	Brice Creek/Trent River	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bertie	Cashie River Swamp	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Carteret	Wards Creek Brackish Marsh	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	North River Brackish Marsh	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	Cedar Point/White Oak River Marshes	U.S. Forest Service
Carteret	Atlantic Natural Area	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	Back Creek Marshes	N.C. Coastal Land Trust
Carteret	Wards Creek Brackish Marsh	N.C. Coastal Federation
Carteret	Pettiford Creek Open Flatwoods	U.S. Forest Service
Cumberland/Harnett	Long Valley Farm Natural Area	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Cumberland	Godwin Cape Fear River Bluffs	DNCR Division of Historic Properties
Cumberland	Cape Fear Botanical Garden	City of Fayetteville, Cape Fear Botanical Garden, N.C. Land and Water Fund
Currituck	Pine Island	National Audubon Society
Currituck	Currituck Banks/Swan Island Natural Area	Currituck Wild Horse Fund
Currituck	Currituck Banks/Swan Island Natural Area	Currituck Wild Horse Fund
Dare	Gull Island	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Dare	Kitty Hawk Woods	N.C. Division of Coastal Management, Town of Kitty Hawk Woods
Harnett	Raven Rock State Park	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Hoke	Antioch Bay	The Nature Conservancy
Hyde	Swanquarter/Gull Rock Wetlands	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Hyde	Swanquarter/Gull Rock Wetlands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Johnston	Neuse River (Clayton) Forests	Triangle Land Conservancy
Johnston	Mill Creek Aquatic Habitat	Triangle Land Conservancy
Johnston	Lone Oak Farm - Mill Creek	Triangle Land Conservancy
Johnston	Neuse River Lowgrounds	Triangle Land Conservancy

Moore	Paint Hill	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Nash	Crooked Swamp	Tar River Land Conservancy
Onslow	Huggins/Dudley Island	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Onslow	Camp Lejeune Longleaf Pine Registered Heritage Area	MCB Camp Lejeune
Pamlico	Cabin Creek Headwaters - Bay River	N.C. Coastal Federation
Pender	South Topsail	N.C. Division of Coastal Management
Pender	Northeast Cape Fear River Corridor	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Pender	Lower Black River Swamp	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Pender	Black River Cypress Swamp	Resource Management Service, LLC
Pender	Shaken Creek Preserve	The Nature Conservancy
Pender	Holly Shelter Game Land	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Richmond	Tater Hole/Three Creeks	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Richmond	Rocky Fork Seep	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Sampson	Northwest Garland Sandhills and Wetlands	N.C. Department of Transportation
Scotland	Sandhills Game Land	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Scotland	Aberdeen Road Sandhills	The Nature Conservancy
Washington	Pettigrew State Park	N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation

ATLANTIC CONSERVATION COALITION

The Atlantic Conservation Coalition is a partnership of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and The Nature Conservancy to protect and restore vital coastal habitats, peatlands, and forests. The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

serves as the lead on this $421 million U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, which will fund 24 nature-based solutions projects, covering multiple sites each, on natural and working lands through September 2029. In North Carolina, the majority of the peatland restoration, coastal habitat, and forest management projects will take place within the Eastern Sentinel Landscape geography. From September 2025-September 2026, there were 17 North Carolina sites in the ENCSL geography in the project pipeline. DNCR expects to report more project specifics in the 2027 Sentinel Landscape report.

N.C. State University College of Natural Resources Report

Industry and Economic Development

N.C. State University's College of Natural Resources plays a vital role in fortifying North Carolina's economy and safeguarding its key industries through targeted research, workforce development, and land stewardship. The following efforts highlight some of the work being carried out in support of industry and economic development:

- **Ecosystem Restoration and Wildland Fire:** This effort advances regional ecosystem restoration across the Eastern Innovation Landscape Network using Terrestrial LiDAR Scanning to evaluate forest structures and habitat viability. It directly empowers private landowners by supporting seven Prescribed Burn Associations and addresses critical wildland fire capacity needs by qualifying students as wildland firefighters.
- **Geospatial Analytics and Military Readiness:** The Geospatial Analytics & Military Readiness Initiative combines spatial modeling with specialized workforce development, delivering MGIST training to a student body that includes 20% military personnel and veterans. It supports regional defense and land stewardship by mapping urban encroachment risks, modeling pest and disease spread, and translating complex spatial data into collaborative planning sessions for stakeholders.

Education, Training, and Outreach

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

- **Heirs' Property Education:** Conducted 7 workshops for 280 participants on clearing land titles and preventing involuntary loss. 75% of participants indicated they would begin formulating a plan for their property following the training.
- **Succession Planning:** Reached roughly 1,300 participants through 13 intensive workshops. A key succession planning workbook was translated into Spanish to better serve the community.
- **Timber Tax Education:** Achieved a 100% knowledge gain in timber tax workshops, ensuring landowners are financially prepared to manage high-impact programs like Present Use Value (PUV).
- **Forest Management Education:** Leveraged $93,000 in Renewable Resources Extension Act capacity funds and $31,262 in external resources to deliver 14 educational programs and a digital outreach campaign reaching 1.3 million contacts. Resulted in 126 landowners adopting improved management practices across 8,411 acres, optimized stewardship on 7,807 forestland acres, and supported five regional forest-based businesses.
- **Workforce Development & Youth Education:** Trained over 350 educators, with 98% reporting increased confidence in teaching environmental topics and a

readiness to use Project Learning Tree (PLT) materials. Added 28 new facilitators to the PLT network—75% of whom serve high-need areas east of I-95 and west of I-77.

- **Regional Workforce Initiatives:** Established the Outer Banks Workforce Network to address housing and childcare challenges in tourism-dependent regions. The 2025 Outer Banks Workforce Summit, featuring Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, provided a platform for 72 local leaders and workers to address regional economic hurdles.
- **Environmental Protection & Disaster Resilience Education:** Certified 55 new wildland firefighters (FFT2) and expanded regional fire capacity through a $3.5 million grant. Implemented prescribed burns across 939 acres and coordinated 40+ Prescribed Burn Associations to mitigate wildfire risks.
- **Forest Health Education and Outreach:** Proactively addressed biological threats through statewide surveillance and restoration, including the removal of invasive Callery pears and the distribution of 1,200 native trees across six counties. Mobilized thousands of "citizen scientists" through the "Poolside Pests" digital platform and professional scouting guides, ensuring rapid response to emerging threats like the elm zigzag sawfly.

Research and Innovation

The CNR research portfolio saw a 32% increase in the number of new proposals submitted, but a 14% decrease in the number of new awards and a 15% decrease in the average award amount over the past year. Despite this modest decline, CNR saw success in some major new awards, including:

- **$3,097,193:** Increasing Prescribed Fire Capacity, Training, and Use Across the Southern Region
- **$1,481,250:** FIRE-MODEL: Impacts of rapid shifts of moisture availability on regional landscapes, forest hydrology and flammability
- **$514,122:** Planning silvicultural treatments for landscape-level oak management following Hurricane Helene in the southern Appalachians
- **$467,918:** Geospatial Analysis of Disaster Impacts on Rural Economies and Communities
- **$299,940:** Evaluating the Impacts of the Forest Legacy Program on the Conservation of Economically Important Working Forests in the United States
- **$195,959:** EASTERN FIRE-NET: Frontiers in Understanding Novel Fire Systems in the Eastern US
- **$131,618:** Southern Forest Sector Outlook under Changing Market Dynamics and Risks

Academic Programs

- The CNR academic program experienced a **4.5% 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 **37% increase in enrollments,** despite leadership change mid-year.
- The Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) continues to invest in collaborative research and newly instituted micro-credentialing for participants. **Twenty four micro-credentials were awarded** in Summer 2026.
- Assisted in the **creation of Wolfpack Connect, a guaranteed transfer program** into select majors from North Carolina Community Colleges. CNR currently will be onboarding 9 N.C. residents into this program.
- CNR had **185 undergraduate students travel abroad** for academic, volunteer, or professional development opportunities across Fall, Spring, and Summer terms.

