North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee Minutes
December 11, 2023, 1:30 PM
Conference Call: 984-204-1487
Conference: 235847227 #

**Attendees:**
**Committee members present**:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Rick Long, Assistant Secretary, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Brian McRae, Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources, NCSU
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

**Other Attendees**: David Smith, Joe Austin, Corey Hoilman, Robert Bardon, Will Best, Jonathan Lanier, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Evan Davis, Allison Rodriguez, Phil Wallace, Joe Beckman, Bill Edwards, Steve Woodson, Rodney Woolard, Scott Shoulars, Anita Kenndy, Nancy Richardson, John Shaw, Chris Baillie, Jaime Simon, Richard Reich, and Veronica Jamison.

**Reading of Ethics Reminder:** 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.

**Approval of Previous Minutes:** The minutes from September 12, 2023, were presented for approval. Rick Long made the motion, and Brian McRae seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Addition to the Committee:** David Smith asked the committee to approve a new member to the Sentinel Landscape Committee team, David Harris from the NC Department of Transportation. Harris gave a brief background about his knowledge

and experience with the Department of Transportation, currently serving as a state engineer, and how he works together with all state agencies.

David Smith asked for a motion to add him to the committee. Chester Lowder made the motion, Dr. Myron Floyd seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. David Harris is now a member of the Sentinel Landscape Committee.

**Evan Davis** gave his program update for Farmland Preservation. He reviewed all current open contracts with military partners – G&H Properties in Hyde County, Futral Farm in Onslow County, Jenkins Farm in Jones County, and Small Farm I and Small Farm II in Jones County. All of these open contracts are with Working Lands Trust as the grantee. Altogether, these easement projects cover 1,146.63 acres. Evan reviewed all military partnership projects since 2016 – 22 easements have been recorded with 13,393.735 acres preserved. Evan Davis also reviewed the MOU with NCMAC, stating over $750,000 has been awarded since October 2023, $423,453.70 has been spent, leaving a balance of $336,546.30.

**Rick Long** gave a brief update for Military and Veterans Affairs. He said that there wasn't very much in the way of new activity to bring to the committee's attention.

**Jeff Michael** gave his update for the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Jeff stated since the last update the NCLWF Board had awarded $48.9 million in 2023 grants, protecting over 17,656 acres. He said 2,100 acres will be added to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission game lands, 4,300 new acres to NC State Parks, and 6,000 acres for local parks and preserves. He stated that $10.1 million is going to protect 5,000 acres and military mission readiness near MCAS New River Air Station, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, MCAS Cherry Point, US Army Fort Liberty, USAF Seymour Johnson, and USMC Camp Lejeune. He reviewed the new upcoming projects of 2023, with funding of $7,793,616 that will preserve 4,493 acres in ENCSL counties.

**Bryan McRae** gave his update for NC Wildlife Resources. He spoke about the Bear Creek Tracks and the planning that has been put into the project to this point. Over $7.8 million will go toward preserving over 45,000 acres. He spoke about the agency's Green Growth Toolbox and using it for preservation efforts around the Fort Liberty area.

**Dr. Myron Floyd** gave his update on the NC College of Natural Resources. He discussed an article on an AI-powered waste management system which could revolutionize recycling. Dr. Lokendra Pal with the College of Natural Resources is

partnering with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, IBM and the Town of Cary – with support from the US Department of Energy – to generate a process that reduces the 290 million tons of municipal solid waste generated each year. He mentioned research conducted by the college's Center for Geospatial Analytics that has created a land change model that simulates interactions between urban growth, increased flooding and how humans adapt in response. The new model is designed to offer a more realistic assessment of risk for urban planners, natural resource managers and other local government stakeholders. He said that the state experiences some of the greatest number of wildfires in the country due to the amount of wildlife urban interface areas, and discussed resources available through the NC Forest Service, including an interactive map to monitor the current wildfire danger rating in the area. The link to these resources is http://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/2023/11/wildfire-resources-in-north-carolina. He highlighted a series of workshops hosted by NC A&T about heir's property and the issues surrounding this topic. Heir's property is land that is jointly owned by descendants of a deceased person whose estate was never handled in probate court and passed down from generation to generation. The training sessions will provide valuable materials and guidance to avoid involuntary property loss and protect and preserve family land for generations to come.

**Chester Lowder** gave his update of the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He spoke on the Association for Defense Communities (ADC) conference that was held on November 6-8 that was focused on building resilient communities that support America's military. The forum was a 3-day event designed to help bring together the installations and their surrounding communities to discuss innovation and enhancing infrastructure. He also spoke on the Conservation Finance Opportunities in Sentinel Landscapes webinar that was presented on December 6. The webinar featured case studies of Sentinel Landscapes tapping into new partnerships and sources of financing to conserve natural resources, promote economic sustainability, and enhance military missions. He spoke on the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership. This quarter saw the development of a drafted strategic plan, now with one framework to guide the planning work versus two different frameworks previously. A small committee of the principals is tasked with development of a proposed vision statement such that each subsequent 5-year plan contributes strategically to the overall long-term vision based on measurable goals of the ENCSL. That committee will work with the principals and interested Partnership members to develop and refine the

proposed vision statement (members of that committee include Pete Benjamin, Dewitt Hardee, Will Summer, Bill Holman and Carmen Lombardo).

**Mary Lou Addor** spoke about the progress summary for the last quarter, which was focused on the development or completion of new projects while enhancing current efforts and deliverables to produce organizational or cross-sector results and outcomes.

**David Harris** gave a brief update regarding his background with the NC Department of Transportation. He said he was excited about given the opportunity to be a part of the committee.

**Chris Baille** asked about the possibility of putting together a planning committee to work closer with the Federal Coordinating Committee. He wants to offer the resources needed to make sure the partnership structure's calibration and focus aligns with the FCC's. He suggested having virtual or in-person meetings with the FCC. He is willing to meet in person or virtual this quarter to see if something can be put together, and suggested meeting in January – the sooner the better, he said.

**Jeff Michaels** and Dewitt Hardee suggested that the Partnership keep the same players involved who were around since the start of the program.

**Commissioner Troxler** asked what was missing and encouraged the committee to get together and get the structure in place to get things back on track.

**Dewitt Hardee** said when this was originally put together in 2016, the target was to combine federal and state funds with some private partnership to serve the needs of the military, and said this should remain the committee's focus.

**Corey Hoilman** spoke on the new mapping tools and the new website. He thanked Christian Vose for working to get the new symbology included, and asked if the scope could be broadened to include Camp Butner and MOTSU.

**David Smith** asked if there was further additional business, and hearing none he asked for a motion to adjourn. Jeff Michael made the motion, Brian McRae seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.