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.

- **Economic Contribution of the Forest Sector in North Carolina, 2024.** This factsheet details the $42 billion economic impact of North Carolina's forest sector in 2024, analyzing its overall contributions to statewide employment, labor income, gross state product, total industry output, and tax revenue.
- **Management Plans: A Planning Guide for Landowners.** This publication helps landowners and others understand the process of developing a management plan and guides them through a step-by-step process that helps in developing the beginning framework of a sound management plan for their woodlands.
- **Using Fire to Improve Wildlife Habitat.** This publication explains how prescribed fire benefits wildlife habitat and forest ecology across North Carolina, highlighting its impact on native plant and animal species, wildfire risk reduction, and management strategies for private landowners.
- **Common Insect Pests of Elm in North Carolina.** This factsheet highlights the most common insect pests of elm in North Carolina, their identification and biology, and management options to help homeowners, arborists, and land managers protect these important trees.
- **Four Lessons to Build Resilience in Agritourism.** This publication outlines four key strategies learned from North Carolina farm operators to help agritourism operations build resilience against major disruptions.

Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report



PERMANENTLY CONSERVED LONGLEAF PINE SAVANNA ON THE DP TROUTMAN LONGLEAF FARM BORDERING CAMP MACKALL, NC SANDHILLS.
IMAGE CREDIT: THREE RIVERS LAND TRUST

About the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership

Established through a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of War (DoW), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. 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 range 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 Partnership reduces internal resource constraints and magnifies the impact of taxpayer dollars.

Administered by a Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC) composed of leadership from all participating agencies; the 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. The FCC designates sentinel landscapes where an established local partnership has demonstrated its alignment with, and readiness to advance, the Partnership's goals.

The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape

The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL) received its designation from 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), charged with 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 ENCSL Partnership have worked collaboratively to conserve hundreds of thousands of acres through easement or acquisition, enroll more than two million acres in voluntary landowner assistance programming, and advance countless initiatives to further Sentinel Landscapes priorities.

2026 ENCSL Partnership: Impact by the Numbers

Funding committed, acreage protected, and acreage enrolled

$41.6M **FUNDING COMMITTED OR SECURED** *DoW & USDA data not yet included*	**15,145** **ACRES PROTECTED** *via acquisition or easement*	**38,086** **ACRES ENROLLED** *in cost-share assistance*

The ENCSL Partnership is one of a growing number of Sentinel Landscape partnerships nationwide, all of which report annual progress through a shared data call that tracks funding committed, acres protected, and acres enrolled. In May 2026, ENCSL completed its FY2025 submission. Partners committed or secured **$22.8 million in state funding, $10.9 million in private funding, $1.5 million in local government funding, and $6.4 million in U.S. Department of the Interior funding** (Fig. 1), together totaling $41.6 million. These were the highest levels of private, local, and Interior funding recorded since the Partnership's inception.

U.S. Department of War and U.S. Department of Agriculture partners have not yet finalized their FY2025 funding contributions and acreage data; once included, FY2025 will almost certainly stand as the Partnership's strongest funding year to date.

Partnership organizations also directly engaged **over 175,000 landowners** through landowner outreach events in FY2025. These accomplishments bring the Partnership's cumulative totals since its 2016 designation to **$366 million in funding committed or secured and 251,015 acres protected.**

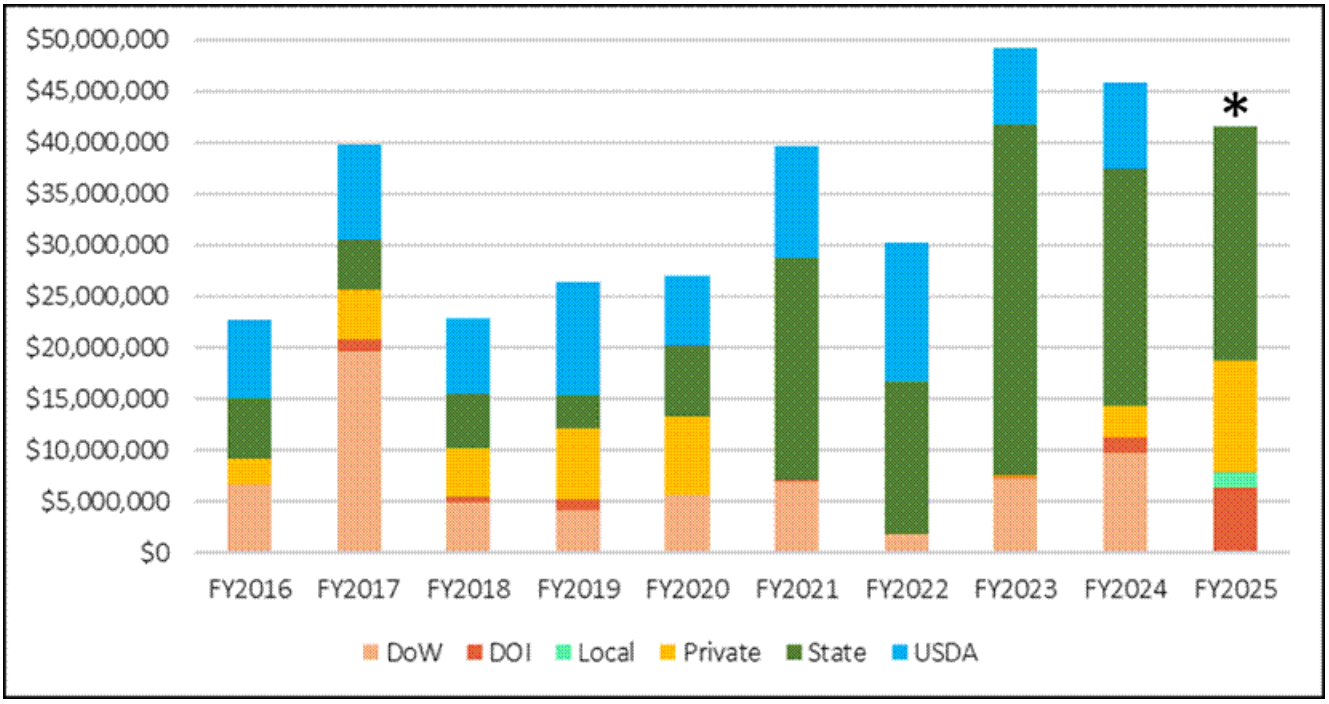


*Figure 1. Committed fiscal-year funding by ENCSL Partnership contributing organizations. *DoW and USDA data for FY2025 is not incorporated. Source: Sentinel Landscapes Partnership*

Partnership Operations

ENCSL Partnership Meetings

The Partnership convened four quarterly meetings during the reporting period, on September 24, 2025; December 10, 2025; April 22, 2026; and July 22, 2026,drawing a combined 104 partner participants from across the full breadth of the partnership: the four anchor military installations (Fort Bragg, Seymour Johnson AFB, MCB Camp Lejeune / MCI East, and MCAS Cherry Point), state and federal agencies (NCDA&CS, NC DNCR, NCWRC, N.C. DMVA, N..C Forest Service, USDA-NRCS, and USFWS), academic institutions (N.C. State University's CENREP and Texas A&M's Natural Resources Institute), and non-governmental partners (The Nature Conservancy, Working Lands Trust, Triangle Land Conservancy, N.C. Coastal Land Trust, North Carolina Coastal Federation, N.C. Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation, Environmental Defense Fund, N.C. Grange, N.C. Farm Bureau, Three Rivers Land Trust).

Standardized Meeting Record

Meeting	Participants	Format	Primary Topics Covered
Sept. 24, 2025	32	Hybrid (in-person + call-in)	Strategic Plan approval; Texas A&M web-mapping tools; NRCS WRE/ALE funding decision memo; coordination-capacity expansion; leveraging the NC Sentinel Landscape Committee
Dec. 10, 2025	18	Virtual	Program-review accomplishments & governance; partner project updates; Atlantic Conservation Coalition ($421M grant); funding briefings (LLSF, SERDP, RCPP, NCRF, DOI); committee reporting; coordinator leave planning
April 22, 2026	29	Hybrid (Raleigh + virtual)	FY2024 data-call results; NRCS/WRE & RCPP updates; Farmland Preservation Advocacy Day; Conservation Tax Credit; land-use/downzoning policy; Resilience Specialist hiring; DCIP; partner project updates
July 22, 2026	25	Hybrid (in-person + call-in)	Resilience Specialist & state Coordinator hires; funding-to-closing lag & Landmark tracking tool; land-use policy series; Advocacy Day outcomes; RCPP check-in; resilience work-plan scoping; NRCS updates

Coordination Team Expansion

In June 2026, LegacyWorks Group, the formal support organization of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership, hired **Dr. Faren Wolter** to serve as the Resilience Specialist for the ENCSL Partnership. In this role, Faren will support the Partnership's partners and collaborators to conceptualize and implement projects and initiatives that enhance the

resiliency of the ENCSL's anchor military installations, defense-supporting communities, working-land economies, and natural resources.

With more than 20 years of experience advancing place-based resilience and landscape-scale conservation through partnership development, strategic planning, collaborative facilitation, and cross-sector coordination, Faren's expertise is particularly well suited to help advance the Partnership's vision for the landscape. Her demonstrated ability to align diverse partners around shared goals and translate ecological and social information into actionable strategies positions her to strengthen coordination, build capacity, and move priorities from planning to implementation.

Project Category Definitions

How the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership classifies each project.

	**Sentinel Supported** The Sentinel Landscape coordination team is involved in proposal drafting and reviewing. Additionally, the project may have been given additional consideration under Section 2693 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, whereby the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior, and the heads of other Federal agencies which become full partners in the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership are encouraged to give any owners and managers of land within a designated sentinel landscape "priority consideration for participation in any easement, grant, or assistance program administered by that Secretary."

	**Sentinel Endorsed** Endorsement or general coordination support, including letters of support. These are projects for which the partnership did not directly help pursue or write a proposal.

	**Sentinel Mission Aligned** Activities and accomplishments that partners are doing within the landscape to advance the ENCSL Partnership mission, but that occur without any direct Sentinel Landscape involvement.

Partner Project Highlights

Organized by service-specific priority geography

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

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Sandhills Stream Flow & Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Studies —** Funded in part by a 2022 Department of War (DoW) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Challenge grant, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) completed two studies in the Sandhills. The first, a stream-flow study, aimed to identify root causes of declining base flows in Drowning Creek, which supplies drinking water to the Town of Southern Pines, and factors contributing to flood events in the Lower Little River, which flows through or adjacent to the entire length of Fort Bragg and near Pope Army Airfield. The second study examined long-term trends in red-cockaded woodpecker nesting success in the Sandhills.

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **2026 SERPPAS Principals Meeting —** The 2026 Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) Principals Meeting, held April 27–29, 2026, in Pinehurst, North Carolina, brought the partnership directly into the Sandhills landscape near Fort Bragg, offering a powerful opportunity to see SERPPAS's mission in action and celebrate the partnership's 20th anniversary. Highlighting the ENCSL Partnership, the meeting showcased how North Carolina's military, conservation, state, federal, academic, and private-sector partners are working together to address encroachment, protect working lands, manage fire and species, and sustain military readiness around Fort Bragg. The meeting also affirmed the 2026 Strategic Plan, strengthened relationships among regional partners, increased understanding of emerging challenges such as declining forest-product markets and landscape connectivity, and identified opportunities for SERPPAS to advance regional solutions — helping set a clear direction for the partnership's next 20 years.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund, Phase VIII —** TNC received a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund (LLSF) grant to implement Phase VIII of a comprehensive longleaf restoration initiative spanning more than 300,000 acres across the N.C. Sandhills landscape, anchored by Fort Bragg and Sandhills Game Land. The project will establish a seasonal fire crew to conduct controlled burns across TNC, N..C Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. State Parks, Three Rivers Land Trust, and Fayetteville Public Works properties; plant longleaf pine and thin stands with minor longleaf components on 2,205 acres; restore six isolated wetlands and

100 acres of bottomland hardwood habitat; control invasive species and midstory hardwoods; and provide technical support to private landowners through cost-share programs. A distinctive feature is capacity building within the Lumbee Indian community through habitat improvements on tribal lands, technical assistance to Lumbee landowners, and community outreach. TNC's eighth LLSF grant builds on more than 14 years of successful implementation and strong partnerships, positioning the project to benefit globally significant populations of red-cockaded woodpeckers, Bachman's sparrows, and other longleaf-associated species. The project leverages funding from both the DoW REPI program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)/U.S. Forest Service Joint Chiefs program.

MISSION ALIGNED **Troutman Family Easement, 589 acres —** Three Rivers Land Trust (TRLT) permanently conserved 589 acres adjacent to Camp Mackall through a conservation easement with the Troutman family, protecting over one mile of shared border and ensuring compatible land use while conserving more than 500 acres of longleaf forest habitat and safeguarding 1.5 miles of Drowning Creek frontage, a primary drinking water source for the Town of Southern Pines. The easement also protects critical Special Forces training operations at Camp Mackall by preventing incompatible development that could impact long-standing training activities, including land navigation and Assessment and Selection courses.

MISSION ALIGNED **United Methodist Foundation Tract, 492 acres —** TNC closed on the fee-simple acquisition of the 492-acre United Methodist Foundation tract in Richmond County, which will eventually be added to Sandhills Game Land. The project benefited from the DoW REPI program and will generate significant non-federal match for future REPI-funded projects.

MISSION ALIGNED **McEachern Tract, 25 acres —** TNC closed on the fee-simple acquisition of the 25-acre McEachern tract next to Antioch Bay in Hoke County. This key strategic conservation success enables better management of the unique clay-based bay.

Seymour Johnson Air Force Base / Dare County Range [U.S. Air Force] Priority Geography

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Neuse Islands, 802 acres —** On June 15, 2026, Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) acquired the 802-acre Neuse Islands property in the Lowgrounds of Johnston County, in partnership with Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (SJAFB), the N.C. Land and Water Fund, and Johnston County. Funded by a N.C. Land and Water Fund grant and in part by a DoW REPI program grant, this is the second-largest single acquisition in TLC's history and one of the most significant natural and cultural resource protection projects it has completed in the entire Triangle. The property protects mature hardwood forest within the Richardson Bridge Natural Heritage Area and features 10 miles of existing trails.

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Neuse River Shoreline Stabilization (65% Design) —** Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, through a contract with Dewberry managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), completed a 65% design of a shoreline stabilization solution to address erosion along the Neuse River shoreline that borders the installation. The project, supported through unspecified minor military construction (UMMC) dollars, will mitigate the risk of bank subsidence encroaching on installation infrastructure.

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Nature-Based Shoreline Resilience Study —** The University of Georgia's Defense Community Resilience Program (DCRP) is leading a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Coastal Resilience Fund-supported effort to complement the shoreline stabilization project. The project will develop a watershed-scale feasibility analysis and conceptual designs for nature-based solutions aimed at reducing erosive forces along roughly 3,000 linear feet of the installation's Neuse River shoreline. The identified solutions will augment the stabilization effort while delivering additional community resilience benefits, namely reduced flood risk and environmental enhancement.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Boyd Family Farm, 1,100 acres —** Working Lands Trust, in partnership with the Boyd Family, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFP), and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, secured a permanent conservation easement on the 1,100-acre Boyd Family Farm in Washington County. The conservation of the farm ensures its continued provisioning of food and fuel by keeping working farms in working hands, and supports military mission-compatible land uses in perpetuity.

MISSION ALIGNED **Rose Dairy, 311 acres —** On December 30, 2024, Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) closed on the fee-simple acquisition of the 311-acre Rose Dairy property along the Neuse River, just south of Smithfield. TLC transferred the property to Johnston County for long-term ownership on May 20, 2026. It will become the county's first publicly operated nature preserve, eventually offering public access to trails (including the Mountains-to-Sea Trail), a boat launch, and other recreational amenities. The county has already begun building trails and renovating a house on the property, which will soon serve as the new office space for the Johnston County Parks Department.

MISSION ALIGNED **Gar Gut Marshes, 602 acres —** On July 23, 2026, TLC closed on the 602-acre Gar Gut Marshes in the Neuse River Lowgrounds, one of the largest remaining wilderness areas in the Triangle area. The parcel lies along the planned route of the future Mountains-to-Sea Trail. This acquisition preserves a significant area along the Neuse River floodplain that helps absorb stormwater during extreme rain events and reduces downstream flooding. The project was completed with a grant from the N.C. Land and Water Fund and in partnership with Johnston County.

MISSION ALIGNED **Alligator River, 1,550 acres —** The Conservation Fund finalized the transfer of around 1,550 acres of coastal wetlands and forestland in Tyrrell County to the North Carolina Coastal Federation for long-term stewardship. The waterfront tract, located along Highway 64 near the Alligator River Bridge, protects ecologically significant coastal wetlands that filter water, support fish and wildlife habitat, and provide natural flood buffering in one of the state's most important coastal regions.

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune / Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point [U.S. Marine Corps] Priority Geography

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Camp Lejeune & MCAS New River Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR) —** Onslow County is implementing the Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River MIRR, a U.S. Department of War Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC)-funded collaborative planning initiative that helps installations and surrounding communities identify shared risks, develop responsive implementation strategies, and mitigate hazards and vulnerabilities associated with resources outside an installation that are critical to conducting military missions. The MIRR brings installation personnel and community stakeholders together to identify gaps in shared infrastructure and systems, to include transportation, water/wastewater, energy, utilities, and housing, that affect mission readiness and community resilience. The process focuses on how installations and communities can withstand future environmental change scenarios such as flooding, wind, drought, and wildfire. The review will result in a strategic action plan with prioritized, implementable projects that strengthen both military mission assurance and community capacity, creating opportunities for coordinated investment aligned with ENCSL Partnership Strategic Plan priorities.

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Camp Bryan Farms, 8,815 acres —** Working Lands Trust has secured funding from the U.S. Department of War's REPI program and the NCDA&CS' ADFP program for a permanent conservation easement on 8,815 acres of Camp Bryan Farms. Located between the Croatan National Forest and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, the project secures critical low-level flight corridors and unmanned aerial systems transit airspace by preventing incompatible development. Beyond these military benefits, the easement permanently preserves Craven County's largest private tract of working lands — managed pine and hardwood forests, wetlands, and Carolina Bays. It will create a critical wildlife movement corridor between managed lands, provide off-installation habitat benefitting threatened and endangered species recovery, and provide management opportunities for wildlife and forest resource agencies within the landscape.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Carteret 7,783 acres —** In April 2026, Navy Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Mid-Atlantic and their conservation partner North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) closed on the Carteret 7 project. Funded by a 2025 DoW REPI program grant, NCCF purchased fee interest in the 783-acre tract in Carteret County for $1.89M and sold a perpetual easement to the U.S. Department of the Navy for $590,000 on behalf of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. The Navy's restrictive-use easement ensures military mission-compatible land uses and furthers air operations protection goals in Carteret County. The acquisition will be added to NCCF's adjacent 6,000-acre North River Wetlands Preserve and will allow relocation of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail off Merrimon Road through the preserve. This brings the total number of acres protected through the DoW REPI program to over 18,000 acres.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Futral Family Farm, 465 acres —** Working Lands Trust permanently conserved 465 acres of working forest in Onslow County through an agricultural conservation easement with landowner Troy Futral and his family. Made

possible through NCDA&CS' ADFP and DoW REPI program funding, the easement keeps this multigenerational tract in active farming and forestry while maintaining compatible land use around the installation and delivering lasting environmental benefits, including clean water, wildlife habitat, and resilience to flooding and storms. The Futral family was recognized at the North Carolina Wildlife Federation's 61st Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards as Land Conservationists of the Year for permanently protecting their 465-acre Onslow County farm and forest through a conservation easement held by WLT.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Thin Layer Placement Pilot —** The NCCF provided support to EA Engineering to implement the Nature-Based solutions for Coastal Resilience at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point project to develop the means and methods for implementing and installing a full-scale prototype implementation of thin layer placement and living shoreline techniques to mitigate erosion- and increased inundation-induced impacts and to enable wider application of nature-based solutions (NBS) at MCAS Cherry Point and other installations.

MISSION ALIGNED **Venters Family Farm, 129 acres —** Working Lands Trust permanently protected 129 acres of farmland and managed timberland in Onslow County through an agricultural conservation easement funded through the United States Endowment for Forestry and Communities' Enviva Forest Conservation Fund. The easement keeps the land in active farming and forestry while safeguarding wildlife habitat along the New River and preserving the property's rural character, permanently limiting future development and shielding the working landscape from suburban sprawl near Camp Lejeune. Spanning multiple generations of family stewardship, the donation reflects a lasting commitment to North Carolina's agricultural heritage and to keeping working lands in working hands.

MISSION ALIGNED **Holly Shelter & Horse Swamp Acquisitions, 643 acres —** In December 2025, TNC closed on three properties totaling 613 acres adjacent to Holly Shelter Game Land. In June 2026, TNC also closed on a 30-acre parcel near Horse Swamp Preserve in Onslow County.

MISSION ALIGNED **Gateway to Down East, 153 acres —** The North Carolina Coastal Federation and The Conservation Fund partnered to purchase 153 acres along U.S. Highway 70 at what is often called the gateway to Down East, Carteret County's 13 unincorporated communities east of Beaufort. It complements efforts within a larger North River conservation landscape, where nearly 7,000 acres of wetlands, forests, and marsh migration corridors have been protected and restored over the past several decades.

Cross-Geography Activities

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Prescribed Fire — 16,727 acres burned —** The Nature Conservancy's burn crews conducted controlled burns on 3,127 acres on TNC preserves and assisted partners in burning 13,600 additional acres. A portion of TNC's capacity for this work came from the 2022 DoW REPI Challenge grant, with additional funding from the

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and traditional REPI, among others.

SENTINEL SUPPORTED **Community-Led Resilience & Co-Designed Conservation —** The N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation continues to lead a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Coastal Resilience Fund-supported project, in partnership with Working Lands Trust, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Lumbee Tribe, entitled *Advancing Community-Led Resilience Initiatives and Co-Designed Conservation Practices in a Sentinel Landscape*. This multi-pronged project is delivering technical support and capacity to private natural and working-lands landowners, convening community-led adaptation and resilience planning to co-design a pipeline of nature-based approaches to mitigate flooding in defense-supporting communities, and using hydrologic and hydraulic modeling to quantify peak-flood-reduction benefits of alternative nature-based solutions to mitigate recurring flooding that impacts military mission readiness. FloodWise H&H modeling incorporated six flooding locations of concern identified with Fort Bragg personnel, including Pope Army Airfield, Manchester Road, NC 24/87, Horse Creek, Texas Pond and Beaver Creek. The analysis evaluates dam modification, afforestation, water farming/dry detention and related strategies for their potential to reduce flooding around military and community infrastructure. Earlier NCRF23 modeling found that combined natural-infrastructure strategies could produce modeled 16–18% reductions in peak flow during a Hurricane Matthew scenario and 33–46% reductions during SCS design storms in the Upper Little River basin, with peak timing delayed about 3–5 hours.

SENTINEL ENDORSED **Atlantic Conservation Coalition High Carbon Coastal Habitat Conservation —** The North Carolina Coastal Federation (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. NCCF has identified priority areas and is moving forward with eight projects that will include various combinations of nature-based solutions (i.e., living shorelines, shoreline revegetation, beneficial use of dredge material). The project sites include Bogue Sound Dredge Spoil Island, Cape Hatteras Secondary School, North River Mountains-To-Sea Trail, North River Thomas Creek, Cape Lookout National Seashore Visitor Center, Rachel Carson Estuarine Reserve, Swanquarter, and Roanoke Island Festival Park.

MISSION ALIGNED **Building Local Conservation Capacity Across the Sentinel Landscape:** Through complementary N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation-administered programs, the Foundation has placed reusable conservation equipment and educational tools directly with Soil & Water Conservation Districts throughout the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape. Six ENCSL Districts received no-till drills, with 91 documented uses covering around 1,529 acres to date, while three ENCSL Districts (Jones, Moore, and Sampson) received drones to expand capacity for conservation assessment, monitoring, storm response, and land-management planning. In addition, six ENCSL Districts received environmental-education equipment, and three additional Districts served as regional soils-tent hosts, supporting around 48,171 reported participant interactions within ENCSL counties. Together, these investments build durable local capacity for agricultural conservation, technical assistance, environmental education, and

working-lands resilience. These projects are funded by the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

Partner & Program Acronym Key

Abbreviations for the partner organizations, agencies, funding programs, and place names referenced throughout this report.

ADFP
Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (N.C. Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services)

CENREP
Center for Environmental and Resource Economic Policy (at N.C. State University)

DCIP
Defense Community Infrastructure Program (at OLDCC)

DCRP
Defense Community Resilience Program (University of Georgia)

DOI
U.S. Department of the Interior

DoW
U.S. Department of War

DMVA
North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

DNCR
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

EDF
Environmental Defense Fund

ENCSL
Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape

EPA
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

FCC
Federal Coordinating Committee

NCRF
National Coastal Resilience Fund, NFWF program

NCWRC
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

NFWF
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)

OLDCC
Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (DoW)

REPI
Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration

SERPPAS
Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability

SERDP
Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program

SJAFB
Seymour Johnson Air Force Base

TLC
Triangle Land Conservancy

TNC
The Nature Conservancy

TRLT
Three Rivers Land Trust

LLSF
Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund

MCAS
Marine Corps Air Station

MIRR
Military Installation Readiness Review

NAVFAC
Navy Facilities Engineering Systems Command

NBS
Nature-Based Solutions

NCCF
North Carolina Coastal Federation

NCDA&CS
North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

UMMC
Unspecified Minor Military Construction

USACE
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

USDA
U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDOI
U.S. Department of the Interior

USFS
U.S. Forest Service

WLT
Working Lands Trust

Meeting Summaries

Third Quarter: September 16, 2025, 1:30pm – 3:36pm

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
- Rick Long, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Brian McRae, sitting in for Executive Director Kyle Briggs, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Bob Bardon, sitting in for Dean Myron F. Floyd, 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, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, Cameron Dawson, Joe Austin, Veronica Jamison, Anita Kennedy, Reva Orr, Sabrina Shaffer, Ryan Manning, Will Summer, Bill Edwards, Dewitt Hardee, Steve Woodson, Tristan Reynolds, Christian Vose, Addie L. Thornton, Ashton Bachman, and Will Robinson

Online: Carmen Lombardo, Jacob Boyd, Denise Evans, Jaime Simon, Gwen Abernathy, Kevin Johnson, Brian McRae, Lisa Shealy

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 June 9, 2025, meeting were presented for approval. Chris Baillie said he offered a correction to remove the line about Avon Park from his report. Jeff Michael made the motion to approve with Baillie's edits, and Rick Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis reported on military partnerships with USAF-SJAFB and MCIEAST-MCB Camp Lejeune. There are two open military partnership conservation easement contracts, one with each installation. Boyd Farm is still in development with the Air Force, and Futral Farm with MCIEAST is nearing completion and will hopefully close by the end of the year. The two projects combine 1,629.21 acres. Davis reviewed a summary of the completed agricultural conservation easements since 2016, which have combined to preserve nearly 15,000 acres, with 27 easements recorded in six North Carolina counties.

Davis also provided the summary of funding for completed military partnership agricultural conservation easements. NCDA&CS has spent $11 million to date, REPI has contributed $13.7 million, and USDA has committed just over $5 million. These partner funds, plus the value of landowner donations, put the total easement purchase value at nearly $32.8 million. He also reviewed the MOU with NCMAC and the balance of that award through August 2025.

Rick Long with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs reported on the progress of the MOU, a Department of Defense project in partnership between the University of Georgia and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Also, he noted that it was the Air Force's 78th birthday.

Jeff Michael spoke briefly for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources before turning it over to Will Summer. He said the N.C. Land and Water Fund has received $120 million in requests and receives $36 million from the license plate fund to add to their budget. He said that at the next meeting, he will be able to give a better rundown of requests and funding.

Brian McRae was sitting in for Kyle Briggs to present the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission report. He reported on conservation activities from June and July 2025. He reported that the Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP) had completed 816 acres of prescribed burning, 197 acres of mechanical and timber treatment, 211 acres of clear-cutting, and 45 acres of thinning at Holly Shelter Game Land. He also reported on the progress of the Wildlife Conservation Lands Program (WCLP), noting that eight site visits had been conducted across five counties, totaling 891 acres. He also reported on recent activities, if any, for Fieldwork for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, the Green Growth Toolbox (GGT) and Partners for Green Growth (PGG), and the N.C. Wildlife Action Plan.

Dr. Bob Barden was sitting in for Dr. Myron F. Floyd to present for the College of Natural Resources. He reported on recent personnel moves at NC State, including the selection of Kevin Howell as the new chancellor.

Chester Lowder presented for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He said that he had been working hard with Chris Baillie at the quarterly meeting and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) decision memo for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) funding. He also reported on the 2025 Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) Principals meeting.

Chris Baillie gave more updates on the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership Report. He reported on new proposals under the REPI Challenge, Conventional REPI, and the Forest Legacy program. He also provided Regional Impacts Briefs, information about the Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River Military Installation Readiness Review Project (MIRR), and the upcoming annual report.

Jeremy Goodwin presented for the N.C. Department of Transportation. He spoke about the mountain-based project on the monarch butterfly and mentioned practices involving roadside wildflowers and milkweed plots.

Addie Thornton with the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute reported on the 2025 SERPPAS Principals Meeting. She reported that this meeting brings together representatives from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. She said the Department of Defense wants to foster strong relationships with Southeastern U.S. installations. She also highlighted the value of the mission, noting that these agencies aligned their missions. Thornton passed along a save-the-date for the meeting, November 17-19, at the Carolina Hotel, Cardinal Ballroom in Southern Pines, and broke down the meeting schedule for each day.

In other business, Chris Baillie brought forward a request for approval of the ENCSL Partnership Strategic Plan and to add two statutorily required ex officio members to the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee. Those members are the ENCSL Partnership Coordinator and a representative from the United States Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program. Additional ex officio members, optional under the state law, would be considered for approval at a later meeting.

David Smith asked for a motion to approve. Rick Long made the motion, and Chester Lowder seconded. The motion was approved.

The next meeting was set for December 9. Will Summer made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Rick Long. Meeting adjourned at 3:36pm.

Fourth Quarter: December 9, 2025, 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture
- Rick Long, Installation Coordinator, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Shannon Deaton for Kyle Briggs, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- Dr. Chris Baillie, Interim Partnership Coordinator
- Jaime Simon, External Affairs and Communication, DoW REPI Program

Other Attendees: Evan Davis, Kelsey Pearce, Allison Rodriguez, Chris Baillie, Cameron Dawson, Dewitt Hardee, Mikey Fulk, Jon Lanier, Will Summer, Neil Oakley, Bill Ross, Sara Ward, Bailey Butler, Anne-Elisabeth Baker, Andy Cox, Reena Bhatia

Online: Corey Hoilman, Denise Evans, Joe Austin, Edward Davis, Addie Thornton, Brian Rubino, Erin Ananian-Gentile, Weston McCorkle, Guenevere Abernathy, Amanda Sand, Mark Pfanstiehl, Sarah Weavil, Lisa Shealy, Jaime Simon, Michelle Lovejoy, Kevin Johnson, Rhonda Murray, Reva Orr, Rodney Woolard, Trent Ensley, Edward Olive

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The meeting was called to order at 1:35 PM. The minutes from the September 16, 2025, meeting were presented for approval. Jeff Michael made the motion, and Rick Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Evan presented on current open contracts with military partners – two open contracts, one in Washington County and one in Onslow County. The project in Onslow County is moving toward the finish line, expected to close in late December or in early 2026. Next, he reported on completed easements with military partners to date, along with a table showing total contributions for those easements. He discussed the final report for the NCMAC project for the year 2024-2025, and said his team was awaiting the renewal of the project for the next year. He expressed his appreciation to NCMAC for their support of this project to date.

Rick Long presented for the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The MOU for NCMAC has made it through their general counsel and will be signed in the coming days. NCMAC is concerned that they may get a shortened budget in the coming year so there may be some cuts in the future. He talked about the National Defense Authority Act bringing a little over $3.6 million for veterans' services in Salisbury. In other news, the U.S. Army single four-star command will now be based at Fort Bragg, bringing opportunities and jobs to the state, and the Marine Corps and the Navy both turned 200 years old this year.

Jeff Michael presented for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Will Summers is the Director of the Division of Land and Water Stewardship, and also brought along Sarah Ward, who is the Director of the Atlantic Conservation Coalition. Two other team members in attendance, Policy Director Bailey Butler and Policy Analyst Anne Elizabeth Baker, are key architects in writing this grant for these four states.

Summer said they had awarded over $36 million in grants that will protect 9,300 acres – split between 6,250 acres added to game lands and 2,360 acres in local parks and preserves. Another note – the application form for the state tax credit is now live and can now be found by googling "N.C. Conservation Tax credit" – this is the first year in 10 years that this is back. They have been working with N.C. Wildlife Resources and Davis's team – the first application for the tax credit is in and it is for ag land.

Jeff Michael reminded attendees that this credit was authorized for two years; the goal is to get this authorized permanently, and he encouraged others to share with their constituents the importance of that.

Sara Ward presented for the Atlantic Conservation Coalition – it is the largest grant that DNCR has received in its history – and she said they are both administering and receiving

some of those funds. The types of projects that they work on are Coastal Habitat Protection, Peatland Projects and Forest and Tree Projects. The high-level goals include reducing greenhouse gases, community benefits, maximizing funding and innovative policies and programs that are scalable. So far, in Year 1 she said they have accomplished finalizing the grant and obligating the funds quickly, achieving the sub-awards with the four states and having spent $6.6 million by the end of September. They have already acquired 4,000 acres of land in N.C. and Maryland and have held 27 stakeholder and community engagement activities that have reached over 1,000 members. They are working with the Duke Nicholas Institute to launch a dashboard of accomplishments. This team is growing, and she said they are very excited about that – they have five branches including ACC Leadership, Implementation Support, Monitoring and Performance, Leveraging Impact and Policy Innovation, and Budget and Finance. Almost all of the projects are in the Sentinel Landscape areas, and they're very exciting.

Shannon Deaton represented the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission, sitting in for Kyle Briggs. Since the last meeting, she said three tracts have closed for a total of 731 acres in three ENCSL counties. Additionally, they were able to engage 12 landowners and have provided technical guidance in Johnston, Sampson, Wilson counties across 825 acres to encourage landowner stewardship. They had conducted timber operations on 211 acres of Bear Garden property.

Deaton said the Wildlife Action Plan's 10-year revision was submitted in late September; they have done a cursory review and expect to hear back in February. She said they were able to spotlight some success stories and have been working to update the conservation mapping tool.

Dr. Myron Floyd of N.C. State University was not present.

Chester Lowder presented on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He noted the constant air traffic over his farm in Stanly County and said that brings to mind why these relationships matter, across agencies and with private landowners. A hybrid partnership meeting was held in late September, and the November meeting was moved to December and would be held the following day with a hybrid option. The SERPPAS meeting in Pinehurst was moved to April 28-29, and the works of the partnership will be highlighted. He mentioned two lunch and learn events, and that NCDA&CS's Weston McCorkle spoke at the Joint Military Affairs Commission.

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

Chris Baillie presented for the Eastern N.C. Sentinel Landscape as the Coordinator. He discussed some near-term efforts currently underway, including the draft of a decision memo for NRCS to request increased funding, given that WRE and ALE are both severely underfunded in N.C. They are doing funding analyses on how N.C. is leveraging funding across the landscape. He said they have received formal approval to add capacity in 2026, adding a position housed at Legacy Works, but it will be situated in the Sandhills region to be sure there is opportunity within the landscape. He said they plan to submit that job description at the next committee meeting.

Andy Fox with the N.C. State Coastal Dynamics Design Lab presented for the partner spotlight. Fox is a professor at N.C. State. The lab is a six-person unit, all members trained as architects and planners. The university only funds one of those positions, but he said they have primarily worked since 2017 after Hurricane Matthew at the coast all the way to the mountains post-Tropical Storm Fred and Hurricane Helene. Most of their research happens in a linear fashion — they see a need; they fix an issue. They come in and do an analysis to figure out the suite of things that can build resilience for a community. Fox said there is a lot of financial design involved, work at no cost to community partners to attract lots of resources for matching funds. He said the best example of what they've done is in Pollocksville in Jones County – at the time of Hurricane Florence, there were 216 residents there, and their lab was able to help them attract $2 million in grants and match in 12 months following the hurricane. They develop flood prints – different project types, guided through community engagement – and had over 60 participants in their community meetings. They have also done work in Goldsboro, the biggest community they've serviced, breaking the town area into sub-watersheds to quantify and prioritize projects. One of the things that came out of that project, Fox said, was looking at the wastewater treatment plant in the city and how it is shared with Seymour Johnson AFB. It was very close to topping out. They went door to door with city and housing authority staff to discuss needs with residents. To date, they have brought $34 million into partners, with a 32-times return on investment for these implementation dollars.

Fox said that future opportunities to benefit ENCSL partners includes integrating staff and family programming, addressing acute and chronic climate threats, and looking beyond the fenceline – enhancing collaboration with military installation readiness reviews, and assisting communities as they recover from floods to build long term resilience.

Jaime Simon presented for US DoW REPI Program. She said they were playing catch up from the federal shutdown, getting back into things. The current focus is the REPI budget, with Simon saying they have support on both sides of the aisle. She said they were looking at $158 million for FY26 for projects. They met with all of the headquarters at the services to talk about projects, 62 in all this year, and she expects their next call to have an update on what will be funded in N.C. The federal landscape FCC call will take place very soon, including discussion of the 2026 goals, revising the Sentinel Landscape MOU, and waiting on Fish and Wildlife signature, among other topics. She said the designation cycle is shifting from November to mid-January, adding 1-3 new landscapes in the coming year. Per the MOU, a 2026 strategic plan will be discussed and will have gotten the principals' approval.

The business item to be voted on was the nomination and approval of military installation ex-officio seats and members. Per N.C.G.S. 106-747(d), it was proposed to add representatives from military installations to the ENSL committee. Individuals from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and Marine Corps Installations East had been identified as logical candidates who have agreed to serve if nominated. A motion to appoint members from military installations to ex-officio seats was made by Shannon Deaton and seconded by Rick Long. The motion was approved unanimously.

A motion made by Chester Lowder to fill the seats with Denise Evans, Community Planner, 4th Civil Engineer Squadron, at Seymour Johnson AFB; and Marty Korenek, Government and External Affairs, with MCIEAST. It was added that for future discussions, Fort Bragg is allowed to select someone. It was noted that the Coast Guard in Elizabeth City is not a DoD base but a Department of Homeland Security base, and that they could become included if they are accepted as a DoD installation. Lowder reported that the Coast Guard has been recognized as part of the defense community as a part of the Sentinel Landscape.

A motion to close nomination was made by Jeff Michael, seconded by Shannon Deaton. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Troxler asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Hearing none, Lowder made the motion to adjourn, and Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

First Quarter: February 18, 2026, 10:00am – 11:27am

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture
- Will Summer, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Sarah Ward for Dr. Myron Floyd, N.C. State of College Natural Resources
- Shannon Deaton for Kyle Briggs, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- Jaime Simon, External Affairs and Communication, DoW REPI Program
- Denise Evans, Community Planner, 4th Civil Engineer Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base
- Marty Korenek, Government and External Affairs, Marine Corps Installations East

Other Attendees: In Person: Evan Davis, Veronica Jamison, Kelsey Pearce, Allison Rodriguez, Cameron Dawson, Dewitt Hardee, Mikey Fulk, Jon Lanier, Neil Oakley, David Smith, Addie Thornton, Bill Edwards, Sara Ward, Bailey Butler

Online: Joe Austin, Edward Davis, Addie Thornton, Brian Rubino, Erin Ananian-Gentile, Weston McCorkle, Guenevere Abernathy, Amanda Sand, Mark Pfanstiehl, Sarah Weavil, Lisa Shealy, Jaime Simon, Michelle Lovejoy, Kevin Johnson, Rhonda Murray, Reva Orr, Rodney Woolard

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The minutes from December 9, 2025, meeting were presented for approval. Chester Lowder made the motion, and Will Summer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Evan presented the current open contract with military partners, Boyd Farm with USAF-SJAFB. The project in Washington County is moving toward the finish line, expected to close in early 2026. Next, he reported on completed easements with military partners to date, along with a table showing total contributions for those easements. He also reported on the MOU with NC MAC, which has a balance of $127,321.33. Davis introduced Marty Korenek with Government and External Affairs with Marine Corps Installations East. He spoke on the $7 million match from the Marine Corps for the Camp Bryan project, and he also welcomed Anita Kennedy back from maternity leave after having twins.

Rick Long with Veterans Affairs could not attend due to a scheduling conflict but sent his materials along to be included in the presentation. His report as provided by Evan Davis discussed the completion of the NCMAC MOU, that there were seven Military Child of the Year semifinalists from North Carolina, made notes of the results of the Military Childcare Round Table, and highlighted the XVIII ABC LTC Gavin Joint Innovation Outposts Open. The next slide covered upcoming events through the end of April.

Will Summer reported on the upcoming grant cycle for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. They are taking applications until March 1, 2026. He reported the deadline for certification of 2025 donations for Conservation Tax Credit recently passed, and he said there were 41 applications covering 4,062 acres.

Sarah Ward reported for the N.C. State of College Natural Resources. She noted Kate Jones' efforts working alongside the Forest Service and the Black Family Land Trust.

Shannon Deaton reported for Kyle Briggs for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. She reviewed the progress of the RASP — N.C. Wildlife has treated 1,412 acres with prescribed fire in the Holly Shelter Game Lands in the Bear Garden footprint. Staff also planted 128 Long Leaf Pine in the Bear Garden and have planned sales and replants in November/December 2026. She also reviewed the Mayo project which closed in November, and the Jordan Timber project that closed in January covering 2,018.7 acres in Scotland County. She reported on the Southern Aquatic Resources Partnership and said that all data is uploaded into a larger SARP database. She gave everyone a handout and went over the new online tools to help identify fish, wildlife, and plant species. The online tool is helpful for users to find SWAP, and priority actions will be updated. An online map viewer is being developed the will allow users to find recommended Conservation Opportunity Areas.

Chester Lowder reported for the Partnership and said he will be looking forward to Dr. Chris Baillie coming back from paternity leave, with hopes that baby and mother are all doing well. He reported on the REPI Challenge, saying that he was waiting for formal

notification about the REPI Challenge decisions. He reported on the MIRR kick off — the Military Installation Readiness Review Meeting — for Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River, held in January. He also reviewed the easement closing with The Nature Conservancy that included a 492-acre United Methodist Foundation tract in Richmond County. Lowder said this will help generate a lot of matches for REPI. He said there are three other properties next to Holly Shelter Game Land in Pender County. He also discussed the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - Longleaf Stewardship Fund, a TNC-led proposal requesting $2 million with $1.48 million in match over three years. It would support 50,298 acres of controlled burning, 2,205 acres of long leaf establishment, and 3,368 acres of other longleaf habitat enhancements. Lowder proposed immediately on Baillie's return from paternity leave that he would like to see the hiring committee, comprised of federal, state and NGO partner representatives to interview and narrow down a list of candidates so we can share suitable candidates with the N.C. Sentinel Landscape Committee for their responsibilities.

Jeremy Goodwin with N.C. Department of Transportation stated that he had nothing to report on this meeting but hopefully will have more when the legislature passes a budget.

Jaime Simon, the Community Planner with the DOW REPI Program, reported on the partnership with Working Lands Trust, the previously mentioned $7.4 million funding for the Camp Bryan project near Cherry Point. She also spoke on the SERPPAS meeting in Southern Pines on April 27-29 at the Carolina Hotel. She said Addie Thornton can give more details. There is also going to be a SERPPAS annual meeting in Indiana on May 14.

Denise Evans, Community Planner with the 4th Civil Engineer Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, said she had nothing to report at this time but was happy to represent SJAFB.

Marty Korenek with Government and External Affairs, Marine Corps Installations East, presented a slide showing the priority tiering map, and explained that Tier 1 areas are where partner activities have a direct benefit and the most support from DOD for funding of projects. He said that Tier 2 had some similarities but was considered a little lower in priority. Tier 3 areas are where partner activities have more indirect benefits and will need letters of support. He also reported on the Futral project, partnered with Working Lands Trust, which recently closed and preserved 465.13 acres in Onslow County. This project also included partnership with the U.S. Navy and the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. The total purchase was $635,000, with the Navy's share totaling $317,500. He also went down the list of REPI projects that they are planning to close in 2026.

Amanda Sand made a presentation for the N.C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation that detailed her organization's outreach and partnership efforts since 1999. She said the Foundation has a portfolio of 21 education and outreach projects with funding over $4.7 million. These projects have included educational and interactive resources the districts have focused on primary and secondary education to create the next generation of

conservationists. She reviewed the Careers in Conservation Scholarship Program and the banner program which has reached 91 counties. Sand highlighted the Market Based Conservation Initiative and manure management initiatives as examples of their environmentally focused programming. Projects that have built conservation capacity at the county level include their work with district equipment rental and demonstration days. She closed by reviewing the Foundation's strategic plan from 2026 through 2030.

Commissioner Troxler asked if there was any other business for the committee. He thanked all the partners for their efforts.
Addie Thornton spoke on the upcoming SERPPAS meeting in Southern Pines and said she would like to see NCDA&CS and Chris Baillie represented there. She also provided a link to the meeting.

Commissioner Troxler spoke on his back problems, and said the one good thing coming from UNC Chapel Hill is their spine doctors. He thanked the committee for their hard work and said he is hoping for some additional money from the legislature to support the ADFP Trust Fund.

Evan Davis told the committee that the next meeting would likely be sometime in June.

Commissioner Troxler asked for a motion to adjourn. Chester Lowder made the motion and Will Summer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM.

Second Quarter: June 16, 2026, 1:34pm – 2:47pm

Attendees:
Committee members present:

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- For Commissioner Steve Troxler: David Smith, Chief Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
- For Rick Long: Doug Taggart, Interagency Coordinator, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Dr. Myron Floyd, Dean, N.C. State College of Natural Resources
- For Kyle Briggs: Shannon Deaton, Division Chief of Habitat Conservation, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- Jeremy Goodwin, State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation
- Denise Evans, Community Planner, 4th Civil Engineer Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base

- Marty Korenek, Government and External Affairs, Marine Corps Installations East

Other Attendees: In Person: Evan Davis, Veronica Jamison, Kelsey Pearce, Allison Rodriguez, Aubrey Hilton, Anita Kennedy, Joe Austin, Mikey Fulk, Jon Lanier, Neil Oakley, Addie Thornton, Bill Edwards, Weston McCorkle, Will Allen, Mark Pfanstiehl, Travis Morehead, Dr. Chris Baillie, Christian Vose, Jared Lamb, and Will Summer

Online: Brenna Thompson, Brian Rubino, Edward Davis, Dewitt Hardee, Kenneth Lingerfelt, Kevin Johnson, Lisa Shealy, Janine McLawhorn, Reva Orr, Nancy Richardson, Sabrina Shaffer, Steve Woodson, Tom Potter, Sara Ward, and Rodney Woolard

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The minutes from February 18, 2026, meeting were presented for approval. Chester Lowder made the motion, and Shannon Deaton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Davis said the only current open contract with military partners, Boyd Farm with USAF-SJAFB in Washington County, is moving toward the finish line and is expected to close in or around the July 15. Next, he reported on completed easements with military partners to date and reviewed the table showing total contributions for those easements. He briefly discussed the memorandum of understanding with N.C. Military Affairs Commission, which has a funding balance of $226,456.26, and highlighted the need for the agency and its partners to make sure year-end deadlines are met.

Doug Taggart with the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs provided a brief update on conservation efforts and their work to assist service members. He thanked Evan Davis for sitting in on a recent meeting.

Jeff Michael with the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources spoke briefly on the extension of the state conservation tax credit and the incentive it offers to landowners, as well as the pending state farm bill which he said he hoped to find out soon if it passes. He presented a summary of grant applications for the North Carolina Land and Water Fund's 2026 cycle. He said there were over $116.8 million in total requests and 154 applications — 86 were for land acquisition, 41 for restorations, eight were for innovative stormwater projects, and 19 were for planning projects. Of those applications, 36 are in the 33-county area of the ENCSL, requesting $22.5 million combined across in all project types and cover a total of 7,165 acres. Funding decisions will be made in October. He asked Will Summer to review lists of grant applications. Summer also provided final numbers for

certified conservation tax credits for the 2025 calendar year. The total of requests – just over $5.1 million – exceeded the $5 million provided for by the legislature.

Shannon Deaton presented for the N.C. Wildlife Commission. She reviewed the agency's accomplishments and activities since February. She highlighted the RASP program, stating that N.C. Wildlife has recently treated 973 acres with prescribed burns. Deaton said 211 acres of clear-cutting had taken place in Bear Gardens to prepare for longleaf pine conservation efforts. She also said that 45 acres of longleaf pine had been thinned for future red-cockaded woodpecker recruitment clusters, and 25 acres had been treated at Stone Creek Game Lands. Deaton detailed the American Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) Longleaf Pine Habitat Grant that N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission had received, which is a four-year grant that will help the Southeast Sentinel Landscapes comprised of North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. The funding will help with 42,290 acres of longleaf pine habitat and aquatic barrier assessments. In other news, Deaton said the Wildlife Action Plan will be released on the agency's website in July 2026. She spoke about field work focused on rare coastal fish, and the coastal crayfish CSWG survey. This grant will do surveys in N.C., S.C., and Georgia to learn about the different variety of crayfish.

David Smith asked about their experience working with other states. Deaton said it is somewhat of a nightmare because everyone has different reporting styles but it's a multi-state grant.

Dr. Myron Floyd reported for the N.C. State College of Natural Resources. He said he had a few updates, first and foremost his stated plans to retire from N.C. State effective January 1, 2027. Floyd said there will be an interim dean to be announced at a later date. Floyd moved on to discuss the NFWF America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative that is providing $3.1 million for SERPPAS partners.

Chester Lowder reported out for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He remarked on the effect of the partnership on the landscape and how things have changed over the last 50 years, which he credited to the strong collaboration among the military and all the partners.

Lowder turned the presentation over to Dr. Chris Baillie to report on the Eastern N.C. Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Dr. Baillie recapped recent meetings including the ENCSL Partnership Meeting on April 22 and the SERPPAS Principals Meeting from April 27-29. From the annual ENCSL Partnership Data 2025 Call, he highlighted new highs and superlatives included in that year's data, including the highest level of non-federal committed funding since the inception of the ENCSL at $36.2 million, the highest private funding since inception at $9.1 million, and the highest local funding since inception at $1.5 million. The project spotlight for this quarter was Troutman Longleaf Farm, a Three Rivers Land Trust easement project with Fort Bragg/Department of War - REPI in Hoke County. This project provides a military training buffer, helps protect the primary source of drinking water for the city of Southern Pines, and includes over 500 acres of longleaf

habitat. Dr. Baillie also recapped the hiring process for the ENCSL Partnership Resilience Specialist, and introduced the selected candidate to the committee, Dr. Faren Wolter.

Dr. Chris Baille said the upcoming Eastern N.C. Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Report will be going over land use policies, transferable tax credit systems, and forest product markets.

Jeremy Goodwin reported for the N.C. Department of Transportation. He gave a brief update on the new U.S. 70 Highway Bypass, which he said was looking like it would include taking about 300 acres of land. Goodwin said a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

Denise Evans presented for Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. She said she didn't have anything pressing to discuss but said she was happy to hear the Boyd easement tract would be closing sometime in mid-July.

Marty Korenek with the Marine Corps Installations East said he had nothing to report at this time aside from his work on the project list for 2027.

Addie Thorton gave a presentation on the 2026 SERPPAS Principals Meeting, which coincided with the partnership's 20th anniversary. Of the meeting's outcomes, she said the 2026 SERPPAS Strategic Plan was approved; members visited Paint Hill Farm, a readiness and recreation project supporting Fort Bragg; and the principals endorsed SERPPAS engagement on supporting the Marine Corps Maritime Center of Excellence, on impacts to the Department of War from declining forest markets, and on regional corridors supporting SERPPAS interests.

David Smith asked if there were any other comments or business for the committee. He asked for a motion to adjourn, provided by Jeff Michael and seconded by Chester Lowder. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 2:47 PM.

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